

Explicit Instruction of Formulaic Expressions and Second Language Pragmatic Competence:

A Collective Case Study

by

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## Abstract

Research on formulaic language pedagogy has shown that a wide repertoire of formulaic expressions can help second language (L2) learners to present themselves as proficient language speakers. Formulaic expressions often carry a strong sense of social contract and perform specific pragmatic purposes (Bardovi-Harlig, 2012) and therefore play a crucial role in developing L2 pragmatic competence. However, research in this area lacks solid findings about the role of explicit instruction in developing L2 pragmatic competence as well as in stimulating acquisition and retention of formulaic sequences that possess pragmatic functions. The present study investigated whether and how the explicit instruction of refusal and thanking formulaic expressions can foster acquisition and retention of these expressions and help L2 learners in developing their pragmatic competence and overcoming challenges they face while performing these speech acts. The research design consisted of pre-, post- and delayed post-tests, a 9-hour instructional intervention (Boers & Lindstromberg, 2012), and thematic analysis of students' written and oral reflections about the explicit instruction course. The results imply that explicit instruction of such expressions and semantic formulas can increase learners' understanding of the complex phenomenon of formulaicity and help their spoken language become more pragmatically appropriate, more grammatically accurate, more fluent, concise and confident. Explicit instruction also helps L2 learners to overcome the challenges they may face while performing refusal and thanking speech acts. These findings have practical implications for incorporating activities focused on meanings and pragmatic functions of various formulaic expressions into every day classroom practices.

*Key words:* Formulaic expressions, L2 pragmatic competence, L2 learners, explicit instruction.

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

#### **1.1. Research gap and guiding research questions**

Formulaic language and its connection to the study of pragmatics have received a vast amount of attention from applied linguists in the last several decades. Wray and Perkins (2000) define ‘formulaicity’ as a phenomenon that encompasses various types of word strings which are stored and retrieved whole from memory. Nattinger and DeCarrico (1992), Pawley and Syder (1983), Wray (2002; 2008), Wood (2010) devoted their work to defining and categorizing this complex language phenomenon. Definitions of formulaic language often include mention of recurrence, social contract, and the importance of the context. Bardovi-Harlig (2012) reviewed multiple uses of the term ‘formula’ in pragmatics, such as pragmatic routine, conversational routine, situation-based utterance and conventional expressions. Despite the differences in terminology, there is clearly a consensus among scholars that formulaic sequences play a crucial role in learning and acquisition of a language. Pragmatics can be defined as the study of how utterances have meaning in communication (Leech, 1983). Pragmatic competence is one of the two major components of communicative competence along with organizational competence in the Bachman’s model (Bachman, 1990). It is important to mention that formulaic expressions often carry a strong sense of social contract and perform specific pragmatic purposes (Bardovi-Harlig, 2012) and therefore play a crucial role in developing L2 pragmatic competence.

Interestingly, many years ago Pawley and Syder (1983) pointed out the link between formulaic language, pragmatics and speech act theory and claimed that “the problem of nativelike selection is to be solved in terms of theory of speech acts and discourse context” (p.

198). Wray (2008) distinguished an ability to express fidelity as one of the main pragmatic functions of formulaic language and emphasized that “through custom and practice some expressions become socially obligatory” (p. 249).

Interlanguage pragmatics has been extensively discussed and explored in the literature. As such, research studies were devoted to possible classroom methods for raising second language (L2) pragmatic awareness (Bardovi-Harlig & Griffin, 2005); differences between target language production of grammar and pragmatic performance (Bardovi-Harlig & Dörnyei, 1998); the role of proficiency, length of stay and intensity of interaction in acquisition of formulaic expressions in L2 pragmatics (Bardovi-Harlig & Bastos, 2011); cross-cultural misunderstandings caused by pragmatic failures and improper usage of formulaic expressions and differences between native and non-native speakers (Yu, 2011; Decapua & Dunham, 2007); and finally, the pragmatic strategies that L2 learners tend to utilize while communicating with native speakers (Cohen, 2005).

Research findings have also provided evidence of the effectiveness of explicit instruction in developing pragmatic fluency (House, 1996) and teaching various aspects of pragmatic competence (Fordyce, 2014). Boers and Lindstromberg (2012) listed three main approaches to teaching formulaic language: awareness-raising and attention-directing, stimulating dictionary lookups to foster learner autonomy and stimulating retention.

However, there are only a few studies that investigate the effectiveness of instructed formulaic language and pragmatics not only for awareness-raising purposes, but also for the sake of stimulating retention of formulaic sequences that possess pragmatic functions in students’ active lexicon (Webb & Kagimoto, 2011). Additionally, teaching formulaic expressions for developing L2 pragmatic competence has been quite disregarded in the research. There are very few studies that discuss this particular aspect of second language

teaching (Ghobadi & Fahim, 2009); moreover, research in this area lacks solid findings about developmental issues in interlanguage pragmatics (Kasper & Schmidt, 1996). The majority of the research studies so far were devoted mainly to the instructional effects of L2 pragmatics on learners' noticing and recognition ability (Bardovi-Harlig & Bastos, 2011) and raising their meta-pragmatic awareness (Bardovi-Harlig & Griffin, 2005; Cruz, 2013). Therefore, the role of explicit instruction in L2 pragmatics has not been explored to the full extent. It still remains a question in what other ways, besides awareness-raising, explicit instruction can help L2 learners develop their pragmatic competence and overcome difficulties they might face while performing various speech acts in English.

Considering this research gap, the objective of the present study is to investigate whether the explicit instruction of formulaic expressions that commonly occur in refusal and thanking speech acts can foster not only acquisition but also retention of these expressions by L2 learners and in such a way develop L2 pragmatic competence.

This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. Can the explicit instruction of refusal and thanking formulaic expressions and semantic formulas:
  - a) foster their acquisition and retention by second language (L2) learners;
  - b) develop L2 pragmatic competence?
2. What are the challenges L2 learners may face while performing refusal and thanking speech acts?
3. Does the explicit instruction help L2 learners to overcome those challenges? If yes, in what ways?

## 1.2. Organization of the thesis

To answer these research questions, I conducted a collective case-study, which took the form of a pedagogical intervention. The research design is quasi-experimental, which consisted of pre-, post- and delayed post-tests and 2 groups of participants: experimental and control. In addition, students' written and oral reflections about the role of the explicit instruction in acquisition and retention of refusal and thanking formulaic expressions and semantic formulas were collected and analysed thematically. This thesis is divided into 6 chapters. Chapter 2 is a literature review which provides theoretical background on formulaic language and pragmatics; it also discusses the role of formulaic language in developing L2 pragmatic competence and argues for the advantages of explicit instruction method in teaching formulaic expressions for effective development of pragmatic competence. Chapter 3 explains the methodology employed in this study including the description of the participants, the instruments and procedures of data collection and analysis.

The responses to 6 multiple-turn written discourse-completion tasks (WDCTs) were first collected from native speakers of English, and then from L2 participants in experimental and control group through multiple-turn oral discourse-completion role-plays (DCRPs). The responses were analyzed and coded for refusal and thanking formulaic expressions as well as for semantic formulas following pre-determined criteria. Then, both tokens and types of formulaic expressions were counted in both experimental and control groups and the results were compared. In addition, written and oral reflections about the role of the explicit instruction in acquisition and retention of formulaic expressions and semantic formulas were collected from experimental group participants at different stages of the study. The responses underwent thematic analysis in order to find the recurrent themes and patterns in students' reflections.

Chapter 4 presents and interprets the results of the data analysis, whereas the discussion of the findings is presented in Chapter 5. Finally, Chapter 6 concludes the entire study and suggests implications for language teaching, teacher training and language classroom research.

## Chapter 2

### Literature review

#### **2.1. Formulaic language**

##### **2.1.1. Background**

With the development of linguistic pragmatics and sociolinguistics it became quite obvious that it is not enough to know grammar and syntax rules of a given language to be able to communicate effectively. In order to understand the complex nature of a language it is also necessary to investigate so called phenomenon of ‘idiomaticity’ or ‘formulaicity’ which can be attributed to any language. Phraseology, defined by Cowie (1994, as cited in Granger & Paquot, 2008) as the study of the structure, meaning and use of word combinations, has been under scrutiny for already more than fifty years. Linguists started to acknowledge that “a vast proportion of verbal behaviour consists of recurrent patterns...including the full range of utterances that acquire conventional significance for an individual, group or whole culture” (Hymes, 1968, as cited in Pawley, 2007, p.7). Granger and Paquot (2008) identified two major approaches to studying phraseology: the Eastern European (Soviet Russian tradition) top-down approach and a more recent corpus-driven bottom-up approach, originally started by Sinclair (1987, as cited in Granger and Paquot, 2008). The Soviet tradition used to be one of the oldest and the most influential in the field of formulaic language study starting from the second half of the twentieth century. In this line of inquiry, formulaic sequences were studied and classified according to their syntactic and/or semantic characteristics. For example, Vinogradov (1947) and Amosova (1963) (as cited in Pawley, 2007) distinguished three major categories of speech formulae: pure idioms (*beat around the bush*); figurative

idioms (*steal someone's heart*); and restricted collocations (*pay a compliment, meet the demand*).

A British and North American tradition developed later, with interest in a wide range of word combinations, which do not all fit predefined linguistic categories. These include such sequences as frames, collocational frameworks, and recurrent phrases (Granger & Paquot, 2008). It then became popular to investigate the speech of high speed speech performance, such as that of livestock auctioneers, meteorological offices, various kinds of radio sports commentaries, and children's playground rhymes, as such speech types contain a lot of recurrent and idiomatic phrases (Pawley, 2007). That was the time when first phrasal and idiomatic dictionaries started to appear, such as Oxford Dictionary of Current Idiomatic English (ODCIE), the first dictionary produced by native speakers. However, as Pawley (2007) concluded, none of the phrasal dictionaries of English gave due attention to the special features of situation-bound expressions or 'speech-act expressions'. Therefore, many questions have arisen since then, for instance, how to identify if a word combination is formulaic or not, or how to categorise and define those that proved to possess a formulaic nature and, finally, what role formulaic language plays in second language teaching and acquisition.

### **2.1.2. Definitions and functions of formulaic sequences**

Formulaic language has been extensively investigated by applied linguists for already more than three decades. Weinert (2010) concluded that the most recent studies tend to use the label 'formulaic' as an umbrella term and refer to specific manifestations of the phenomenon such as "oral narratives, prayers, proverbs, social routines, non-compositional idioms, transparent idioms, collocations, lexical bundles, sentence stems, complex word forms, frequently used sequences of words and clauses, fixed sequences, sequences with open

slots which can be filled to varying levels of constraints” (p. 2). Naturally, multiple studies were devoted to defining and categorizing formulaic language as well as to describing possible issues in teaching and acquisition of this complex phenomenon by second language (L2) learners.

Pawley (2007) in his detailed review of history of the developments in the study of formulaic language, pointed out the main distinguishing features of spoken formulaic language, such as “distinctive intonation, distinctive rhythm, and pragmatic function separate from literal meaning” (p. 6). It is a well-known fact that even native speakers of English experience problems when asked to explain why they prefer different ways to convey the same message. In other words, native speakers tend to express ideas in one form instead of other potential alternatives (*I'll see you later* versus *I hope that we will meet at a more protracted date*). ‘Nativelikeness’ of speech is one of the most difficult aspects to master for L2 speakers. Pawley and Syder (1983) pointed out that few non-native speakers can fully acquire the native speaker repertoire of formulaic sequences and called this phenomenon one of ‘two puzzles of linguistic theory’. According to them, these puzzles are nativelike selection and nativelike fluency. They define nativelike selection as “the ability of native speakers to convey meanings by expressions that are not only grammatical but also natural and idiomatic” and nativelike fluency as “the ability of native speakers to produce fluent stretches of spontaneous connected discourse which exceeds human capacities for encoding novel speech in advance or while speaking” (p. 190). Wray and Perkins (2000) referred to formulaic language as to something that has “a multi-faceted nature”. Its nature is evident from “the variety of ways in which it has been characterised: according to its form, function, semantic, syntactic and lexical properties, and its relationship with language” (p. 3). According to Wray and Perkins (2000), ‘formulaicity’ is a phenomenon that encompasses various types of word strings which are stored and retrieved whole from memory. Overall,

they mentioned two major pragmatic functions that formulaic sequences can perform. They can serve as tools for social interaction and act as compensatory devices for memory limitations (e.g. processing short-cuts, time-buyers, manipulation of information). For example, such refusal formulaic expressions as *sorry, I'm not interested* or *it's not a good time to talk* can serve as a time-saver: the speaker achieves the communicative goal by producing only 5 words; additionally, such phrases send a clear message to the hearer meaning: "I don't need the product/service you are offering." One of the most commonly used definitions of a formulaic sequence is the one offered by Wray and Perkins (2000):

a sequence, continuous or discontinuous, of words or other meaning elements, which is, or operates to be, prefabricated; that is, stored and retrieved whole from memory at the time of use, rather than being subject to generation or analysis by the language grammar (p. 1).

In her latest book Wray (2008) made an attempt to "set the scene for the exploration of the boundaries of formulaic language" (p. 9). In her view, the most difficult task in identifying what is formulaic in a language and what is not. According to Wray, on the one end of continuum there 'true idioms' like *kick the bucket* or *raining cats and dogs*; on the other extreme end are collocational associations such as fully developed and highly complex (especially used in academic prose). There are also other types that are located between the two extremes. These expressions "seem to be entirely detached from normal meanings and/or do not reflect the normal rules of grammar, for example *by and large*" (p.10). Wray uses two main definitions of formulaic word combinations in her works: formulaic sequence and morpheme equivalent unit (MEU). The first one is defines as "a sequence, continuous or discontinuous, of words or other elements, which is, or appears to be, prefabricated: that is, stored and retrieved whole from memory at the same time of use" (Wray, 2002b, p. 9, as cited in Wray, 2008). The latter (MEU) has a somewhat specific definition: "a word or word

string, whether incomplete or including gaps for inserted variable items, that is processed like a morpheme” (Wray, 2008, p. 12).

Nattinger and De Carrico (1992) noted the difference between lexical phrases and collocations. While lexical phrases (e.g. *for example, how do you do*) can perform certain pragmatic functions, collocations do not perform any pragmatic function (e.g. *garage sale*). Apart from these two terms there are many others widely used definitions of formulaic language units such as ‘multiword units’, ‘prefabricated chunks’, ‘ready-made utterances’, ‘lexical bundles’, and so forth. Lewis (1997) referred to formulaic sequences as lexical items that are socially sanctioned independent units that convey fixed social or pragmatic meanings within a given community.

Pawley and Syder (1983) claimed that the problem of nativelike selection is to be solved in terms of a theory of speech acts and discourse context: “any grammatical sentence will seem unnatural in certain contexts but, conversely, contexts can be found where it will be heard as a natural thing to say” (p.198). An ability to use language in various contexts and register plays a significant role in language acquisition. Thus, in order for a speaker to become part of a target language community, learners need to incorporate as many formulaic sequences in their lexicon and be able to use them in the proper context and time.

## **2.2. Pragmatics**

### **2.2.1. Background and speech act theory**

Pragmatics in applied linguistics refers to the theory of communication, in other words, how language is used in communication. Leech (1983) divided pragmatics into two components: pragmalinguistics (a study of resources for conveying communicative acts through linguistic forms and functions) and sociopragmatics (a study of proper social

behaviour). Rose and Kasper (2001) defined pragmatics as the study of communicative action in its sociocultural context. They pointed out that communicative action includes not only using speech acts, but also engaging in different types of discourse and participating in speech events of varying length and complexity. Whereas semantics is concerned with the general meaning of a word in abstraction from particular situations and compositional semantics explores meanings beyond the word level (e.g. phrases and sentences), pragmatics deals with the meaning that is created by a speaker (user) of a language in a specific context. To illustrate this difference, Leech (1983) provided an example of two sentences that both have a word ‘mean’, however with different meanings: *What does X it mean?* versus *What did you mean by X?*). As Rose and Kasper (2001) fairly mentioned, “it is one thing to teach people what functions bits of language serve, but it is entirely different to teach people how to behave properly” (p. 3). That is why focus on grammar instruction was the main approach in teaching languages until recently. And whereas grammar deals with abstract entities such as sentences (in syntax) and propositions (in semantics), pragmatics deals with verbal acts or performances which take place in particular situations, in time (Leech, 1983).

Cutting (2005) determined that communication is a series of speech acts which are used systematically to accomplish particular purpose. L2 learners need to understand the purpose of communication, developing an awareness of what the purpose of communicative act is and how to achieve that purpose through linguistic forms. Interestingly, utterances that are being made during various communicative (or speech) acts take the form of conventional expressions, a subclass of situation-bound expressions (Pawley, 2007).

Speech act theory is one of the milestones in the theory of pragmatics. A British linguistic philosopher Austin was a developer of this theory (Austin, 1962). According to Austin, the action performed when an utterance is provided constitutes a basic unit of communication- a speech act. Every speech act can be analysed on three different levels:

- the words themselves (locution; locutionary act)
- what speakers do with their words: asserting, requesting, apologising etc.( illocution; illocutionary act)
- the result of the words (perlocution; perlocutionary act/effect—the effect on hearer)

Also, in order for communication to take place, there should be addressers (speakers or writers) and addressees (hearers or readers) involved. Austin also stressed the importance of communication consequences – the perlocutionary force. Austin's theory was further developed by Searle (1969). In an essay, Searle further developed Austin's taxonomy of speech acts and based his taxonomy on the principle that language is used to carry out certain actions. Apart from the consequential effect of an utterance on the interlocutor, Searle focused on the listener's reaction to the utterance and its interpretation. There can be hundreds of speech acts that may happen in real-life contexts, such as apology, thanking, refusal, request, compliment and many others. It is important to mention that every speech act is accompanied by certain attitude expressed by a speaker. According to Fraser (1983), four major attitudes underlying speech acts are “belief, desire, commitment and evaluation” (p. 36).

Blum-Kulka (1980) argued that one utterance can serve more than one communicative function and pointed out that very often there is no direct match between the literal meaning of the utterance and the speech act performed by it in context. For example, the sentence ‘I am hungry’ can have various meaning depending on speakers’ true intentions. Thus, it can be extremely hard for a L2 learner to develop an ability to draw inferences about the contextually appropriate use of the target language in context.

### **2.2.2. Pragmatic competence as an important component of communicative competence**

Before the actual term of communicative competence appeared, linguists simply used the term linguistic competence (the Chomskyan model) to define an ability to generate grammatically correct sentences. In the late seventies linguists started to make distinctions between linguistic and communicative competence. Nattinger and De Carrico (1992) emphasized that researchers, especially those concerned with language pedagogy, were troubled because of the lack of description of pragmatic knowledge with respect to competence and performance in the Chomskyan model. These led many applied linguists and teachers to turn to a description of ‘communicative competence’, “which includes the notion that the concept of linguistic competence must somehow be stretched to include the knowledge speakers have of how to use sentences to achieve meaning in context” (p. 3).

Finally, the term ‘communicative competence’ was introduced by a sociolinguist Dell Hymes (Brown, 2000). In his opinion, Chomsky’s notion of competence was too limited. Hymes referred to communicative competence as to the aspect of our competence that enables us to convey and interpret messages and to negotiate meanings within specific contexts (Brown, 2000). Later, Canale and Swain (1980) distinguished four components that make up the construct of communicative competence. The first two components (grammatical and discourse competence) reflect the use of linguistic system itself; the last two (sociolinguistic and strategic) define the functional aspects of communication.

Another model of communicative language abilities has been proposed by Bachman and Palmer (1996), as an elaboration of the Canale and Swain model, based on results in language testing research. The Bachman and Palmer model divides language knowledge into two main categories, both broken down into subcategories: organizational knowledge and

pragmatic knowledge. Organizational knowledge includes grammatical knowledge (vocabulary, syntax, phonology and graphology), and textual knowledge (cohesion, rhetorical and conversational organization, imaginative functions). Pragmatic knowledge, on the other hand, includes functional knowledge (ideational functions, manipulative functions, heuristic functions, cultural references and figures of speech) and sociolinguistic knowledge (dialects and language variety, registers, natural and idiomatic expressions). Niezgoda and Roever (2001) pointed out that “definitions of communicative competence tend to include at least two components: a code component, which describes a language user’s knowledge of syntax, morphology, semantics, lexis, and phonology; and a use component; which describes a language user’s ability to use language appropriately for a purpose within a given context” (p. 63).

Pragmatics is largely concerned with language use in various communicative contexts. Pragmatic competence belongs to the ‘use component’ and falls under the category of sociolinguistic knowledge (Bachman & Palmer, 1996). Interestingly enough, under sociolinguistic knowledge Bachman and Palmer put not only the ability to recognize dialects and language varieties and adjust your language to different registers, but also the knowledge of natural and idiomatic expressions. Therefore, the importance of introducing L2 learners to such expressions cannot be neglected in the language classroom. It has been recognized that developing pragmatic competence in second language (L2) is equally important with developing grammatical or textual competence since L2 learners need to understand the purpose of communication and how to achieve that purpose through linguistic forms.

### 2.2.3 Formulaic language in pragmatics

A subset of formulaic expressions whose occurrence and functions are directly tied to types of recurrent social situations deserves special attention since they are central to this study. Coulmas (1979) referred to such expressions as '*routine formulae*':

Hence, by definition, RFs are expressions whose occurrence is closely bound to specific social situations and which are, on the basis of an evaluation of such situations, highly predictable in a communicative course of events. Their meaning is pragmatically conditioned, and their usage is motivated by the relevant characteristics of such social situations (p. 240).

Such expressions have a highly formulaic nature and are commonly used by all members of a speech community. Other authors used such terms as *conversational routines* (House, 1996) or *formulaic patterns* (Yu, 2011) to underline the significant role that formulaic units play in every-day interaction. Overstreet & Yule (2011) viewed these formulae as constructions of English which conventionally associate special pragmatic forces or effects and possess specific morpho-syntactic structures.

The issues of complexity of identifying formulaic sequences in written or oral texts were largely addressed in the literature. Bardovi-Harlig (2012) in her recent review on formulaic language in pragmatics research noted that “the use of the term formula in contemporary empirical pragmatics refers to recurrent strings or expressions used for *specific pragmatic purposes*” (p. 207). She also noted that the main contribution of the concept of formula to the study of pragmatics is a strong sense of social contract and stressed the importance of knowledge of such expressions for a speaker’s pragmatic competence. This implies the importance of teaching situation-bound formulaic expressions or formulas to L2 learners in order to develop their socio-pragmatic competence in an effective way.

## **2.3. Formulaic language and pragmatics in L2 teaching**

### **2.3.1. The need for teaching formulaic language**

Research on formulaic language pedagogy has shown the advantages of having a wide repertoire of formulaic expressions in learners' lexicons. One of the major benefits of formulaic language is that it can help L2 learners to come across as proficient language speakers. A study by Boers, Eyckmans, Kappel, Stengers and Demecheleer (2006) has shown that those participants who were made aware of the standardized word combination in authentic reading and listening materials significantly improved their oral proficiency. Wood (2009a) explored how teaching formulaic language can improve fluent expression of L2 learners in narratives and concluded that developing a wide repertoire of formulaic sequences may help improve speech fluency. Another reason why fixed word combinations should be taught to L2 learners is the fact that the majority of such strings cannot be readily and easily paraphrased or translated into learners' first language (L1). Bahns and Eldaw (1993) in their study tested the productive knowledge of English collocations of advanced German EFL learners and concluded that it would be beneficial to pay close attention to those collocations that cannot directly paraphrased or translated.

Boers and Lindstromberg (2012) described two major types of explicit instruction strategies for teaching formulaic sequences to L2 learners: awareness-raising and attention directing and stimulating retention. The first type of instruction is premised on the notion that an enhanced awareness of formulaicity will foster independent learning because the learners will be more inclined to notice formulaic sequences in the samples of L2 they engage with outside the language classroom. In addition, it is hoped that learners will be more attentive to information about the syntagmatic behaviour of words they look up in a dictionary. Participants in the studies of the second type are explicitly prompted to try to remember

particular vocabulary items as they are focused on retention of formulaic sequences. The majority of the studies of this type prompted participants to store in their mental lexicon particular vocabulary items with the help of various techniques, such as text chunking, copying, collocation recognition, L1 comparative translations, and more. One example of a collocation recognition technique is used in a study by Laufer and Girsai (2008) where participants were prompted to read passages in English and answer True-or-False text-based questions. The learners, however, were neither allowed to use dictionaries, nor were they provided with marginal glosses for the unknown vocabulary. When the exercise was completed, a teacher discussed the correct answers with students. Another such study was by Webb and Kagimoto (2010), in which the researchers asked students to learn the words presented in bold together with their L1 translations and the sentences in which they appeared. The participants were instructed to try to understand the words in bold and the sentences in which they appear. Peters (2012) noted that without instructional intervention language learners may not notice new words when they first encounter them and stated that this is especially true for formulaic sequences since they are not always semantically transparent. This supports the need for focused or explicit instruction of such expressions to L2 learners.

### **2.3.2. The need for teaching pragmatics**

Target language pragmatic strategies are not always salient to L2 learners. Therefore, there is a need for raising pragmatic awareness in English as a second language (ESL) classroom context. Moreover, research shows that students struggle with mastering this aspect of communicative competence and becoming ‘pragmatically fluent’ both at the beginner and advanced levels (House, 1996). Bardovi-Harlig and Griffin (2005) compared

students' responses to nativelike production and analysed them according to such criteria as (1) production of different speech acts by NNS (non-native speakers), (2) use of different semantic formulas, (3) use of different content, and (4) use of different form. The results showed that L2 pragmatics seems to emerge in stages just as any other component of L2 communicative competence and can be enhanced by classroom activities which are aimed at raising pragmatic awareness.

L2 learners should definitely be supported in their effort to obtain knowledge about target language speech acts. Cohen (2005) offered strategies for enhancing language learners' strategies in developing speech act ability (e.g. thinking through or writing out what the appropriate thing to say would be for a certain speech act or determining similarities and differences between the two speech acts). He claimed that native speakers of a language within a given speech community share knowledge about the norms for the performance of speech acts. However, exposure to this 'shared knowledge' doesn't guarantee successful acquisition and learning of target language strategies, as they are not always salient to L2 learners. Yu (2011) compared compliment strategies used by Chinese L2 speakers to those used by speakers of American English. The differences between the Americans and Chinese speakers clearly showed that there are language specific differences due to syntax and lexicon: whereas native Chinese speakers often use adverbs like 'well' and 'very well' as positive semantic carriers in complimenting, these words appear to be employed only sparingly in American English. This proves the fact that there are significant differences in formulaic patterns used by speakers of languages other than English and allows concluding that they should be pointed out to L2 students during lessons.

Moreover, pragmatic errors can be at times perceived as more serious than grammatical errors. Research showed that there might be differences between target language production of grammar and pragmatic performance (Bardovi-Harlig & Dörnyei, 1998).

Pragmatic failures may lead to cross-cultural misunderstandings caused by pragmatic failures and improper usage of formulaic expressions in certain speech contexts (Decapua & Dunham, 2007). Rose and Kasper (2011) pointed out that a number of proposals for instruction in different aspects of pragmatic competence are now based on empirical studies of native speaker (NS) discourse, on both NS and interlanguage material and L1 and L2 data. They suggested three major questions in the learning of L2 pragmatics:

- what opportunities for developing L2 pragmatic ability are offered in language classrooms;
- whether pragmatic ability develops in a classroom setting without instruction in pragmatics;
- what effects various approaches to instruction have on pragmatic development.

## **2.4. Conclusion**

This literature review was aimed at showing obvious links between the study of formulaic language and L2 pragmatics. A sufficient amount of research has shown that these two aspects of language are crucial in L2 acquisition and teaching and should by no means be ignored in L2 classrooms. Despite the differences in terminology, there is clearly a consensus among scholars that formulaic constructions have a very valuable role because "they constitute standardized links between what people actually say and what sort of communicative functions their utterances serve to perform" (Coulmas, 1979, as cited in Overstreet et al, 2011). In addition, the research on pragmatics stated the importance of formulaic language sequences in the realization of speech acts. Language learners can certainly benefit from having a substantial repertoire of formulaic sequences in their active lexicon. First of all, the sequences are generally conventionalized means of expressing

particular meanings or language functions. Second, use of formulaic sequences has a processing benefit and can allow speakers to produce more fluent language by reducing the hesitations in speech. The third major benefit of using formulaic sequences is that they can provide chunks of accurate language. Native speakers do not seem to experience any difficulties in production of formulaic expressions in spontaneous speech; neither do they face problems with structuring pragmatically adequate semantic formulas in order to achieve their communicative goals effectively. However, formulaic expressions may be completely opaque to L2 learners. This supports the need for explicit instruction of formulaic language for developing L2 pragmatic competence. At the same time, many aspects of L2 pragmatics are not acquired without the explicit instruction; otherwise they are learned more slowly. There is a strong indication that instructional intervention may be facilitative to, or even necessary for, the acquisition of L2 pragmatic ability (Kasper & Rose, 2011).

## Chapter 3

### Methodology

#### **3.1. Overview and procedures**

This study investigated whether and how the explicit instruction of refusal and thanking formulaic expressions can foster acquisition and retention of these expressions and help L2 learners in developing their pragmatic competence and overcoming challenges they face while performing these speech acts. The study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. Can the explicit instruction of refusal and thanking formulaic expressions and semantic formulas:
  - a) foster their acquisition and retention by second language (L2) learners;
  - b) develop L2 pragmatic competence?
2. What are the challenges L2 learners may face while performing refusal and thanking speech acts?
3. Does the explicit instruction help L2 learners to overcome those challenges? If yes, in what ways?

The present chapter provides a detailed description of the multiple-stage methodological process designed to better address the guiding research questions. The research design of the present study took a form of a quasi-experiment with some elements of instructional intervention. The data was collected during two main stages over a period of four months (October 2014- January 2015). There were 8 participants who were split into experimental and control groups (4 participants per group). The study is a collective case

study (Dorneyi, 2007) where each participant from the experimental group was treated as a case under investigation.

There were two main sources of data collection: native speakers and students enrolled in Language Instructions for Newcomers to Canada program (LINC). Firstly, in order to collect authentic material for the explicit instruction course, I compiled a corpus of native speaker responses to 6 multiple-turn written discourse completion tasks (WDCTs). The collected data were analysed and marked for refusal and thanking formulaic expressions as well as for semantic formulas following the pre-determined selection criteria.<sup>1</sup> Secondly, the researcher audio-recorded oral responses from ESL students to 6 multiple-turn oral discourse completion role-plays (DCRPs) based on the same scenarios as in the case with native speakers during pre-, post- and delayed post-tests. L2 responses were analyzed as well, and refusal and thanking formulaic expressions as well as semantic formulas were elicited following the same criteria applied to the native speaker group.

Additionally, the researcher together with two independent native English speaker collaborators reviewed the experimental group participants' performance during each test to avoid researcher bias in favour of the experimental group participants and to ensure consistency in judgement and the validity of the drawn conclusions. The collaborators were given the responses of all 4 participants to each of the 6 scenarios and asked to reflect on the nature of the students' performance in the pre-, post- and delayed post-tests. In particular, they were asked to comment on any differences between the tests. However, I did not point out any specific aspects of focus (formulaic expressions and semantic formulas). It is worth mentioning that the native speaker 'reviewers' were not provided with any explanations regarding the purpose of any of the 3 tests, nor regarding the explicit instruction course which

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<sup>1</sup> The definitions of the terms as well as selection criteria are given later in this chapter.

followed the pre-test. The feedback received from the native speaker collaborators is discussed further in Chapter 4.

The main objective of the pre-test was to collect the responses from both groups *before* the instructional intervention, whereas the purpose of the post and the delayed post-tests was to compare the performance of the control group with that of the experimental group *after* the latter had received explicit instruction treatment. After the pre-test, the experimental group participants were exposed to 3 weeks of explicit instruction treatment. For that purpose, I designed and taught the course which was comprised of 9 hours of pedagogical intervention in total. In addition, the written and oral reflections from experimental group participants were collected at different stages of the study. The responses were analysed employing a thematic analysis method in order to find the recurrent themes and patterns in reflections provided by the students.

### **3.2. Native speakers**

The main reason for creating a corpus of native speaker responses was to collect language samples that might contain examples of semantic formulas and refusal and thanking formulaic expressions that possess pragmatic functions (e.g. *I really appreciate it* is used to emphasize gratitude). These data were later used as a source for developing classroom activities for the explicit instruction course. The respondents were twenty native speakers of English (4 males and 16 females) who volunteered to participate in the study. Their age ranged between 22 and 65 years old. They were 12 graduate students from Carleton University, 1 Carleton University graduate administrator, 1 English for Academic Purposes (EAP) instructor from Carleton University, and 6 LINC teachers from Ottawa Community Immigrant Services Organization (OCISO).

The respondents were offered 6 different scenarios (three per each speech act) based on situations that learners may encounter on a daily basis (the detailed description of these scenarios is given later in this chapter). The data were elicited through a set of discourse completion tasks that were designed to fit each scenario. According to Kasper and Dahl (1991), a Discourse Completion Task (DCT) is a written questionnaire that includes a number of brief situational descriptions, followed by a short dialogue with an empty slot for the speech act under study. A decision to use a written version of the multiple-turn DCT was made in order to elicit the responses in the least time-consuming way. The booklets that contained multiple-turn written DCTs were given out to the native speaker group, and they were allowed approximately a week to complete the tasks (see Appendix A).

### **3.3. L2 participants**

ESL students of different first languages (L1), gender, cultural and educational backgrounds from intermediate level classes and two different Ottawa LINC schools were invited to participate in this research project. These participants were selected by the researcher following a homogeneous sampling strategy. The participants of this study formed a homogeneous group in terms of sharing certain similar characteristics. Firstly, they all were L2 learners of English; secondly, all of them had recently immigrated to Canada and were placed in the same LINC class according to their language proficiency level (intermediate). According to Dorneyi (2007), this type of strategy allows to “conduct an in- depth analysis to identify common patterns in a group with similar characteristics” (p. 127).

Overall, 8 students volunteered to take part in the study. Then, the students were split into two groups: experimental and control, with 4 participants per group. The data collection at this stage included 5 steps described as follows:

Step 1. Pre-test. The pre-test was aimed at checking how well L2 participants were able to spontaneously express themselves in different social situations using refusal and thanking formulaic expressions and whether their speaking repertoire included any semantic pragmatic formulas, which may be a part of a speech act (Bardovi-Harlig, 2012). The participants from both groups were provided with the same scenarios as the native speakers had been, and asked to engage in 6 multiple-turn oral discourse completion role-plays (DCRPs) (Ishihara & Cohen, 2010) together with the researcher. All role-plays were audio-recorded, transcribed and marked for refusal and thanking formulaic expressions, and semantic formulas according to the criteria pre-determined by the researcher.

Step 2. Explicit instruction. Participants from the experimental group only were exposed to various activities aimed at drawing learner's attention to the nature, possible meanings and functions of refusal and formulaic expressions as well as semantic formulas used by native speakers while performing speech acts of refusal and thanking. Overall, students were exposed to 9 hours of pedagogical treatment over the course of three weeks (1 hour 30 minutes per session). The detailed examples of activities used during the explicit instruction sessions are presented later in Appendices L and M.

Step 3. Post- test. The aim of this step was to check how many refusal and thanking formulaic expressions as well as speech act semantic formulas were appropriately used by students to ensure the comparability of the two groups. Shortly after the explicit instruction session, the post- tests were administrated to both experimental and control groups, again in the form of 6 multiple-turn oral discourse completion role-plays. This time, however, the multiple turn oral DCRPs were based on slightly changed scenarios in order to check their ability to spontaneously engage in a conversation in various contexts (Appendix I). L2 responses were audio-recorded, transcribed and marked for refusal and thanking formulaic expressions and semantic formulas according to the pre-determined criteria.

Step 4. Delayed post- test. The aim of this step was to check how many refusal and thanking formulas and semantic pragmatic formulas were retained and successfully used by the participants, and compare results obtained from the experimental group with those of a control group. During the delayed post-test (a month after the post-test) both groups were asked to take the test again in the form of 6 multiple-turn oral discourse completion role-plays (DCRPs), again with somewhat different scenarios (Appendix J). Again, L2 responses were audio-recorded, transcribed and coded for refusal and thanking formulaic expressions and semantic formulas. The criteria which were used to identify formulaic expressions and semantic formulas are discussed later in this chapter.

Step 5. Students' written and oral reflections. The written reflections were collected from experimental group participants during the explicit instruction course, whereas the oral reflections were collected immediately after post-tests and delayed post-tests. At this stage the researcher asked L2 learners to reflect on their learning experience during and after the course to better understand the processes underlying L2 pragmatic development as well as L2 acquisition of refusal and thanking formulaic expressions. The collected data were coded for recurrent themes using thematic analysis method.

### **3.4. Participants**

#### **3.4.1. Experimental group.**

The participants in the experimental group were at an intermediate level of spoken English proficiency. Since this research was focused only on spoken L2 ability, students' proficiency in other skills (reading, listening and writing) was not taken into account. During the entire time of the explicit instruction sessions they were enrolled in LINC program (level 5), meaning that they continued to receive the same amount of instruction over the entire course of pedagogical intervention. These language services were provided by the Language

Training Centre of Ottawa (LTCO), a privately run language school in the city centre of Ottawa. I had established connections with many LINC teachers across Ottawa during my CTESL practicum, which helped me in searching for ESL students for this study. It is worth mentioning that all four participants volunteered to take part in the research project with a great deal of motivation and were also described by their teacher as being the top students of their class. The participants, two males and two females, came from different cultural and L1 backgrounds: two African language speakers who were educated in French and identified French as their L1; one Arabic speaker; and one Mandarin Chinese speaker. I refer to the four students by their assigned pseudonyms: Mustafa, Julia, Marcus, and Amandine.

Mustafa (L1 Arabic) was a 27-year-old male from Lebanon where he received an associate's degree in nursing. He moved to Canada to reunite with his wife. After graduating from LINC, Mustafa was planning to start the so-called 'bridging' program at Algonquin College in order to improve his English for professional purposes and later seek employment in his field. He studied English at secondary school in Lebanon.

Julia (L1 Mandarin Chinese) was a 35-year-old female from China. She immigrated to Canada together with her son seeking better opportunities. While her son is going to start his undergraduate studies at University of Ottawa, Julia is planning to seek a job in her field and possibly pursue a graduate degree at one of the Canadian Universities. Julia holds a college diploma in International Trade and previously studied English in China.

Marcus (L1 French) was a 33-year-old male from Cameron. He received his Master's degree in Supply Chain Management in France, where he worked for the past several years before moving to Canada. In France, Marcus worked for the French National Railway Company (SNCF) and was the head of one of the departments. During our interactions he

used to emphasize that he had worked on various projects, had won many awards in his profession. Marcus had never studied English before coming to Canada.

Amandine (L1 French) was a 28-year-old female from Abidjan, Ivory Coast. She obtained her Master's degree in Marketing in Abidjan. At the time of the instruction sessions Amandine was looking for a job and planning to start the Master of Business Administration (MBA) program once her English proficiency improves. She studied English at university in her home country.

### **3.4.2. Control group.**

As opposed to the students from the experimental group, the control group participants were not given any expectations in terms of final results. They needed, however, to have the same level of language proficiency to make sure that the two groups were indeed equal at the start. According to Bryman and Teevan (2005) if both control and treatment groups are equal, “the researcher can feel confident that any difference in student performance found between the two groups *after* the manipulation is teacher expectation” (p. 29, italics in the original). They also noted that the presence of a control group gives the study its internal validity. This concept was also referred to as trustworthiness in qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, ac cited in Bryman & Teevan, 2005).

The control group also comprised of four participants who came from different cultural and L1 backgrounds: one African language speaker who was educated in French and therefore identified French as her L1, one Korean speaker, one speaker of Bhutanese language and one Burmese language speaker. All four of them had intermediate oral proficiency in English and were enrolled in LINC (level 5) class at Ottawa Community

Immigrant Services Organization (OCISO) South. Further in the work, I refer to the four students by their assigned pseudonyms: Anand, Tisha, Brianna, and Kim.

Anand (L1 Bhutanese) was a 31-year-old male from Bhutan. He came to Canada as a convention refugee to escape the political and religious persecution in his home country. Before coming to Canada, Anand had spent 10 months in a refugee camp in Nepal. He had never studied English before he started to attend a LINC school in Ottawa.

Tisha (L1 French) was a 29-year-old female from Senegal. She moved to Canada to find better employment opportunities and reunite with her older brother. Before coming to Canada, Tisha lived and worked in France. She had never studied English before moving to Ottawa.

Brianna (L1 Burmese) was a 32-year-old female from Burma. She came to Canada as a convention refugee to escape the political and religious persecution in her home country. Brianna had never studied English before coming to Canada.

Kim (L1 Korean) was a 28-year-old female from South Korea. She moved to Canada to seek better employment opportunities. Before immigrating to Canada, Kim had studied English for 2 years at high school in her home country.

### **3.5. Data collection and analysis**

#### **3.5.1. Creating a Native Speaker corpus.**

Since a large part of my empirical study was devoted to the explicit instruction of spoken language, one of my main tasks was to collect samples of language that could best represent the nature of conversational English. These materials were planned to be used for the explicit instruction sessions over the course of three weeks. The responses which later formed a corpus were collected from the native speakers of English in order to have data that

can best represent ‘nativelike selection’ (Pawley & Syder, 1983). Due to the fact that the research was conducted in the English-speaking country, the researcher had ample opportunities to use the responses from native speakers as the source for collecting authentic data.

The native speaker participants completed a series of the multiple-turn written discourse completion tasks (WDCTs) (Ishihara & Cohen, 2010). Multiple-turn WDCT was chosen as the most feasible tool to elicit responses from the native speakers’ group. The discourse completion task (DCT) continues to be one of the most commonly used empirical data gathering methods in L2 pragmatics, along with field notes and recordings of natural conversations. Kasper and Dahl (1991) (as cited in Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 1993) reviewed 35 studies of speech act production and found out that DCTs were used in 54% of the studies and only 6% used observation of natural data exclusively. Yuan (2001) in the large-scale investigation on data collecting methods in pragmatics research concluded that “the choice of a data gathering method for a particular study should be made based on the research questions and objectives of the researcher” (p. 271).

The next step was to create scenarios that could best reflect day-to-day experiences of L2 learners. Since the participants of my study were LINC students, it was necessary to consult LINC curricular documents prior to selecting topics of the role-play activities. This had to be done in order to make sure that the role-play activities would target the most essential oral communication skills that LINC students are expected to develop. LINC program does not have an official curriculum; however LINC teachers heavily rely on Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB). A working document of CLB was first published in 1996 by Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) in order to create a nationally accepted ‘common language’ to describe the progression of immigrant language learning in Canada and to have a national assessment standard (similar to Common European Framework of

Reference). Later, this document underwent several revisions and arrived in its final version in 2012. It has to be noted, however, that CLB is a set of descriptive statements about successive levels on the continuum of language ability, but not a curriculum with intended outcomes and guidelines that prompt teachers how to reach those outcomes.

In addition to CLB (2000, 2012), there are several documents that contain topics and lesson strategies for LINC teachers. One of such documents is LINC 5-7 Curriculum Guidelines (2007) which offers various units based on CLB. According to it, the main oral communication skills that LINC students have to develop are social interaction skills, workplace and customer service relations skills, ability to resolve conflicts, and, finally, ability to engage in various kinds of formal and informal meetings. The speech acts of refusal and thanking were chosen taking those skills into account. These topics offered in LINC 5-7 Curriculum Guidelines (2007) served as a starting point for creating scenarios for multiple-choice WDCTs. The most popular topics for oral expression included *going out with a friend*, *interacting with sales (service) people*, *engaging in conversations with colleagues*, and *interacting with management*. Eventually, the native speakers were exposed to 6 following multiple-turn WDCTs: *refusing friend's invitation*, *rejecting sales offer*, *refusing manager's request*, *responding to compliment*, *thanking colleague for a favour*, *thanking your manager*. The two examples of the multiple-turn WDCTs, which were offered to twenty native speakers and aimed at eliciting their responses for the speech acts of refusal and thanking, are presented in Figure 1 and Figure 2 respectively. The entire set of 6 multiple-turn WDCTs is given in Appendix A.

**Refusing friend's invitation**

One of your friends is organizing a party at his/her house. You knew about the party two weeks prior and confirmed your attendance. However, your child suddenly got sick and you will have to take him/her to the hospital on that very day. How would you refuse his invitation in a polite way? In the dialogue below please fill in the blanks and write your possible replies (what would you say in this situation). Make sure you have read the whole dialogue before you fill in the blanks.

Your friend: Hello! How are you doing? I hope you did not forget about the party. It is going to be this Wednesday at 7 pm at my place, just a reminder. Hope to see you there!

You: \_\_\_\_\_

Your friend: Oh. That's too bad. I hope your child will get better soon! We will miss you at the party.

You: \_\_\_\_\_

Your friend: Yes, for sure. There is always next time. Don't worry about it.

Figure 1. An example of a multiple-turn written discourse completion task for the speech act of refusal.

**Thanking for a favour**

One of your co-workers has taken your shift on the day when you couldn't work. How would you thank him/her for doing this favour? In the dialogue below please fill in the blanks and write your possible replies (what would you say in this situation). Make sure you have read the whole dialogue before you fill in the blanks.

You: \_\_\_\_\_

Your friend: No problem at all. I am happy I was able to help!

You: \_\_\_\_\_

Your friend: No sweat. You helped last month so I am returning the favour now.

*Figure 2.* An example of a multiple-turn written discourse completion task for the speech act of thanking.

Some examples of the refusal and thanking formulaic expressions received from the native speakers in response to multiple-turn WDCT are presented in Table 1. For the entire Native Speaker (NS) corpus of collected responses see Appendix B.

Table 1

*Responses provided by native speakers*

| Respondent | Speech acts   |  |
|------------|---|--|
|            | <u>Refusal</u>  | <u>Thanking</u>  |
| NS 1       | I'm sorry I won't be able to make it. Hopefully, we can get together soon!  | Oh, thank you for noticing!  |
| NS 2       | I'm so sorry, I'm afraid I won't be able to make it this time. I promise I will make it next time!  | Oh, thank you. Do you think it looks okay?   |
| NS 3       | Although that sounds interesting, I think I will stick with my current plan.  | Thanks a lot for filling in for me today. I really owe you one.  |
| NS 4       | I am sorry, but I am not interested in the plan.  | Thanks so much for taking my shift. I hope that I can return the favour soon. It meant a lot to me. Thanks again.        |
| NS 5       | I would love to stay and help, but unfortunately I have a doctor's appointment after work. You know that I would always help out if I could, but this appointment has been scheduled for months. Thank you much for your understanding. | Thank you! That is good news. I have worked hard. I will do my best to fulfil the job requirements. Thank you very much. |

*Note.* NS stands for 'native speaker'. The responses presented in this table were elicited from the following multiple-turn written DCTs: 'refusing friend's invitation', 'rejecting sales offer', 'refusing manager's request', 'responding to compliment', 'thanking colleague for a favour', 'thanking your manager'.

After the multiple-turn WDCTs were completed by the native speakers and all the data were collected, I was able to start analyzing the elicited responses. The following section describes the process of determining criteria for identifying refusal and thanking formulaic expressions as well as semantic formulas in Native Speaker (NS) corpus.

### **3.5.2. Criteria for identifying refusal and thanking formulaic expressions and semantic formulas in the speech acts of refusal and thanking.**

#### ***3.5.2.1. Defining and identifying refusal and thanking formulaic expressions.***

The term *formula* is mainly used as an umbrella term in pragmatics and can result in a terminology overlap (Bardovi-Harlig, 2006). Since my study focused the speech acts of refusal and thanking, it was decided to use the term *refusal formulaic expression* when referring to the formulaic sequences that were produced by the native speakers and by the L2 learners during the speech act of refusal; similarly, the term '*thanking formulaic expression*' was chosen to refer to the formulaic sequences that were produced by the native speakers and by the L2 learners during the speech act of thanking. The following criteria were applied to identifying refusal and thanking formulas:

- recurrent formulaic expressions used for specific pragmatic purposes (e.g. *I won't be able to make it; thanks so much for + doing something*) (Bardovi-Harlig, 2012);
- greater length or complexity (e.g. *let me know if I can ever do anything for you*);
- semantic irregularity close to idioms or metaphors (e.g. *that's a real vote of confidence*) (Wray & Perkins, 2000);
- formulaic expressions that frequently occurred in a speech act but did not explicitly perform refusal or thanking function (e.g. *prior commitment, not a good time*).

However, it is worth noting that sometimes a combination of the above mentioned criteria was considered essential to be marked as refusal or thanking formulaic expression. Additionally, the holistic intuitive approach and researcher's own judgement were at times applied in identifying formulaic expressions used by the native speakers.

### **3.5.2.2. Defining and identifying semantic formulas.**

Bardovi-Harlig (2012) noted that the term 'formula' may be also used as a shortened form of *semantic formula* which usually describes a component of a certain speech acts. Semantic formulas in one speech act of thanking may include such components as expressing surprise or delight, expressing affection or emphasizing the depth of gratitude. Cohen (2005) stated that such semantic formulas tend to be used in a given speech act and add the pragmatic value to the utterance if used appropriately. Further in the thesis I use the term *semantic formula* when referring to different components of refusal and thanking speech acts.

Semantic formulas in the refusal speech acts were elicited based on a taxonomy offered by Beebe, Takahashi, and Uliss-Weltz (1990), whereas semantic formulas in the thanking speech acts were elicited partially based on combination of taxonomies offered by Eisenstein and Bodman, (1986) and by Schauer and Adolphs (2006). Beebe et al. (1990) mentioned the following semantic formulas that may underlie the refusal speech acts:

- statement of negative ability (*I can't*)
- statement of regret (*I'm sorry*)
- wish (*I wish I could help you*)
- excuse, reason, explanation (*I have to go to the hospital*)
- set condition for future acceptance; promise of future acceptance (*I'll do it next time*)
- statement of principle (*I never do business with friends*)

- attempt to dissuade interlocutor
- self-defense (*I'm trying my best...but*).

Adjuncts to refusals (usually come in the beginning) were also identified as components of a refusal speech act. These are:

- statement of positive opinion/feeling or agreement (*I'd love to... but*)
- statement of empathy (*I realize you are in a difficult situation, but...*)
- pause fillers (*uhhm, well, hmm*)

Eisenstein and Bodman (1986) identified such semantic formulas that usually underlie speech acts of thanking:

- thanking+ complementing
- thanking + expressing affection
- thanking + reassuring the listener
- thanking + promising to repay
- thanking+ expressing surprise and delight
- thanking+ exaggerating to emphasize the depth of the gratitude

In turn, Schauer and Adolphs (2006) proposed several additional semantic formulas that may occur in thanking speech acts. These are:

- thanking+ confirming interlocutor's commitment
- thanking + stating intent to reciprocate (to do or give something, because something similar was done or given to you)

Later in the analysis, elicited utterances in both refusal and thanking speech acts (from the L2 learners as well as from the native speakers) were divided into components, and each

component was assigned a corresponding semantic formula following the above mentioned taxonomy. Figure 3 below illustrates some examples of this procedure:

| <b>Statement of regret</b>   | <b>Statement of negative ability</b>  | <b>Promise of future acceptance</b>  |
|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I'm sorry</li> <li>• Unfortunately I can't</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I won't be able to make it</li> <li>• I am not interested</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hopefully we can get together soon</li> </ul> |

Figure 3. Identifying semantic formulas in the refusal and thanking speech acts.

The following section presents the final list of selected refusal and thanking formulaic expressions and semantic formulas identified in the Native Speaker corpus.

### **3.5.3. The list of selected formulaic expressions and semantic formulas.**

As noted previously, 20 native speakers of English were asked to complete 6 multiple-turn WDCTs based on such scenarios: *refusing friend's invitation, rejecting sales offer, refusing manager's request, responding to compliment, thanking colleague for a favour, thanking your manager*. The speech act of refusal corresponded to *refusing friend's invitation, rejecting sales offer, refusing manager's request* scenarios, whereas the speech act of thanking corresponded to *responding to compliment, thanking colleague for a favour, thanking your manager* scenarios. The formulaic expressions were extracted from the Native Speaker corpus across 6 scenarios and assigned criteria that could best describe their formulaic nature according to the identification criteria mentioned previously. Appendix C presents the results of the selection and contains refusal formulaic expressions used by the native speakers in the speech act of refusal. Appendix D, in turn, presents thanking formulaic expressions used by the native speakers in the speech act of thanking.

Secondly, the native speaker responses were analysed in terms of the most common semantic formulas that occurred in both speech acts. Appendix E presents the most recurrent semantic formulas identified in the Native Speaker corpus in the speech act of refusal along with their verbal equivalents. Appendix F, in turn, contains the most recurrent semantic formulas that the native speakers used in the speech act of thanking along with their verbal equivalents. The following section describes the stages of pedagogical intervention that was undertaken in order to investigate the role of explicit instruction of formulaic expressions and semantic formulas in fostering L2 acquisition of these language phenomena and developing L2 pragmatic competence. The purpose of this intervention was to collect data that can be further used while addressing the first guiding research question of this study, in particular, *Can the explicit instruction of refusal and thanking formulaic expressions and semantic formulas:*

- a) foster their acquisition and retention by second language (L2) learners;*
- b) develop L2 pragmatic competence?*

### **3.6. Stages of pedagogical intervention**

#### **3.6.1. Pre-tests.**

Prior to starting the explicit teaching sessions, I had to measure pragmatic ability (competence) of L2 participants as well as to check whether their linguistic repertoire contained adequate amount of typical formulaic sequences compared to those used by the native speakers in the speech acts of refusal and thanking. I will now turn to describing all the steps that were undertaken in order to address the abovementioned research question.

Although there are plenty of LINC schools in Ottawa, finding L2 participants was not an easy endeavour. The original plan was to work with one LINC class from the same school and to divide those students into experimental and treatment groups with approximately 5 people per group. However, when I first came to LTCO, I was able to recruit only 6 students. This number had later reduced and I was left with only 4 students in the end as 2 students had left the school. It is a well-known fact that the attendance rate in LINC schools is very low since the main priority of these students is to find a job; so they tend to drop classes once they are able to work. The decision was made to make the students from LTCO the experimental group, which meant that the control group students were to be found elsewhere. Thanks to the fact that I had established good relations with several LINC teachers during the course of my graduate studies, I was able to use those connections in conducting her study. The participants for the control group were finally recruited from another LINC school, OCISO South, and had also formed a group of 4 students. Special attention in this work has to be paid to the teachers from both LTCO and OCISO. I refer to them by their assigned pseudonyms: John (LTCO) and Tracey (OSICO). They were both experienced language teachers with more than 10 years of teaching experience and assisted me at all stages of this study.

The participants from neither the experimental nor control group were given any previous instructions or explanations about the purpose of the (quasi-) experiment or how they might benefit from participating in the study. They were only informed that for the pre-test they would need to role-play various similar to real-life situations that focus on speech acts of refusal and thanking. The students were also told that there would be a post-test in about three weeks after the pre-test, and a delayed post-test a month after the post-test. In addition, the experimental group was warned that they were going to be taught by the researcher during three weeks (3 hours per week) before they take the post-test. The pre-tests with both experimental and control groups were conducted in the second week of November,

2014. At this stage, the students from both groups were given the same scenarios as the ones given to the native speakers (see Figure 1 and Figure 2 for the examples of multiple-turn written DCTs) in the form of 6 multiple-turn oral discourse completion role-plays (DCRPs) (Ishihara & Cohen, 2010). The students were asked to role play the scenarios with the researcher and informed that their responses would be audio-recorded. The themes of the multiple-turn oral DCRPs for the pre-tests included *refusing friend's invitation, rejecting sales offer, refusing manager's request, responding to compliment, thanking colleague for a favour, thanking your manager*. Tables 2 and 3 below illustrate some of the responses received from L2 participants from experimental and control groups during the pre-test. The full transcripts of the responses collected from the experimental and control groups during the pre-test stage are presented in Appendices G and H respectively.

Table 2

*Experimental group responses (pre-test)*

| L2 respondent | Speech acts   |   |
|---------------|---|---|
|               | <u>Refusal</u>  | <u>Thanking</u>   |
| Mustafa       | Sorry about that. I just want to tell you that I will decline your invitation because something happened and I can't be there. Thank you, I wish but I... I wish but I can't be with you at this party, but sorry about that. | Good, thank you. My wife don't think so.  |
| Julia         | Oh, I see... But [pause] my cell phone, the... the... I don't know how to say, now... the... the... is okay I think. So I don't like to adjust that... Okay, thanks.  | Okay, I very appreciate your help. Thank you very much. Okay, have a drink, please? After work? |
| Marcus        | Yes, of course. Okay, yes madam, I understand what you are saying, but right now  | Thank you very much, you don't know what you are doing, it's very great. Thank                  |

|          |   |   |
|----------|---|---|
|          | I have new plan with Rogers, so I can't change the plan, but I understand that your plan is very interesting [pause], so I very understand, but I can't change my plan because Rogers give me a good plan.  | you!  |
| Amandine | <p>Yes, sir, I would like, but you know, I have some appointment in the hospital with my family doctor. So I can't stay, but I am sorry for that. Yes, I would like, but you know, family doctor is very important for me, so...</p> <p>Okay, thanks.</p> | <p>My friend... my colleague, I would like just to thank for you [pause] because you did [pause] you work for me last time because I wasn't able to do that, I will just like to say thank you for you. Okay, thanks!</p> |

*Note.* The responses presented in this table were elicited from the following multiple-turn oral DCRPs: ‘refusing friend’s invitation’, ‘rejecting sales offer’, ‘refusing manager’s request’, ‘responding to compliment’, ‘thanking colleague for a favour’, ‘thanking your manager’.

Table 3

*Control group responses (pre-test)*

| L2 respondent | Speech acts  |   |
|---------------|--|---|
|               | <u>Refusal</u>   | <u>Thanking</u>   |
| Anand         | Oh, thank you for telling me, sorry for that because I want to come at your party... But I have a problem now, my child is sick so I need to take to hospital my child, so sorry about that. Thank you, I will do my best. | Oh thank you for doing my work, It's really... thank you for it.  |
| Tisha         | Wow, it is very interesting, so but I have a gift with my brother and I don't need to add anything to my... yeah...  | Oh, thank you Alisa because when I was missed you do all my job and it's very kind because you are not mandatory to do that and I think I am gonna have the opportunity to give the same thing for you. |
| Brianna       | Oh sorry, today I can't, because I waiting for my... I have appointment, I waiting   | <p>Thank you, very much!</p> <p>Thank you, thank you so much! Thank you.</p>  |

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|     |   |
|-----|---|
|     | for one month for appointment, and today, three o'clock I have appointment, this way, I need to go. I think... I waiting for long time, this way I need to talk, I need to see for doctor. Ok, thank you. |
| Kim | Oh hi, I am sorry, my son is sick so I will not go to your party, I am sorry. I have to go to the hospital, I am so sorry, I will call you after I go to hospital.  |

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*Note.* The responses presented in this table were elicited from the following multiple-turn oral DCRPs: ‘refusing friend’s invitation’, ‘rejecting sales offer’, ‘refusing manager’s request’, ‘responding to compliment’, ‘thanking colleague for a favour’, ‘thanking your manager’.

If we compare the responses received from the native speakers with the responses elicited from L2 participants, we will see many differences in terms of lengths and uses of formulaic expressions, semantic pragmatic formulas and other aspects. In what follows, I describe the 9-hour explicit instruction course that was delivered to the experimental group participants in the period of 3 weeks.

### 3.6.2. Explicit instruction course.

The terms ‘explicit’ and ‘implicit’ teaching (instruction) are being widely used in the growing body of research literature on teaching formulaic language as well as on instructed L2 pragmatics. *The Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics* (2002) defines ‘explicit teaching’ is an approach in which information about a language is given to the learners directly by the teacher or textbook, whereas ‘implicit teaching’ is defined as non-conscious of learning through which the students are not aware of what is being taught (Richards & Schmidt, 2002). These two methods, however, have been extensively debated in the literature on L2 pedagogics due to inconsistencies in the

definitions (Takahashi, 2010a). Taguchi (2015) in her recent review article on L2 pragmatics teaching argued that the availability of metapragmatic information can be considered a key factor in distinguishing between the two methods.

My deliberate choice of explicit teaching method over implicit one was based on persuasive evidence collected in the classroom-based research. Studies like those of House (1996), Ghobadi and Fahim (2009), Fordyce (2014), Boers, Eyckmans, Kappel, Stengers, and Demecheleer (2006), Wood (2009a) have provided strong support for explicit instruction of L2 pragmatics and formulaic language. In developing the activities for the explicit instruction sessions with the experimental group I drew on several fundamental approaches to focused instruction of formulaic language reviewed in Boers and Lindstromberg (2012). In terms of developing activities for teaching pragmatic strategies to L2 learners, I built on strategies for the initial learning of speech acts aimed at developing L2 pragmatic competence proposed by Cohen (2005). As was mentioned earlier, the course was delivered in 3-weeks period and consisted of 6 sessions (2 sessions per week). Detailed lesson plans were created for each session: the first session focused mainly on introducing the learners to the concepts of formulaic language and pragmatics, whereas the rest of the sessions were devoted to drawing their attention to the nature of refusal and thanking formulaic expressions and semantic formulas that underlie refusal and thanking speech acts. Learners were also encouraged to complete various activities designed by the researcher in order to stimulate acquisition and retention of refusal and thanking formulaic expressions and in such a way improve their pragmatic competence. An example of one lesson plan is given in Appendix K. Overall, the experimental group participants received 9 hours of explicit instruction.

The following paragraphs define and elaborate the two main objectives of the explicit instruction course: teaching formulaic language and developing pragmatic competence.

### **3.6.2.1. Teaching formulaic language.**

Boers and Lindstromberg (2012) listed three main approaches to focused or explicit instruction of formulaic sequences in L2 classroom. These include:

1. Drawing learners' attention to formulaic sequences as they are encountered
2. Stimulating lookups in dictionaries and the use of corpus tools
3. Helping learners commit particular formulaic sequences to memory (p. 83).

Since the scope of my study did not allow me to implement the second approach into practice, I decided to use the first (attention-drawing) and the third (retention in memory) approaches while developing the activities aimed at memorizing formulaic language expressions for the experimental group participants. First and foremost, L2 students' attention had to be drawn to formulaic sequences as well as to their specific nature, possible functions and meanings. Thus, during the first two sessions they were given some examples of refusal and thanking responses from the native speaker corpus that contained examples of refusal and thanking formulas as well as other formulaic expressions that possessed certain meaning or function. After that L2 learners were asked to identify whether they could notice:

- any word strings that always occur together;
- how frequent the same word string occurred;
- what were the meaning and/or function of those word strings.

To illustrate, students were given a sentence: *Thanks so much for taking my shift. I really appreciate it. I just wanted you to know how much it meant!* In this case we have 2 thanking formulas: *thanks so much for* and *really appreciate it*.

Each student shared his/her observations with the rest of the class which served as a starting point for further discussion and question period. The researcher provided the experimental group with explicit comments and explanations about the nature of refusal and thanking formulaic expressions, their possible meanings and functions in a given context. Secondly, students had to acquire the encountered formulaic expressions in the most efficient way. For this purpose 2 ‘matching activities’ were developed by the researcher. For example, Activity 1, presented in Appendix L, was focused on acquiring and retaining the refusal formulaic expressions. The formulaic expressions for this activity were selected from the Native Speaker (NS) corpus of responses (see Appendix B). In this activity students were instructed to match the refusal formulaic expressions with their meanings or functions.

Activity 2 (Appendix L), on the other hand, was focused on requiring and retaining the thanking formulaic expressions. The formulaic expressions for this activity were selected from the Native Speaker (NS) corpus of responses (see Appendix B). Once again, students were instructed to match the thanking formulaic expressions with their meanings or functions.

Since teaching formulaic language was only one of the objectives of the explicit instruction course, the L2 learners still needed to attend to common semantic formulas used by native speakers of English while performing speech acts of refusal and thanking from the Native Speaker corpus. In the next section I present the detailed description of activities that were used during the course and aimed at teaching students how to perform speech acts of refusal and thanking in their L2.

### ***3.6.2.2. Developing pragmatic competence.***

Research has shown that learners quite benefit from the explicit focus on pragmatics in both EFL and ESL classrooms. However, Cohen and Weaver (2005) in their *Styles- and*

*Strategies-based Instruction Guide* noted that it may take up to 15 years “to acquire speech act ability that is indistinguishable from that of the native speakers in the given speech community, especially in the case of certain speech acts, such as complaints and refusals” (p. 79). Despite the fact that developing pragmatic competence is a very time-consuming process, it is still possible to enhance learners’ pragmatic performance. Cohen (2005) argued that introducing L2 learners to various strategies of learning and performing speech acts may be a key to successful development of L2 pragmatic ability. He offered a comprehensive list of speech act learning strategies. Among those were mentioned:

1. Taking practical steps to gain knowledge of how specific speech acts work;
2. Conducting a cross-cultural analysis;
3. Observing what native speakers do by noting what they say, how they say it (speed of delivery, tone, etc.), and their nonverbal behaviour as they say it (facial expressions, body posture, and gestures);
4. Assessing published materials dealing with speech acts and others (pp. 289-290)

Cross-cultural analysis strategy includes such elements as:

- Thinking through what would be the appropriate thing to say for that speech act in target language community, depending on the situation;
- Identifying the socio-pragmatic norms for performance of those speech acts in the target language;
- Identifying the semantic formulas that tend to be used with the given speech acts in that situation;
- Identifying the linguistic structures that tend to be used;
- Determining the similarities and differences between the two cultures;

- Obtaining a viable interpretation for the cross-cultural differences (Cohen, 2005).

In order to enhance the perception and interpretation of speech acts by the experimental group participants the researcher incorporated all elements of cross-cultural analysis strategy as well as provided learners with explicit metapragmatic information about semantic formulas in a given speech act. During the fourth and the fifth sessions students were given some parts of the responses to the refusal and thanking speech acts (taken again from the Native Speaker corpus) that contained examples of refusal and thanking semantic formulas. After that L2 learners were asked to identify whether they could notice:

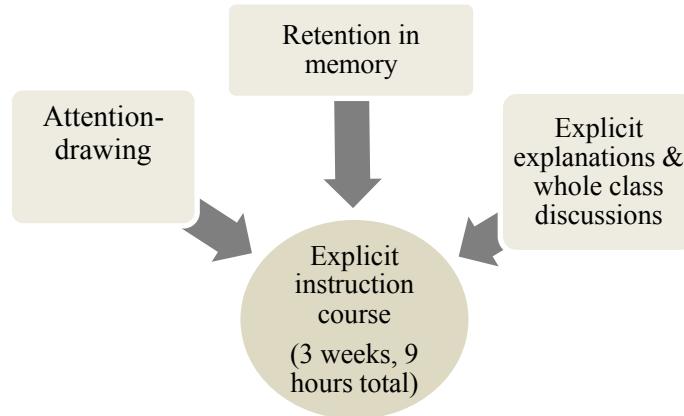
- any refusal or thanking semantic formulas that were used by native speakers;
- what kind of semantic formula was it;
- any differences in structure of the semantic formulas in different scenarios (contexts).

For example, the students were given a sentence: *Unfortunately, I will not be able to come to the party anymore because my child is sick. Thank you for understanding, I'll definitely come to the next party!* This sentence starts with a semantic formula of *stating regret* (*unfortunately, I will not be able to come*); then comes *statement of appreciation* (*thank you for understanding*) and *promise of future acceptance* (*I'll definitely come to the next party*).

Appendix J contains the ‘matching activities’ designed by the researcher in order to foster learners’ acquisition of semantic formulas that native speakers tend to use in order to enhance their pragmatic performance. Students were instructed to match the refusal or thanking semantic formulas with their verbal equivalents (see Appendix M). They were also encouraged to discuss controversial semantic formulas in groups of two.

In summary, during the entire course the L2 learners had ample opportunities to compare the forms that they would produce in speech acts under discussion with those from the Native Speaker corpus as well as participate in class discussion. I had also provided them

with explicit instruction support throughout the course. Figure 4 summarizes the techniques used during the explicit instruction course:



*Figure 4.* Techniques used during the explicit instruction course.

### 3.6.3. Post- and delayed post-tests.

The main objective of the post-test was to check how many refusal and thanking formulaic expressions as well as semantic formulas were appropriately used by students to ensure the comparability of the control and treatment groups. The post-tests were administrated to both experimental and control groups shortly after the explicit instruction course ended. The experimental group was exposed to the post-test in the second week of December, 2014 (December 10-12), while the control group was tested in the third week of December, 2014 (December 17-18). This time, however, scenarios for the multiple-turn oral DCRPs were slightly changed in order to check the ability to engage into spontaneous conversations and make sure the students did not replicate their responses from the previous role-plays (see Appendices I and J for the scenarios of the role-plays). The themes of the multiple-turn oral DCRPs for the post-tests again included *refusing friend's invitation, rejecting sales offer, refusing manager's request, responding to compliment, thanking colleague for a favour, thanking your manager*. Tables 4 and 5 illustrate some of the

responses elicited from the experimental and control group participants during the post-tests (for the full transcript of the responses collected from both groups during the post-test stage see Appendices N and O).

Table 4

*Experimental group responses (post-test)*

| L2 respondent | Speech acts  |  |
|---------------|--|--|
|               | <u>Refusal</u>   | <u>Thanking</u>  |
| Mustafa       | I am glad you called me because I won't be able to be with you on the weekend. I already have a commitment with my family. I wish we will see each other later.              | Yes, I made it by myself with the help of the recipe. Can you imagine that I made it from my home scratches?   |
| Julia         | Okay. Oh, sounds great, but I think my current plan is good. So thank you.   | Thank you for the money. In a difficult situation you helped me, so thanks a lot! Thank you! If you need help, please, tell me!  |
| Marcus        | I am afraid I won't be able to manage two projects in the same time because I don't finish with my current project. I am so sorry for that.                                  | Oh, Alisa, thank you very much for your help last time, for lending me money. I really appreciate it. If you need something else, I will be happy to give you back, to repay what you did for me. Oh, thank you so much. You are so sweet! |
| Amandine      | Hi Alisa! Yeah, but unfortunately I can't because I have another prior commitment with my family and I need to travel. Thank you and I hope we'll get together another time. | \$500? I am very happy for this money! And I am also happy because you have confidence in me and I am able to work hard. I will wait for this.   |

*Note.* The responses presented in this table were elicited from the following multiple-turn oral DCRPs: ‘refusing friend’s invitation’, ‘rejecting sales offer’, ‘refusing manager’s request’, ‘responding to compliment’, ‘thanking colleague for a favour’, ‘thanking your manager’.

Table 5

*Control group responses (post-test)*

| L2 respondent | Speech acts  |  |
|---------------|--|--|
|               | <u>Refusal</u>   | <u>Thanking</u>  |
| Anand         | Oh, thank you for remind me, but sorry, I want to say...very sorry for...because I have a problem at my home, so I need to stay at my home...so sorry about that. Ok, thank you.   | Oh, thank you very much, thank you for this... for that. Yes, sure.  |
| Tisha         | Hi Alisa, I am happy, I know your plan is really interesting, so I have a new one and it's very good and we have no problem with us and I think we are gonna keep it [unclear]. If we have problem or if we plan to change, maybe we can call you. | Hi Alisa, I bring you your money you owe me... yeah, you owe me, and just to say you thank you very much, because it was useful help. And I will remind this help [unclear]. |
| Brianna       | Yes, sorry, I have appointments and today... doctor... three o'clock. Oh, sorry, I can't makes appointment for cancel, so that's why...  | Oh, yeah, I make this rice, all the time I make this rice. Yeah, sure, thank you.  |
| Kim           | I am so sorry, I have appointment with my family after this, so I can't go to the restaurant with you. So sorry! Yes, okay...  | Oh, thank you so much, it's amazing! I am so... hmm... thank you so much... I can work very hard next year. Yes, okay, thank you!  |

*Note.* The responses presented in this table were elicited from the following multiple-turn oral DCRPs: ‘refusing friend’s invitation’, ‘rejecting sales offer’, ‘refusing manager’s request’, ‘responding to compliment’, ‘thanking colleague for a favour’, ‘thanking your manager’.

The objective of the delayed post-test was to check how many refusal and thanking formulaic expressions and semantic formulas were retained and successfully used by the participants, and compare results obtained from the experimental group with those of a

control group. The delayed post-tests were administrated to both groups approximately a month since date of the last post-test (in the last week of January, 2015). Again, the prompts for the multiple-turn oral DCRPs were slightly in the delayed post-test in order to check the ability to engage into spontaneous conversations and make sure the students do not replicate their responses from the previous role-plays. The themes of the multiple-turn oral DCRPs for the delayed post-tests included *refusing friend's invitation, rejecting sales offer, refusing manager's request, responding to compliment, thanking colleague for a favour, thanking manager for day off*. Tables 6 and 7 illustrate some of the responses elicited from the experimental and control group participants during the delayed post-tests (for the full transcript of the responses collected from both groups during the delayed post-test stage see Appendices P and Q).

Table 6

*Experimental group responses (delayed post-test)*

| L2 respondent | Speech acts   |  |
|---------------|---|--|
|               | <u>Refusal</u>  | <u>Thanking</u>  |
| Mustafa       | Unfortunately, my friend, I won't be able to do it because I already have family commitment. I am sorry, I can't do it. Sure, I will be looking forward for that. | That's really awesome, I really appreciate this! That's what friends are for! Yes, sure, thank you!                          |
| Julia         | Thank you for your offer, but I am not interested in it. And I am a student and I can't afford it.  | Oh, do you really like it? That's very sweet of you! I also like it. It's very nice, it's colourful, but it's not expensive. |
| Marcus        | No, sorry. I would like to do that but as you know I just come back from my vacation, so I have many things to do till the end of the month.                      | Yes, of course, that would be very good for me. I hope I will have a chance to give you back this favour. Thank you.         |

|          |  |  |
|----------|--|--|
|          | Once again, I am very sorry about that.  |  |
| Amandine | Oh, I am sorry, I won't be able to make it! Hopefully, we can get together soon. | Thank you so much! Do you really like it? Oh, thank you so much, that's so sweet of you! |

*Note.* The responses presented in this table were elicited from the following multiple-turn oral DCRPs: ‘refusing friend’s invitation’, ‘rejecting sales offer’, ‘refusing manager’s request’, ‘responding to compliment’, ‘thanking colleague for a favour’, ‘thanking your manager’.

Table 7

*Control group responses (delayed post-test)*

| L2 respondent | Speech acts  |   |
|---------------|--|---|
|               | <u>Refusal</u>   | <u>Thanking</u>   |
| Anand         | Thank you for telling me, but sorry to say that I have an appointment with doctor, so I need to take my father to the doctor, so at that time... [pause] I could not attend... maybe. Thank you very much!   | I am coming for say the thank you for giving me the leave for my dentist appointment. I was thinking that our company is so busy, even though you gave me the leave for my dentist appointment and I am very happy. Thank you for that!   |
| Tisha         | It's real a good deal but I think I don't need it. Because we have microwave, new microwave at home. So I think I can refer my friend because I think her microwave was broken and she need a new one. I think maybe if she buys a microwave she is gonna give me the set knife for gift maybe because I refer her. Thank you! | Thank you for proposition, it's very nice and I think it will be helpful for me because I was thinking to rent a truck so now... if you... It would be a pleasure to help us. So I think after when I finish to move out, I will organize a dinner to say thank you for you and your friends. |
| Brianna       | I think today is very busy in my schedule... next week... I explain to next week...  | Manager, I have appointment this week this day dentist appointment. This week is very busy because I have appointment and day off Tuesday and I need day off... Okay, thank you so much, God bless you!   |

---

|     |   |   |
|-----|---|---|
| Kim | <p>It's pretty good but I have an appointment with my family so I can't go there. So I am so sorry. Oh, I am sure I can go there next week.</p> | I know our office is so busy but I have an appointment so you accept I may go... I go to my appointment so thank you so much. If I finish early I come for my office so I work very hard. |
|-----|---|---|

---

*Note.* The responses presented in this table were elicited from the following multiple-turn oral DCRPs: ‘refusing friend’s invitation’, ‘rejecting sales offer’, ‘refusing manager’s request’, ‘responding to compliment’, ‘thanking colleague for a favour’, ‘thanking your manager’.

There are multiple differences between the experimental group responses and the responses elicited from control group participants during post- and delayed post-test in terms of lengths and use of formulaic expressions, semantic pragmatic formulas and other aspects. All of these will be analysed in detail in the next chapter. The following section, however, focuses on the last very important aspect of the data collection, that is, written and oral reflections from the experimental group participants. These reflections were collected in order to better address the last two research questions of the present study, in particular:

*What are the challenges L2 learners may face while performing refusal and thanking speech acts?*

*Does the explicit instruction help L2 learners to overcome those challenges? If yes, in what ways?*

### **3.6.4. Students’ written and oral reflections.**

The written and oral reflections were collected from experimental group participants at different stages of the course. While the written reflections were collected during the explicit instruction course, the oral reflections were collected immediately after the post-tests and delayed post-tests. This procedure was undertaken in order to better understand the processes underlying learners’ noticing of formulaic expressions and semantic formulas

(Bardovi-Harlig & Griffin, 2005). An attempt was also made to analyse the cognitive processes involved in the production of speech acts by L2 learners (Félix-Brasdefer, 2008) and to better explain the developmental aspects of L2 pragmatic competence (Takahashi & Beebe, 1987) as well as challenges L2 learners may face while performing refusal and thanking speech acts. Takahashi (2005) in her article on the in-depth qualitative analysis of instructional effects in L2 pragmatics reported two main instructional (treatment) conditions that students were exposed to following the pre-test: a form-comparison condition and a form-search condition. According to Takahashi (2001; 2005) the form-comparison condition is one of the implicit input conditions where L2 learners compare their forms with those provided by the native speakers and then describe features of native-speaker form realization (in this case, refusal and thanking formulaic expressions produced by native speakers and L2 participants were compared). The form-search condition, on the other hand, is a condition where learners point out any ‘native-like usage’ in the input containing the target forms and “contains a higher degree of input enhancement than form-search” (Takahashi, 2005, p. 439). After the post-test the participants in Takahashi’s study were exposed to so-called ‘retrospective follow-up questionnaire’ which aimed “to elicit information on the extent to which the participants realized the function of the target request forms during the treatment and their possible use in the post-test, and whether the participants actually used the forms in the post-test” (p. 441).

Similarly to the students in Takahashi’s research, the participants in this study were asked to write reflections at the end of each session during the time of explicit instruction course. This form-comparison activity aimed to raise the learner’s awareness about the differences between the target language and their L1. Their reflections were based on the following 2 questions:

*1. Have you noticed any differences between the refusal and thanking formulaic expressions used in English and your L1 (in the speech acts of refusal and thanking)?*

*2. Have you noticed any differences between semantic formulas used by native speakers and the semantic formulas that you usually use in your L1 while performing speech acts of refusal and thanking?*

It is worth noting that the experimental group participants were also exposed to the form-search treatment condition during the entire course. In addition to the above mentioned questions, the L2 learners were asked to reflect on the following:

*What thanking semantic pragmatic formulas and thanking formulas among those that you have just reviewed would you use when:*

- respond to friend's invitation
- reject an offer from a sales agent
- respond to manager's request to stay longer after work
- complimenting your friend
- thanking your co-worker for raking your shift
- thanking your manager for promotion?

To compare, one of the questions included by Takahashi (2005) in her ‘retrospective follow-up questionnaire’ was: “Did you realize that the expressions that appeared in the transcripts were appropriate English request expressions addressed to higher-status people?” (p. 457).

Shortly after the post- and the delayed post-tests were recorded, the experimental group students were asked to comment and reflect on the following:

*1. What challenges with performing refusal and thanking speech acts have you experienced?*

*2. Was the explicit instruction course useful for you? If yes, could you explain why? Has it helped you to overcome the challenges?*

The written responses were collected from the students and typed by researcher while the oral reflections were audio-recorded and transcribed. Later, the collected data underwent thematic analysis and were coded for recurrent themes. The results of the quasi-experiment for both experimental and control groups as well as the findings of the thematic analysis are presented in the following chapter.

## Chapter 4

### Results

The chapter is devoted to presenting and interpreting the results obtained from both experimental and control groups during the entire course of the study. It is divided into 2 main sections that address the guiding research questions of this study. The first section answers the first guiding research question:

Can the explicit instruction of refusal and thanking formulaic expressions and semantic formulas:

- a) foster their acquisition and retention by second language (L2) learners;
- b) develop L2 pragmatic competence?

The results of the oral multiple-turn DCRPs that were administrated to both experimental and control groups during all 3 tests (pre-, post- and delayed post-tests) are presented and discussed here.

The second section presents the findings of the thematic analysis of written and oral post-test reflections collected from the experimental group participants during the explicit instruction course as well as immediately after the post- and delayed post-tests. The most recurrent patterns or themes were identified within the collected data and these became the categories for the qualitative analysis. It addresses the last two research questions of this study, in particular:

What are the challenges L2 learners may face while performing refusal and thanking speech acts?

Does the explicit instruction help L2 learners to overcome those challenges? If yes, in what ways?

#### **4.1. Pre, post- and delayed post-test results**

##### **4.1.1. Experimental group.**

This section is entirely devoted to the experimental group participants' performance during the pre-test as well as after the 9-hour explicit instruction course (post-test and delayed post-test). The post-test results show whether the explicit instruction method had helped the experimental group participants to acquire refusal and thanking formulaic expressions as well as contain evidence of their improved L2 pragmatic performance. On the other hand, the results of the delayed post-test show whether the L2 participants had managed to retain and use the formulaic expressions and semantic formulas in their speech 1 month after the explicit treatment.

The participants, two males and two females, were at an intermediate level of spoken English proficiency. They came from different cultural and L1 backgrounds: two African language speakers who were educated in French and identified French as their L1; one Arabic speaker; and one Mandarin Chinese speaker. I refer to the four students by their assigned pseudonyms: Mustafa, Julia, Marcus, and Amandine. The audio-recorded speech samples of all participants were transcribed and manually coded by the researcher for the refusal and thanking formulaic expressions as well as semantic formulas. The refusal and thanking formulaic expressions as well as semantic formulas were identified and marked following the previously determined criteria in Chapter 5 (sections 3.2.1 and 3.2.2.).

Afterwards, the total number of formulaic expressions identified was also calculated for each speech act, including type and token counts. The *token* counts (number of actual

formulaic expressions used) were done in order to show whether the quantity of formulaic expressions used by L2 participants increased in the post- and delayed post-tests; the *types* (how many out of 1 type of formulaic expressions were used) were counted to see whether the range (variety) of formulaic expressions increased. In other words, while the token counts show the increase in quantity, the types' counts illustrate the increased level of pragmatic appropriateness in a specific context as well as extended repertoire of the formulaic expression in the students' responses after the treatment.

The results of each participant are presented and discussed separately to better represent the changes in his/her usage of formulaic expressions and the signs of pragmatic development of each learner. It is also worth noting that not all formulaic expressions used by L2 participants had exact equivalents in the Native Speaker (NS) corpus. Nevertheless, the researcher made a decision to count all expressions that possessed one or more criteria of a formulaic expression (for the full list of criteria see section 3.2.1 of the previous chapter). In addition to the researcher herself, 2 independent native speaker collaborators had reviewed students' performance during each test and concluded that there was an obvious improvement in their performance in both post- and delayed post-tests.

#### **4.1.1.1. Mustafa.**

##### *Formulaic expressions*

Mustafa (L1 Arabic) was a 27-year-old male from Lebanon. He eagerly agreed to participate in the study and was described by his core teacher as top of his class. Table 8 contains the refusal and thanking formulaic expressions that he used in the pre-test (before the explicit instruction course), the post-test (immediately after the explicit instruction course) and the delayed post-test (1 month after the post-test).

Table 8

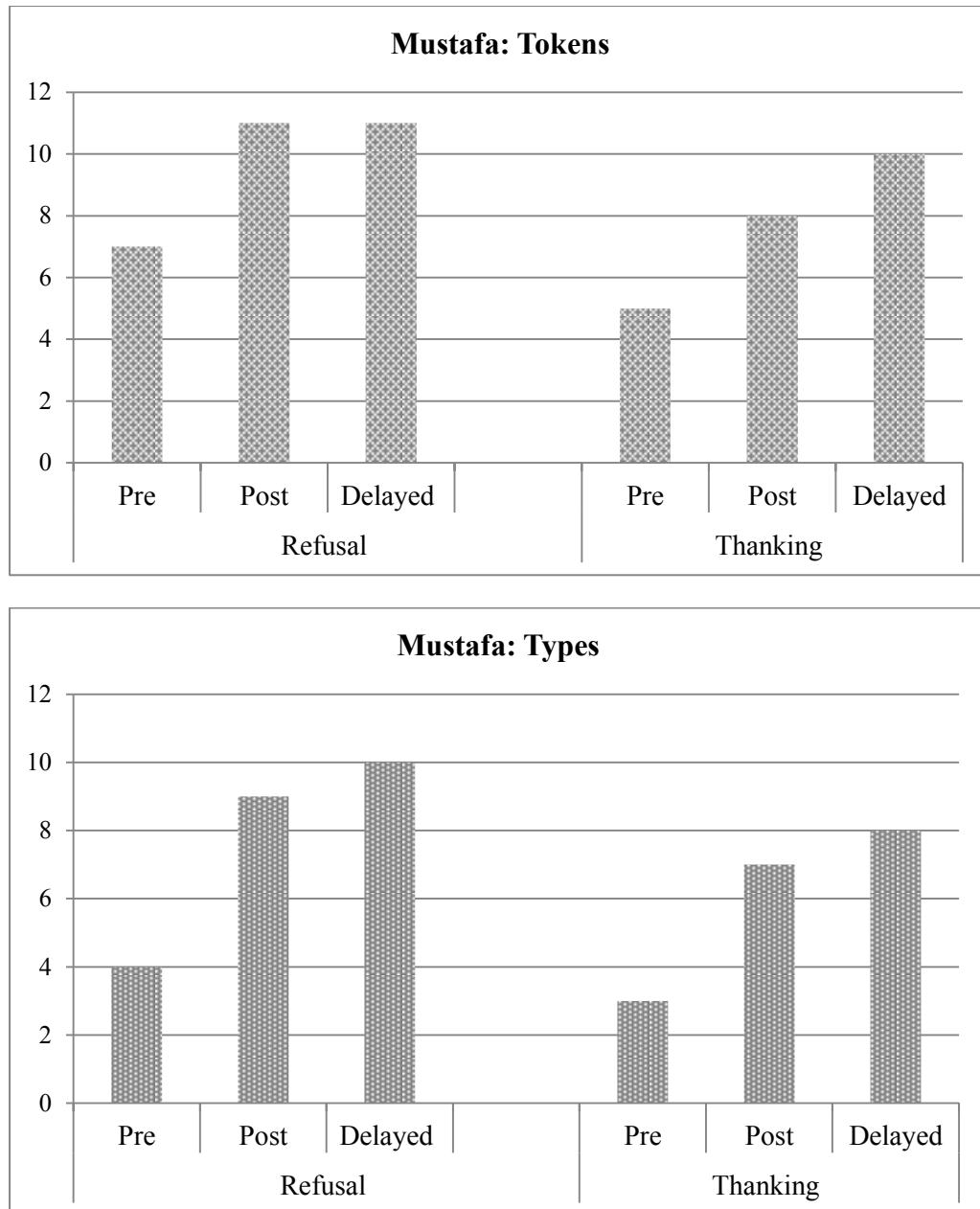
*Mustafa's pre-, post- and delayed post-test results*

| Scenario   | <u>Pre-test</u>   | <u>Post-test</u>   | <u>Delayed post-test</u>  | Speech act |
|--|---|--|---|------------|
| Refusing friend's invitation                           | -sorry about that<br>-thank you<br>-sorry about that    | -I am glad you called<br>-I won't be able to have a commitment<br>-see each other later              | -unfortunately I won't be able to family commitment<br>-I am sorry, I can't do it<br>-looking forward for that                            | Refusal 1  |
| Rejecting sales offer                                  | -thank you<br>-I'm sorry                                | -I am afraid to tell you<br>-I am really satisfied with current plan<br>-thank you for the offer     | -sounds good<br>-I am not interested  | Refusal 2  |
| Refusing manager's request                             | -I'm really sorry<br>I can't<br>-I'm sorry              | -I appreciate that you promote me but<br>-thank you I appreciate that you understand me              | -thanks for this opportunity but<br>-can't afford that<br>-will be able to take it<br>-I am sorry for now<br>-thank you for understanding | Refusal 3  |
| Responding to compliment                               | -thank you  | -can you imagine   | -thank you very much<br>-do I really look like this<br>-that's sweet of you   | Thanking 1 |
| Thanking colleague for a favour                        | -I don't know how to thank you<br>-I am really thankful | -I appreciate your help<br>-that's what friend is for<br>-thank you very much                        | -that's really awesome<br>-I really appreciate this<br>-that's what friends are for<br>-thank you   | Thanking 2 |
| Thanking manager for promotion/ raising salary/day off | -thank you<br>-thank you                                | -I am really very happy<br>-I am very surprised<br>-thank you very much<br>-I will be waiting for it | - I want to thank you for<br>-I really appreciate it<br>-I am really thankful   | Thanking 3 |

*Note.* All formulaic expressions were counted, included the repeated ones.

The data in Table 16 clearly show that Mustafa did not have a wide repertoire of refusal and thanking formulaic expressions before the explicit instruction course. The most commonly occurring expressions which the participant used in the refusal speech act were '*I am sorry*' or '*thank you*'. However, he did not use any formulaic expression that could directly perform the pragmatic function of refusal, such as '*I'm sorry, I won't be able to make it*'. As for the thanking formulaic expressions, '*thank you*' was the most common one used by Mustafa, whereas nothing longer or more complex or 'sophisticated' was used during the pre-test. On the contrary, the data collected during the post- and the delayed post-tests reveal much greater variety of formulaic expressions that Mustafa used in his responses. His utterances produced after the explicit instruction contain more complex and accurate formulaic expressions, such as '*unfortunately I won't be able to*' or '*I am glad you called*' which makes him sound more firm and persuasive. Interestingly enough, the participant also used formulaic expressions that frequently occurred in the Native Speaker (NS) corpus but did not directly perform the refusal or thanking functions. Examples include collocations like '*family commitment*' or '*current plan*' and phrases like '*I am really satisfied with*'.

As mentioned earlier, both tokens (number of actual formulaic expressions used) and types (how many out of one type of formulaic expressions were used) counts were done when calculating the total number of formulaic expressions used by the participant in all 3 tests. The token counts show whether the quantity of formulaic expressions used by L2 participants increased in the post- and delayed post-tests, whereas the types show whether the range (variety) of formulaic expressions increased after the explicit instruction course. Figure 5 below contains both token and type counts of refusal and thanking formulaic expressions used by Mustafa in all 3 tests:



*Figure 5.* Tokens and types of refusal and thanking formulaic expressions (pre-, post- and delayed post-tests): Mustafa.

The results show an increase in number of both tokens and types of formulaic expressions. For instance, Mustafa used only 7 tokens of refusal formulaic expressions in the pre-test, while in both post- and delayed post-tests the number of tokens increased to 11 occurrences. A similar increase can be observed in the speech act of thanking. While only 5 tokens of formulaic expressions were used in the pre-test, the number went up to 8 in the

post-test and further increased in the delayed post-test (10 tokens). However, the increase in number of types is more valuable for this study. The fact that Mustafa's responses after the instruction contain a bigger variety of refusal and thanking formulaic expressions as opposed to the very limited range in the pre-test suggests that the explicit instruction of the formulaic expressions did help the L2 learner to foster his acquisition of this complex language phenomenon. Moreover, the results show that the explicit instruction had also helped the L2 learner to retain and in some cases even increase the number of both tokens and types in the delayed post-test. In conclusion, Mustafa was able to attend to the usage of formulaic expressions in a much more effective way after 9 hours of pedagogical intervention and his responses improved both quantitatively and qualitatively.

#### *Semantic formulas*

The total number of semantic formulas was not calculated since the quantity was not the main focus of the analysis of this aspect of students' performance. On the contrary, I paid careful attention to the semantic structure of each response and analysed it in respect to its pragmatic appropriateness and 'nativelikeness'. Therefore, only the most frequently occurring and the most 'representative' semantic formulas were elicited from Mustafa's responses and included in Table 9 below. Each semantic formula is presented with its verbal equivalent to better illustrate the development of the learner's L2 pragmatic competence.

Table 9

#### *Semantic formulas used by Mustafa in the pre-, post- and delayed post-tests*

| Speech act | Semantic formula      | Verbal equivalent                   |                                   |   |
|------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|
|            |                       | Pre-test                            | Post-test                         | Delayed post-test                               |
| Refusal    | Statement of negative | I just want to tell you that I will | I won't be able to be with you on | I won't be able to do it because I already have |

|          |  |   |  |  |
|----------|--|---|--|--|
|          | ability+ reason  | decline your invitation because something happened and I can't be there                       | the weekend. I already have a commitment with my family                          | family commitment  |
| Refusal  | Statement of regret+ statement of negative ability+ reason | I'm sorry I will not take it because I take this plan with Virgin mobile from three weeks ago | I am afraid to tell you that I am really satisfied with my current plan          | That sound good, but I am not interested                           |
| Refusal  | Promise of future acceptance                               | I wish but I... I wish but I can't be with you at this party                                  | I wish we will see each other later  | Maybe next month I will be able to take it, but I am sorry for now |
| Thanking | Expressing surprise and delight                            | I don't know how to tell you that I very happy  | I am surprised   | very That's really awesome   |
| Thanking | Thanking+ emphasizing the depth of the gratitude           | I am really thankful that you taking this day at work instead of me                           | I appreciate your help   | I really appreciate this   |
| Thanking | Expressing affection                                       | I don't know how to thank you, Alisa  | Alisa, I can't tell you how I appreciate your help and that's what friend is for | I really appreciate it and I am really thankful                    |

*Note.* This table contains only those semantic formulas that best illustrate L2 learner's pragmatic competence development.

As can be observed from the data presented in Table 9, the semantic formulas employed by Mustafa in the pre-test did not have an English-like structure. In other words, his structure of refusal and thanking was not quite aligned with the structure used by the native speakers in the NS corpus. For example, in order to express the statement of negative ability Mustafa produced long and 'bulky' phrases such as "*I just want to tell you that I will decline your invitation*" or "*I will not take it because I take this plan with Virgin mobile from three weeks ago*" as opposed to more concise semantic formulas used by native speakers (see Table 1).

However, the utterances produced by Mustafa after the explicit instruction course, are clearly more concise, ‘nativelike’ and pragmatically appropriate. Moreover, he sounded more confident and fluent in the post-tests as opposed to his pre-test performance. For instance, the semantic formula of future acceptance was not complete in the pre-test: “*I wish but I...*” which could suggest that he simply did not know the proper formulaic expression that could fit that context. On the opposite, in the post-test as well as in the delayed post-test Mustafa was able to attend to the same speech act of thanking in a more effective way simply by using formulaic expression ‘*see each other later*’ in his response: “*I wish we will see each other later*”. In summary, one can observe the overall improvement of Mustafa’s pragmatic competence as well as its gradual development throughout the study.

#### **4.1.1.2. Julia.**

##### *Formulaic expressions*

Julia (L1 Chinese) was a 35-year-old female from China. She was the first student who expressed interest in participating in this study and was always enthusiastic about every session. Table 10 contains the refusal and thanking formulaic expressions that she used in the pre-test (before the explicit instruction course), the post-test (immediately after the explicit instruction course) and the delayed post-test (1 month after the post-test).

Table 10

##### *Julia’s pre-, post- and delayed post-test results*

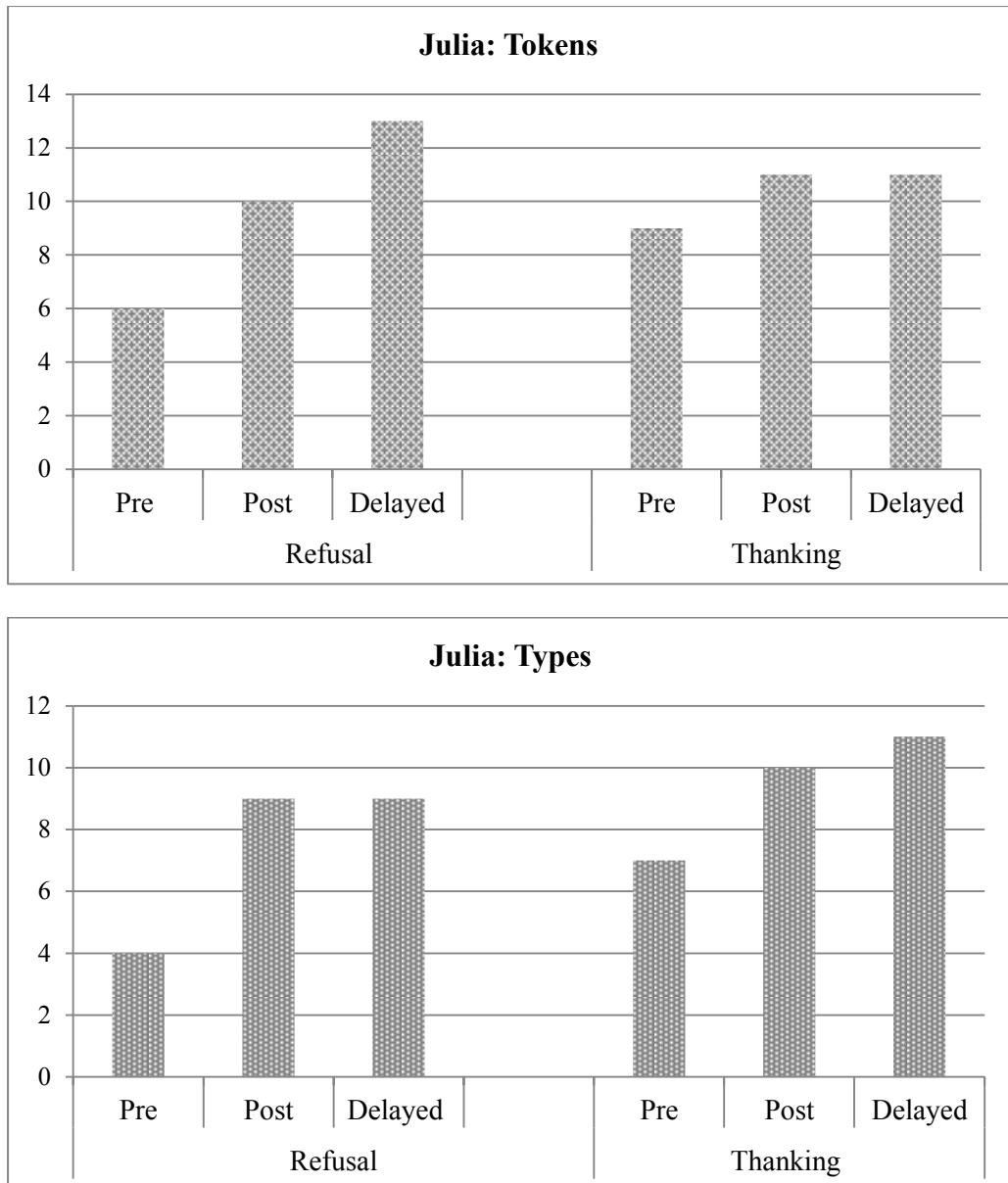
| Scenario                     | <u>Pre-test</u>                 | <u>Post-test</u>                        | <u>Delayed post-test</u>                        | Speech act |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------|---|---|------------|
| Refusing friend’s invitation | -very sorry<br>-very-very sorry | -I’d like to but<br>-I have appointment | -thank you for inviting but<br>-I won’t be able | Refusal    |

|  |  |  |  |          |
|--|--|--|--|----------|
|  |  | -thank you for your invitation<br>-enjoy your time<br>-see you next time   | to make it<br>-I am sorry<br>-thank you for understanding  |          |
| Rejecting sales offer                                  | -okay thanks   | -sounds great<br>-current plan<br>-thank you   | -thank you for Refusal<br>your offer<br>-I am not interested<br>-I can't afford that   |          |
| Refusing manager's request                             | -no very sorry<br>-I'm so sorry<br>-I'm so sorry   | -I'd like to but<br>-thank you for understanding   | -I'd like to but<br>-I am so sorry<br>-I am afraid I won't be able to make it<br>-I am so sorry<br>-so very sorry<br>-thank you for understanding    | Refusal  |
| Responding to compliment                               | -that's good   | -do you really think so?<br>-do you think that it's good?  | -do you really like it?<br>-that's very sweet of you<br>-I also like it  | Thanking |
| Thanking colleague for a favour                        | -I appreciate your help<br>-thank you very much  | -thank you for the money<br>-thanks a lot<br>-thank you<br>-if you need help, please, tell me                      | -thank you for your helping<br>-you are very nice<br>-I really appreciate it<br>-thank you again   | Thanking |
| Thanking manager for promotion/ raising salary/day off | -oh really<br>-thank you very much<br>-thank you for have me<br>-thank you<br>-I will try my best to work hard<br>-thank you very much | -oh, really?<br>-wow, I am so surprised<br>-it's thoughtful of you<br>-thank you<br>-I'll do my best<br>-thank you | -thank you for giving a day off<br>-I made a prior commitment<br>-let me know if I can do anything anytime in future<br>-thank you for understanding | Thanking |

*Note.* All formulaic expressions were considered, included the repeated ones.

Julia's responses in the pre-test include quite short and incomplete formulaic expressions. The L2 participant did not use any formulaic expressions that perform refusal functions, but had used many repeated and incomplete ones like "*I am so sorry*" or "*very*

*sorry*”. On the other hand, she managed to use one quite complex formulaic expression in the thanking speech act (e.g. “*I will try my best to work hard*”). Still, the thanking speech act still does not have enough examples of formulaic expressions that could show her ability to effectively engage in the refusal and thanking speech acts. Julia mostly used common formulaic expressions like “*thank you*” or “*thank you very much*”. In addition, some of her pre-test responses contain grammatical errors and improper word order. For example, in ‘Thanking manager for promotion’ scenario Julia replied: “Thank you for *have me*” instead of ‘thank you for *having me*’; in ‘Thanking colleague for promotion’ the L2 learner put the word *very* in front of the word *appreciate*: “*I very appreciate your help*”. Unlike her pre-test responses, Julia’s post-test and delayed post-test utterances contain multiple examples of formulaic expressions like “*I’d like to but*” or “*thank you for your invitation*”. Such expressions made her responses sound softer and more polite as opposed to “*very sorry*” alone. In addition, Julia’s tone became more natural and less meek in both post-tests and she started to express her surprise, delight or gratitude in an English-like manner, for example: “*Wow, I am so surprised*” or “*that’s so thoughtful of you*”. Finally, this L2 participant was able to retain the majority of formulaic expressions and use them 1 month after during the delayed post-test. This allows us to conclude that the explicit instruction not only helped Julia to better acquire the newly learnt refusal and thanking formulaic expressions, but also fostered their retention in her active lexicon. Figure 6 contains both token and type counts of refusal and thanking formulaic expressions used by Julia in all 3 tests:



*Figure 6.* Tokens and types of refusal and thanking formulaic expressions (pre-, post- and delayed post-tests): Julia.

The results show an increase in number of both tokens and types of formulaic expressions. For instance, the pre-test contains only 6 refusal tokens, while the post-test has 10 and the delayed post-test –13. The increase in the number of types is even more dramatic: in her pre-test Julia used only 4 refusal types, whereas in both post- and delayed post-tests the number went up to 9 refusal types. The similar situation can be observed in the speech act of thanking: while Julia used 7 types of thanking formulaic expressions in the pre-test, this

number increased up to 10 types in the post-test and up to 11 in the delayed post-test. Similarly to Mustafa, Julia attended to the usage of formulaic expressions in a much more effective way after 9 hours of pedagogical intervention.

### *Semantic formulas*

The total number of semantic formulas was not calculated since the quantity was not the main focus of the analysis of this aspect of students' performance. On the contrary, I paid careful attention to the semantic structure of each response and analysed it in respect to its pragmatic appropriateness and 'nativelikness'. Therefore, only the most frequently occurring and the most 'representative' semantic formulas were elicited from Julia's responses and included in Table 11 below. Each semantic formula is presented with its verbal equivalent to better illustrate the development of the learner's L2 pragmatic competence.

Table 11

### *Semantic formulas used by Julia in the pre-, post- and delayed post-tests*

| Speech act | Semantic formula   | Verbal equivalent  |   |  |
|------------|--|--|---|--|
|            |  | Pre-test   | Post-test   | Delayed post-test  |
| Refusal    | Statement of regret+ statement of negative ability+ reason | Okay, I hope so, but very sorry because my son is sick   | I'd like to but I have appointment with my family     | I won't be able to make it because I have to spend time this weekend with my family, so I am sorry |
| Refusal    | Statement of positive opinion+ excuse                      | Oh, I see... But my cell phone, the... the... I don't know how to say, now the... the... is okay I think | Oh, sounds great, but I think my current plan is good | Thank you for your offer, but I am not interested in it. And I am a student and I can't afford it  |
| Thanking   | Expressing surprise and delight                            | Yeah... That's... that's good!   | Oh yes! Do you really think so? Do you think          | Oh, do you really like it? That's very sweet of you! I also like it                                |

| that it's good? |   |  |   |  |  |
|-----------------|---|--|---|--|--|
| Thanking        | Thanking+ emphasizing the depth of the gratitude  | Thank you for have me in working and thank every colleagues  | It's thoughtful of you. Thank you!            | I really appreciate it. Okay, thank you again      |  |
| Thanking        | Thanking + promising to do or give something because something similar was done or given to you | Thank you very much. Okay, have a drink, please? After work? | Thank you! If you need help, please, tell me! | Let me know if I can do anything anytime in future |  |

*Note.* This table contains only those semantic formulas that best illustrate L2 learner's pragmatic competence development.

Data in Table 11 suggest that Julia experienced a lot of difficulties while trying to formulate the structure of semantic formulas in during the pre-test. Her responses were often interrupted with pauses and sounded quite abrupt and incomplete. The way she structured her refusal in one of the speech acts is a striking example of a communication failure: “*Oh, I see... But my cell phone, the... the... I don't know how to say, now the... the... is okay I think*”. The L2 learner was clearly trying hard to express her message, but could hardly complete her utterance in the end: “*is okay I think*”. However, there is no successful example of a pragmatically appropriate refusal semantic formula in the pre-test. As for thanking semantic formulas in the pre-test, Julia made an attempt to produce a few longer and more sophisticated phrases like “*thank you for have me in working and thank every colleagues*”, however this statement was not quite grammatically accurate. Julia expressed the *Thanking + promising to do or give something because something similar was done or given to you* semantic formula in a very uncommon for the English language way by offering her pretended manager (the researcher) a drink after work (“*have a drink, please, after work?*”). Later, in the private conversation with the researcher, Julia said that it was considered polite to offer a drink or a treat to your manager as a sign of appreciation for the promotion at work.

In her post-test responses, however, she expressed the same semantic formula in much more pragmatically accurate and contextually appropriate way: “*Thank you! If you need help, please, tell me!*” by actually offering to return the favour that had been done to her. In summary, one can observe the significant improvement of Julia’s pragmatic competence as well as its gradual development throughout the study.

#### **4.1.1.3. Marcus.**

##### *Formulaic expressions*

Marcus (L1 French) was a 33-year-old male from Cameron. He spoke highly about the way formulaic expressions were taught; at the same time he appreciated the idea of explicit teaching of L2 pragmatics. Table 12 contains the refusal and thanking formulaic expressions that Marcus used in the pre-test (before the explicit instruction course), the post-test (immediately after the explicit instruction course) and the delayed post-test (1 month after the post-test).

Table 12

##### *Marcus’s pre-, post- and delayed post-test results*

| Scenario                     | Pre-test                 | Post-test  | Delayed post-test   | Speech act |
|------------------------------|--------------------------|--|---|------------|
| Refusing friend’s invitation | -I am very sorry I can’t | -I am very sorry<br>-I have prior plans<br>-I am sorry<br>-I won’t be able to<br>-thank you for your understanding | -that will be great but<br>-I can’t I am so sorry<br>-thank you | Refusal    |
| Rejecting sales offer        | n/a                      | -you have to be quick<br>-I am very satisfied with my current plan   | -sorry I am not interested<br>-it is a good deal but            | Refusal    |
| Refusing                     | -I am very sorry I       | -I am afraid I won’t   | -no, sorry  | Refusal    |

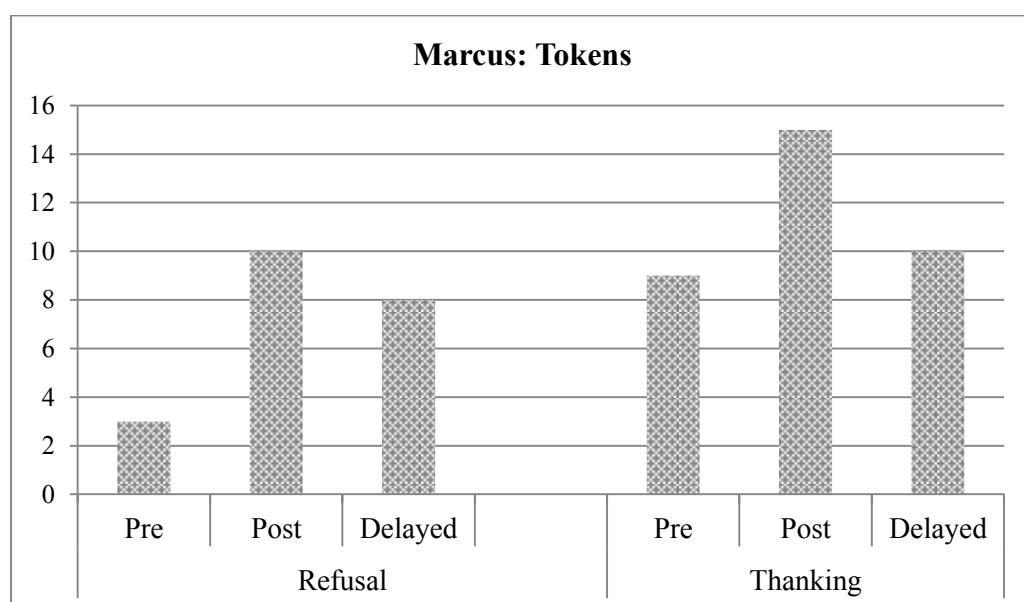
|  |  |  |   |          |
|--|--|--|---|----------|
| manager's request                                      | can't<br>-thank you very much for your understanding   | be able to<br>-current project<br>-I am so sorry for that  | -I would like to do that but<br>-once again I am very sorry about that                                  |          |
| Responding to compliment                               | -thank you<br>-thank you very much<br>-thank you very much for your attention  | -do you like it?<br>-I am so happy that you really liked it  | -oh really?<br>-thank you so much   | Thanking |
| Thanking colleague for a favour                        | -thank you very much<br>-it's very great<br>-thank you   | -thank you very much for your help<br>-I really appreciate it<br>-if you need something else I will be happy to give you back<br>-repay what you did for me<br>-thank you so much<br>-you are so sweet | -that would be very good<br>-I hope I will have a chance<br>-to give you back this favour<br>-thank you | Thanking |
| Thanking manager for promotion/ raising salary/day off | -thank you very much<br>-I am very happy<br>-you have a good confidence in me<br>-I will try to do my best<br>-work very hard<br>-work very hard | -thank you so much<br>-that is great<br>-I promise<br>-I appreciate your confidence in me<br>-work very hard<br>-once again thank you so much<br>-you will not be disappointed                         | -thank you<br>-thank you for your understanding<br>-I very appreciate it                                | Thanking |

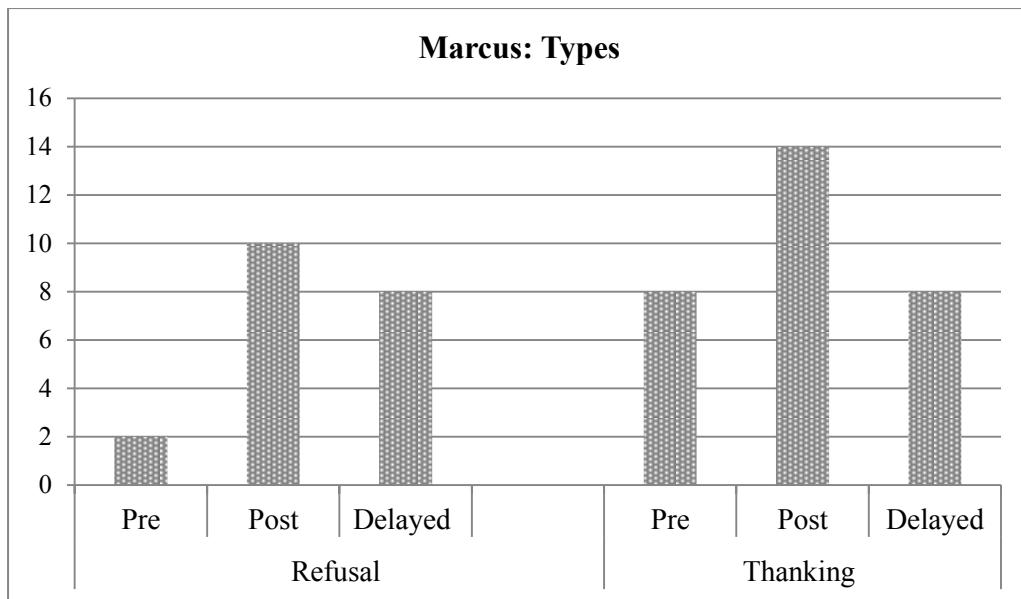
*Note.* All formulaic expressions were considered, included the repeated ones; n/a stands for ‘no formulaic expressions used’.

By looking at data presented in Table 12, one can clearly notice that Marcus experienced more difficulties while responding to the speech act of refusal, compared to the thanking speech act. He would either repeat the same expression several times (“*I am very sorry I can't*”) or not produce any formulaic response at all (see ‘Rejecting sales offer’ scenario). Interestingly enough, Mustafa’s and Julia’s (see Tables 8 and 10) overall performance in the pre-test of refusal speech act was better as opposed to their performance in the speech act of thanking. All participants lacked formulaic expressions that could express

the refusal function or used incomplete phrases like “sorry” or “thank you” that do not perform the pragmatic function of refusal if used alone. Marcus performed relatively better in thanking speech act; his responses contained some examples of more complete and complex thanking formulaic sequences, such as “*Thank you very much for your attention*” or “*I will try to do my best*”.

His post-test responses, however, bear evidence of significant improvement, especially during the refusal speech act. Marcus used a variety of nativelike and quite sophisticated formulaic expressions, such as “*you have to be quick*” or “*I am satisfied with my current plan*”. It is possible to assume that he benefited to a great extent from the explicit treatment, especially in terms of expressing refusals. If we compare his response in the pre-test of the ‘Rejecting sales offer’ scenario where he did not use any formulaic sequence at all, his post-test was quite a success: “*I am very satisfied with my current plan*”. His post-test thanking responses contain a greater variety of formulaic expressions from the Native Speaker (NS) corpus. These include “*I really appreciate it*”, “*you are so sweet*” and “*you will not be disappointed*”. Token and type counts of the formulaic expressions used by Marcus in all 3 tests were calculated. The final results are presented in Figure 7 below.





*Figure 7.* Tokens and types of refusal and thanking formulaic expressions (pre-, post- and delayed post-tests): Marcus.

The results show an increase in number of both tokens and types of formulaic expressions in the post-tests for both refusal and thanking speech acts. For instance, the number of refusal tokens rose from 3 (pre-test) to 10 occurrences in the post-test. The dramatic increase in refusal types can be observed as well: from 8 types in the pre-test to 14 types in the post-test. It is worth mentioning, however, that Marcus's performance in thanking speech act decreased in terms of both types and tokens. In the case of types during the delayed post-test (see Figure 7 above). The number of tokens dropped from 15 in the post-test to 9 in the delayed post-test. As for the types, the number of the delayed post-test did coincide with their number in the pre-test, as opposed to the post-test, where the total number of types was 14.

This decrease in both tokens and types in the delayed post-test, however, did not really harm the positive picture of Marcus's overall results. First of all, I was aware of the fact that Marcus was travelling to France right after the explicit instruction course. At the time of the delayed post-test, he had just came back to Canada after spending 1 month in

Paris, where he did not have any exposure to English for more than a month. Nevertheless, the fact that his performance improved in the post-test (after the treatment) attests to success of the explicit instruction course.

### *Semantic formulas*

The total number of semantic formulas was not calculated since the quantity was not the main focus of the analysis of this aspect of students' performance. On the contrary, I paid careful attention to the semantic structure of each response and analysed it in respect to its pragmatic appropriateness and 'nativelikeness'. Therefore, only the most frequently occurring and the most 'representative' semantic formulas were elicited from Marcus's responses and included in Table 13 below. Each semantic formula is presented with its verbal equivalent to better illustrate the development of the learner's L2 pragmatic competence.

Table 13

### *Semantic formulas used by Marcus in the pre-, post- and delayed post-tests*

| Speech act | Semantic formula                      | Verbal equivalent  |   |  |
|------------|---------------------------------------|--|---|--|
|            |                                       | Pre-test   | Post-test   | Delayed post-test  |
| Refusal    | Statement of negative ability+ reason | Yes, I very want to, but... I have appointment with my family doctor, because I take this appointment three weeks ago, so I can't [unclear] it | I am afraid I won't be able to manage two projects in the same time because I don't finish with my current project. I am so sorry for that. | I would like to do that but as you know I just come back from my vacation, so I have many things to do till the end of the month |
| Refusal    | Statement of positive opinion+ excuse | I understand that your plan is very interesting, so I very understand, but I can't change my plan because                                      | Good, I understand what you are saying, but right now I am very satisfied with my current   | It is a good deal, but right now I'm not interested  |

| Rogers give me a plan<br>good plan |   |  |   |  |
|------------------------------------|---|--|---|--|
| Thanking                           | Thanking+ emphasizing the depth of the gratitude  | Thank you very much, Alisa, I am very happy for this promotion   | Thank you so much, that is very great. I appreciate your confidence in me | Thank you for your understanding, I very appreciate it   |
| Thanking                           | Thanking+ reassuring the listener/ promising to do or give something because something similar was done or given to you | I promise you that I cannot disappoint you, so I will try to do my best to work very hard, to continue to work very hard to assume my responsibilities | Once again, thank you so much. You will not be disappointed               | I hope I will have a chance to give you back this favour |

*Note.* This table contains only those semantic formulas that best illustrate L2 learner's pragmatic competence development.

Marcus's post- and delayed post-test results show sufficient improvement in both pragmatic and lexical (proper word choice) appropriateness of the utterances. For example, there is an obvious improvement of the verbal equivalents of 'Statement of positive opinion+ excuse' semantic formula in all 3 tests. Marcus gave a very long and unnecessary explanation in the pre-test, whereas in the post- and delayed post-test he managed to use the formulaic expressions "I am satisfied with my current plan" and "I am not interested" which made his response more structured, concise and pragmatically appropriate (he reached his communicative goal- to reject a sales offer). In terms of proper word choice, Marcus tended to use very uncommon for the English language phrases like "*I cannot disappoint you*" or "*assume my responsibilities*". Such phrases may cause misunderstandings and finally lead to communication failure. On the contrary, in the post- and delayed post-test the L2 participant expressed similar ideas in a more nativelike way: "*You will not be disappointed*". In conclusion, the Marcus's post- and delayed post-test results suggest that the explicit instruction did help this learner to foster both acquisition and retention of refusal and

thanking formulaic expressions and semantic formulas, as well as played a key role in developing his L2 pragmatic competence.

#### **4.1.1.4. Amandine.**

##### *Formulaic expressions*

Amandine (L1 French) was a 28-year-old-female from Ivory Coast. She decided to take part in the explicit instruction course hoping that it could help her prepare to move to the next LINC level. Table 14 contains the refusal and thanking formulaic expressions that Amandine used in the pre-test (before the explicit instruction course), the post-test (immediately after the explicit instruction course) and the delayed post-test (1 month after the post-test).

Table 14

##### *Amandine's pre-, post- and delayed post-test results*

| Scenario                     | <u>Pre-test</u>  | <u>Post-test</u>  | <u>Delayed post-test</u>   | Speech act |
|------------------------------|--|---|--|------------|
| Refusing friend's invitation | -I am sorry<br>-thank you                                      | -unfortunately I can't<br>-I have prior commitment<br>-thank you<br>-I hope we'll get together another time | -I am sorry<br>-I won't be able to make it<br>-hopefully we can get together soon                          | Refusal    |
| Rejecting sales offer        | n/a  | -go ahead<br>-that's sounds like a good plan<br>-I am happy with my current plan                            | -that sounds like a great deal<br>-I am sorry I am not interested<br>-okay thanks                          | Refusal    |
| Refusing manager's request   | -I would like but<br>-I am sorry for that<br>-I would like but | -I would like, but -current project<br>-thank you for understanding   | -I'd like to but<br>-I'm so sorry but I can't<br>-I will let you know<br>-thank you for your understanding | Refusal    |

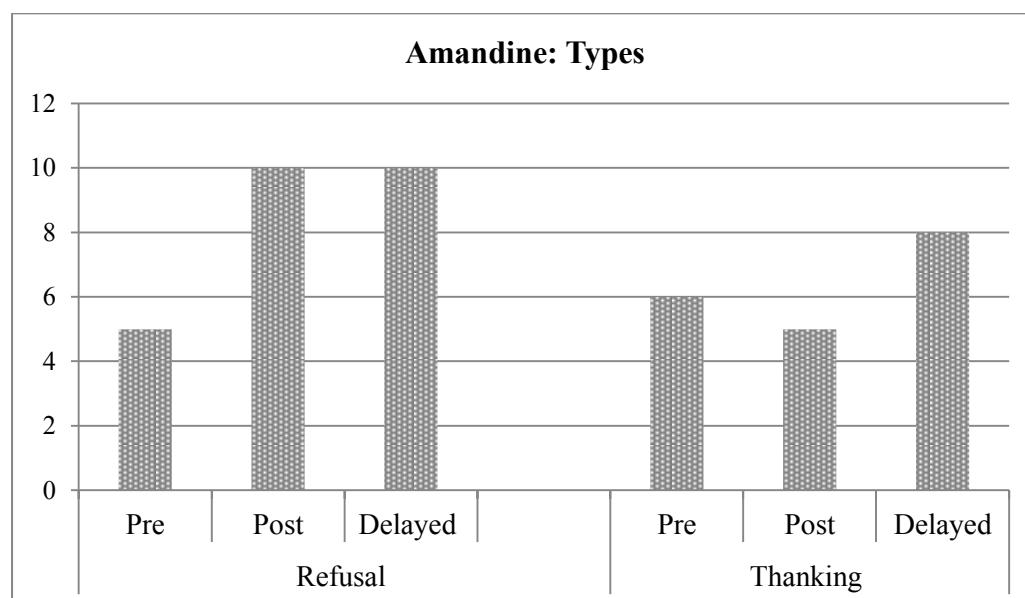
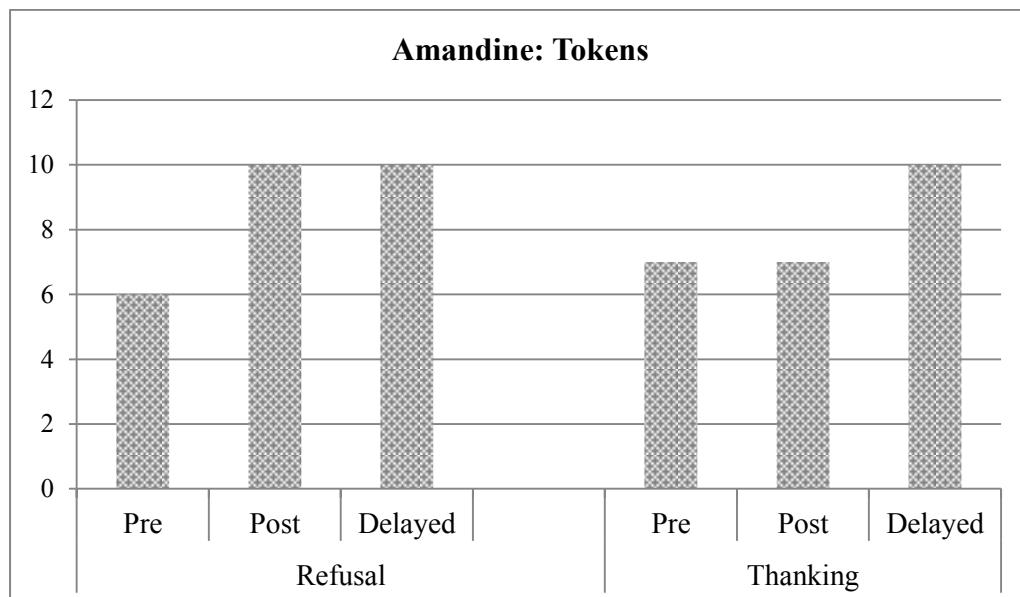
|   |   |   |   |          |
|---|---|---|---|----------|
|   | -okay thanks  |   |   |          |
| Responding to compliment                                  | -oh really?<br>thanks                                       | -are you sure?  | -thank you so much!<br>-do you really like it?<br>-thank you so much<br>-that's so sweet of you | Thanking |
| Thanking colleague for a favour                           | -I would like to thank you<br>-okay thanks                  | -I was very happy   | -thank you so much<br>-thank you so much for helping  | Thanking |
| Thanking manager for promotion/<br>raising salary/day off | -this is good news<br>-I am very happy<br>-thanks very much | -I am very happy<br>-you have confidence in me<br>-I am able to work hard | -I'd like to thank you<br>-thank you<br>-let me know<br>-next time<br>-I will wait for this     | Thanking |

Note. All formulaic expressions were considered, included the repeated ones; n/a stands for ‘no formulaic expressions used’.

The data presented in Table 14 reveal an increase in the variety of refusal and thanking formulaic expressions that Amandine used in the post- and delayed post-tests. In the pre-test her performance was very poor as she was not able to produce any appropriate formulaic expression which possesses refusal function. Although she tried to structure her refusal response several times (“*I would like but...*”), unfortunately she had never managed to complete neither of her statements. Amandine clearly lacked proper refusal formulaic expressions that could have been helpful in the offered ‘refusal scenarios’. In terms of thanking speech act, the L2 participant (similarly to Marcus) performed a bit better and used several advanced formulaic expressions (“*I would like to thank you*”, “*this is good news*”).

Both post- and delayed post-tests indicate improvement in Amandine’s ability to refuse and thank effectively. To illustrate, she did not use a single refusal formulaic expression in the ‘Rejecting sales offer’ scenario, but used a variety of formulaic expressions in both post- and delayed post-test scenarios. These include “*go ahead*”, “*that’s sounds like a good plan*”, “*I am happy with my current plan*”, “*that sounds like a great deal*”, and “*I am sorry I am not interested*”. As for thanking, Amandine’s repertoire of thanking formulaic expressions was also enriched. In her post- and delayed post-test responses she had used

formulaic expressions like “*that's so sweet of you*” or “*you have confidence in me*” which demonstrates successful acquisition and retention of the formulaic expressions that were presented to the experimental group during the course. Figure 8 below displays both token and type counts of refusal and thanking formulaic expressions used by Amandine in all 3 tests:



*Figure 8.* Tokens and types of refusal and thanking formulaic expressions (pre-, post- and delayed post-tests): Amandine.

As can be seen from the results in Figure 8, Amandine generally increased the total number of token and types for refusal speech act after the explicit treatment. However, the number of thanking types in her post-test performance slightly decreased (from 6 to 5); while in the delayed-post-test the number had gone up to 8 types. This might seem like a negative tendency from the first glance, but if we take a closer look at the transcribed data in Table 14, it will become clear that despite the relatively low number of types in the post-test, it did not harm Amandine's performance qualitatively. In other words, although she used less types of thanking formulaic expressions, her post-test responses contained more complex and sophisticated for an intermediate L2 learner formulaic expressions like "*I am able to work hard*", "*you have confidence in me*" or "*I will wait for this*", whereas in the pre-test the types included quite repetitive and simple thanking formulaic expressions like "*thanks very much*" or "*okay, thanks*". Overall, Amandine's performance in both speech acts improved after 9 hours of explicit instruction.

### *Semantic formulas*

The total number of semantic formulas was not calculated since the quantity was not the main focus of the analysis of this aspect of students' performance. On the contrary, I paid careful attention to the semantic structure of each response and analysed it in respect to its pragmatic appropriateness and 'nativelikness'. Therefore, only the most frequently occurring and the most 'representative' semantic formulas were elicited from Amandine's responses and included in Table 15 below. Each semantic is presented with its equivalent to better illustrate the development of the learner's L2 pragmatic competence.

Table 15

*Semantic formulas used by Amandine in the pre-, post- and delayed post-tests*

| Speech act | Semantic formula   | Verbal equivalent   |  |  |
|------------|--|---|--|--|
|            |  | Pre-test  | Post-test  | Delayed post-test  |
| Refusal    | Statement of regret+ statement of negative ability+ reason   | My daughter is sick, so I have to send him to the hospital, so I am not sure to come on your party, I am sorry          | Unfortunately I can't because I have another prior commitment with my family and I need to travel      | I like to do, but at this moment I don't have a lot of time because I have a lot of work to do in a short time |
| Refusal    | Statement of positive opinion+ excuse  | Your proposition is very good, but I think it's expensive for me, so I cannot accept your proposition                   | That sounds like a good plan but I am happy with my current plan                                       | Okay, that sounds like a great deal, but I am sorry, I am not interested now                                   |
| Thanking   | Confirming commitment/promising to do or give something because something similar was done or given to you | I am very happy for the new promotion and I am sure I will not [unclear] you. [unclear] I will do that my job very well | And I am also happy because you have confidence in me and I am able to work hard. I will wait for this | Thank you and let me know if you have anything to do next time   |

Note. This table contains only those semantic formulas that best illustrate L2 learner's pragmatic competence development.

The verbal equivalents of Amandine's semantic formulas in the pre-test clearly show that she has an understanding of how the proper and pragmatically appropriate response should look. However, due to the lack of proper refusal or thanking formulaic expressions, the L2 participant was not able to express herself clearly and accurately. Examples like "*I am not sure to come to your party*" or "*I will do that my job very well*" illustrate how hard it may be for a L2 speaker to properly refuse or thank his/her interlocutor spontaneously in a second language. However, Amandine's semantic formulas in the post- and delayed post-tests became better structured and clear. Moreover, she successfully used appropriate refusal and thanking formulaic expressions to express her commitment ("*I am able to work hard. I will wait for this*"), promise to do or give something similar because something similar was done

or given to her (*“let me know if you have anything to do next time”*) and so on. To conclude, the explicit instruction did help this learner to foster both acquisition and retention of refusal and thanking formulaic expressions and semantic formulas, as well as played a key role in developing her L2 pragmatic competence.

Finally, the two native speaker independent collaborators also concluded that the responses (utterances) produced by Mustafa, Julia, Marcus and Amandine in both post- and delayed post-tests were more logical, coherent, confident and pragmatically (contextually) appropriate. This gives additional validity to my own interpretation of the results and supports the importance of explicit instruction of situation-specific formulaic expressions for developing L2 pragmatic competence.

#### **4.1.2. Control group.**

The control group was also comprised of four participants who came from different cultural and L1 backgrounds: one African language speaker who was educated in French and therefore identified French as her L1, one Korean speaker, one speaker of Bhutanese language and one Burmese language speaker. As was mentioned in the previous chapter, the control group participants had not received any pedagogical treatment after the pre-test, as opposed to the experimental group participants. The inclusion of the control group into the research design of this study was due to the need for a sense of external validity and trustworthiness of the findings. Since the L2 learners from the control group were not the part of the collective case study, I will not discuss each participant separately. This section is aimed at presenting the summary of the results of the control group performance during all 3 tests. This is done in order to compare and contrast the performance of the control group with that of the experimental group.

### *Formulaic expressions*

Similar to the experimental group, tokens and types of the refusal and thanking formulaic expressions were counted for each control group participant in the pre-, post- and delayed post-tests. Table 16 contains the overall results of the calculation.

Table 16

#### *Types and tokens of formulaic expressions used by control group participants*

---

| L2 learner | Refusal  |           |              | Thanking |           |                   | Type/Token |
|------------|----------|-----------|--------------|----------|-----------|-------------------|------------|
|            | Pre-test | Post-test | Delayed-post | Pre-test | Post-test | Delayed post-test |            |
| Anand      | 12       | 10        | 11           | 8        | 8         | 5                 | Token      |
| Brianna    | 7        | 4         | 2            | 7        | 6         | 9                 | Token      |
| Tisha      | 3        | 4         | 6            | 9        | 5         | 8                 | Token      |
| Kim        | 6        | 7         | 7            | 5        | 8         | 5                 | Token      |

| L2 learner | Refusal  |           |              | Thanking |           |                   | Type/Token |
|------------|----------|-----------|--------------|----------|-----------|-------------------|------------|
|            | Pre-test | Post-test | Delayed-post | Pre-test | Post-test | Delayed post-test |            |
| Anand      | 8        | 6         | 9            | 5        | 3         | 5                 | Type       |
| Brianna    | 4        | 2         | 1            | 3        | 4         | 5                 | Type       |
| Tisha      | 3        | 3         | 3            | 6        | 3         | 7                 | Type       |
| Kim        | 3        | 4         | 4            | 2        | 5         | 4                 | Type       |

The time difference between the pre-test and the delayed post-test was 3 weeks; whereas the time difference between the post-test and the delayed post-test for both groups was approximately 1 month. The control group participants were attending their LINC classes and, therefore, exposed to instruction during the entire time of the quasi-experiment. As a result, the participants were presumably adding new formulaic expressions into their active vocabulary. Surprisingly enough, the results did not show any increase in the number of tokens and types of refusal and thanking formulaic expressions. Moreover, in some cases (Brianna and Kim) the number of tokens and types after the pre-test even decreased. This

strengthens the claim for the advantage of explicit instruction of formulaic expressions and suggests that such a complex language phenomenon may not be acquired implicitly. Drawing learners' attention to various formulaic expressions that occur in speech acts as well as additional explanations from a teacher may be very beneficial for L1 learners. In summary, the control group participants did not perform significantly better in the post- and delayed post-tests, as opposed to the experimental group participants.

### *Semantic formulas*

Similar to the experimental group, the total number of semantic formulas was not calculated since the quantity was not the main focus of the analysis of this aspect of students' performance. The responses were analysed in terms of their semantic structure, pragmatic appropriateness and 'nativelikeness'. Therefore, only the most frequently occurring and the most 'representative' semantic formulas were elicited from the responses of the control group participants and included in Table 17 below. Each semantic formula is presented with its verbal equivalent to better illustrate the development of the learner's L2 pragmatic competence.

Table 17

*Semantic formulas used by control group participants in the pre-, post-, and delayed post-tests*

| Semantic formula                                   | Pre-test verbal equivalent   | Post-test verbal equivalent   | Delayed verbal equivalent  | post-test verbal equivalent | Speech act and participant |
|--|--|---|--|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| Statement of regret+ statement of negative ability | Sorry for that because I want to come at your party but I have a problem now | Sorry, I want to say very sorry for because I have a problem at my home, so I need to stay at my home | Sorry to say that I have an appointment with doctor, so I need to take my father to the doctor, so at that time I could not attend | Refusal (Anand)             |                            |

|   |  |  |   |                    |
|---|--|--|---|--------------------|
| Promise of future acceptance  | If it possible I call you before, if it not possible I call you too to tell you          | I think next time I will go with you   | I think next Friday if you want, you have time?   | Refusal (Tisha)    |
| Statement of negative ability+ reason   | My son is sick...and now I am... I stay, or...I am hospital. I can't come.               | I have appointments in a doctor for 7 pm, that's why I can't come to that...   | I have another explain. My sister in law invite a party that's why I want to go to my family  | Refusal (Brianna)  |
| Statement of regret+ excuse   | I am so sorry, I have another plan, another company so I wanna keep going                | I am so sorry, I already have another company's plan, so I can't use your plan | I wanna refuse your suggestion because I have a knife set in my home so I wanna just buy a microwave. So sorry  | Refusal (Kim)      |
| Thanking+ emphasizing the depth of the gratitude  | Oh thank you for doing my work, It's really... thank you for it                          | Thank you very much, I was problem, you gave me this money, thank you for that | Thank you for your helping  | Thanking (Anand)   |
| Thanking + promising to do or give something because something similar was done or given to you | Thank you, Alisa. I think I am gonna have the opportunity to give the same thing for you | Thank you very much, because it was useful help. And I will remind this help   | Thank you for proposition, it's very nice. So I think after when I finish to move out, I will organize a dinner to say thank you for you and your friends | Thanking (Tisha)   |
| Expressing surprise and delight   | Thank you very much! Thank you, thank you so much! Thank you                             | Oh, thank you so much for my manager, God bless you!                           | Thank you so much, God bless you!   | Thanking (Brianna) |
| Thanking+ Confirming commitment   | Thank you. Yes, I am really...   | Thank you so much. I can work very hard next year                              | Thank you so much. If I finish early I come for my office so I work very hard   | Thanking (Kim)     |

*Note.* This table contains only the most representative responses of the control group participants.

As opposed to the experimental group participants, the control group students did not develop their L2 pragmatic competence well enough to be able to structure their refusal or thanking statements appropriately and politely. In other words, due to the limited range of

refusal and thanking formulaic expressions used by control group participants, their responses lacked a ‘nativelike’ way of expression. In addition, the results of all 3 tests show that the semantic structure of the responses to both speech acts produced by the control group lacked coherence, logic and were most of the time incomplete. Thus, the L2 respondents were not able to reach their communicative goal (refuse or thank somebody). Examples of such incomplete refusal or thanking statements include:

- *My son is sick...and now I am... I stay, or...* (Brianna, refusal)
- *Oh thank you for doing my work, it's really...* (Anand, thanking)
- *Thank you. Yes, I am really...* (Kim, thanking)

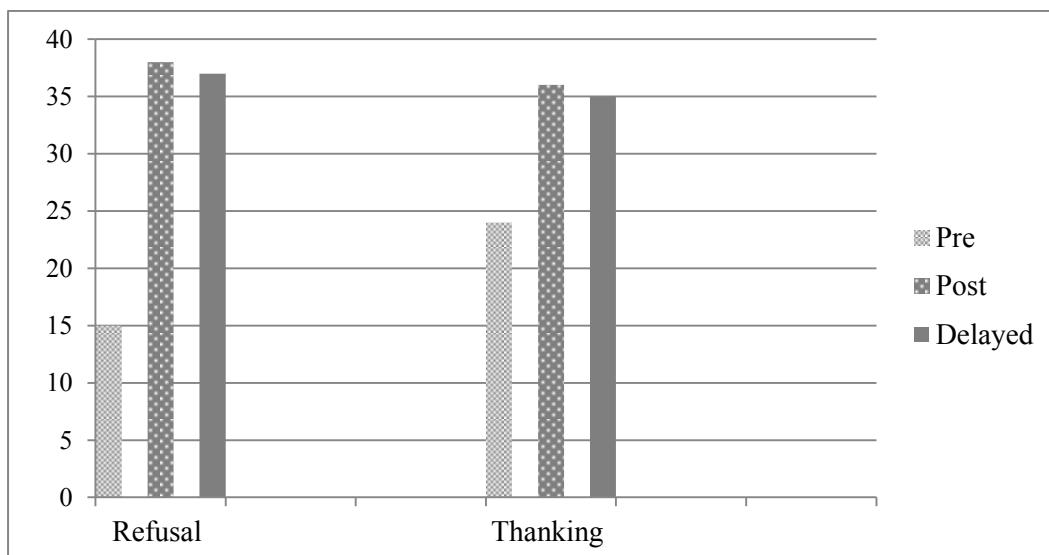
Moreover, the responses of the control group participants contain multiple examples of the pragmatically inappropriate utterances or utterances with various semantic irregularities. These include:

- *Thank you so much, God bless you!* (Brianna, thanking manager)
- *I will remind this help* (Tisha, thanking colleague)
- *If I finish early I come for my office so I work very hard* (Kim, confirming her commitment and thanking manager)

In summary, despite the continuous exposure of the control group to LINC language instruction, these L2 learners were not able to acquire and retain the sufficient number of refusal and thanking formulaic expressions. Nor did they develop their L2 pragmatic competence for effective spontaneous performance in various real world contexts in English. Their responses contain multiple pragmatic, semantic and grammatical discrepancies, which significantly interrupt speech flow and lead to misunderstandings and frustration.

#### 4.1.3. Summary and conclusion.

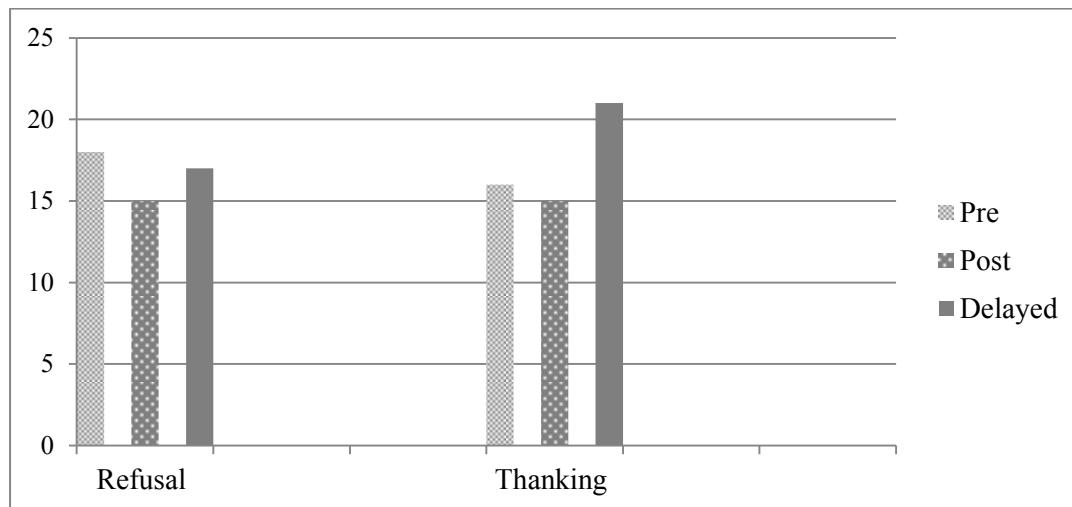
The results obtained from both experimental and control groups were presented and discussed in detail in the first section of the present chapter. The results showed improvement in the performance of the experimental group participants after 9-hour pedagogical intervention. These L2 learners not only acquired a sufficient number of refusal and thanking formulaic expressions, but were able to retain the majority of them in the delayed post-test. Figure 9 illustrates the overall results of the experimental group performance and includes the total number of types of refusal and thanking formulaic expressions used in all 3 tests. The types, as opposed to tokens, are more valuable for the interpretation of the results, since they show not only the quantity, but also the variety of the formulaic expressions used by a L2 learner. All in all, the responses of the experimental group became more pragmatically appropriate, more grammatically accurate, more fluent, concise and confident.



*Figure 9. Total number of types of formulaic expressions used in 3 tests: Experimental group.*

The control group participants, in contrast, did not acquire a sufficient number of refusal and thanking formulaic expressions during the entire time of the study (see Figure 9 for the overall results of the control group). Their performance can be described as

inconsistent and quite chaotic. By and large, the results supported the advantage of the explicit instruction over the implicit one and showed that it can foster L2 learners' acquisition and retention of refusal and thanking formulaic expressions and in such a way develop their L2 pragmatic competence.



*Figure 10.* Total number of types of formulaic expressions used in 3 tests: Control group.

The following section presents the results of the thematic analysis of the experimental group participants' written and oral reflections. The reflections were collected during the explicit instruction course as well as right after the post- and delayed post-tests. This was done in order to answer final two research questions of the study.

#### **4.2. Students' written and oral reflections**

This section presents the findings of the thematic analysis of written and oral post-test reflections collected from the experimental group participants during the explicit instruction course as well as immediately after the post- and delayed post-tests. The most recurrent patterns or themes were selected from the collected data and later became the categories for the qualitative analysis. The main themes were extracted from students' responses during the explicit instruction course, as well as after the course had ended (after post- and delayed post-

tests). Once again, the reflections of each experimental group participant are discussed separately according to the collective case-study design. The control group had not been asked to reflect on their experiences, since they were not exposed to the explicit instruction.

#### **4.2.1. During the course.**

In the end of each session during the explicit instruction course the experimental group students were asked to answer the two following questions in written form:

1. *Have you noticed any differences between the refusal and thanking formulaic expressions used in English and your L1 (in the speech acts of refusal and thanking)?*
  
2. *Have you noticed any differences between semantic formulas used by native speakers and the semantic formulas that you usually use in your L1 while performing speech acts of refusal and thanking?*

Four running themes were extracted from the students' written reflections collected during the course:

- The role of context in the choice of formulaic expressions and/or semantic formulas;
- The role of culture in the choice of formulaic expressions and/or semantic formulas;
- Difficulties with finding direct equivalents of formulaic expressions into other languages;
- Difficulties with structure of formulaic expressions and/or semantic formulas in other languages.

In what follows, the reflections of each individual participant are discussed and the above mentioned themes are explained in detail using supporting evidence from students' reflections.

#### **4.2.1.1. Mustafa.**

##### ***Difficulties with direct equivalents of formulaic expressions into other languages***

Mustafa did not notice many differences between English refusal and thanking formulaic expressions and those used in his L1 (Arabic) during the explicit instruction course. He stated that refusal and thanking formulaic expressions have the same meanings or perform the same functions no matter in what language they are produced. When answering the first question, Mustafa wrote:

*There are not big differences because always there is word strings [formulaic expressions]<sup>2</sup> used in most cases and they look similar to those are used in English. Some of the word bundles [formulaic expressions] are used typically the same, some of them changed by some words but still hold the same meaning.*

Yet, already in the second session he admitted that there were sometimes no exact English equivalents of the Arabic formulaic expressions:

*Other bundles [formulaic expressions] are not found at all in Arabic (for example, a real vote of confidence).*

The question of no direct equivalency was repeatedly raised by the researcher during the course. The fact that Mustafa mentioned this in his reflection may show his developing understanding of the complex nature of formulaicity due to the explicit explanations provided by the researcher.

##### ***Difficulties with structure of formulaic expressions and/or semantic formulas in other languages***

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<sup>2</sup> The true meanings of the terms used by the L2 participant are given in the square brackets. Terms ‘word string’ and ‘word bundle’ were used by the researcher during the explicit instruction sessions to facilitate better understanding of the material.

In terms of differences between Arabic and English semantic formulas, Mustafa had noticed some differences in the structure of the refusal semantic formulas in English and in his L1. In his reflection he wrote:

*Yes, there is a little bit difference in the way we apologize and the way we refuse. Because in some cases we can just say 'No, I can't' or 'No, thank you' in the native language. But here it's important to say sorry and to explain the reason why you refuse in very polite way that show the respect to the other person.*

#### **4.2.1.2. Julia.**

##### ***Difficulties with structure of formulaic expressions and/or semantic formulas in other languages***

As noted earlier, Julia was the only participant from the experimental group who started to notice the differences between both formulaic expressions and semantic formulas in English and her L1 from the very beginning of the course. She wrote in one of her reflections:

*Yes, two languages have different fixed word strings [formulaic expressions].*

Similar to Mustafa, Julia also mentioned the role of meaning of the formulaic expressions in her reflections. In her opinion, both languages (English and Chinese) have formulaic expressions and their meanings (or functions) are the same:

*I think the meanings of the word strings [formulaic expressions] are same, they are only different on speaking and writing.*

However, despite the similarities in meaning, Julia was able to notice the differences in the structure of English formulaic expressions: “...they are only different on speaking and writing”.

Julia also mentioned multiple differences between the structures of the semantic formulas in English with those in her L1. Firstly, she talked about the differences in the structure of refusals and stated that the refusal semantic formulas are more polite in English as opposed to Chinese:

*NS<sup>3</sup> refusal strategies [semantic formulas]<sup>4</sup> are more polite. Our L1 are more direct, but they can also be used between strangers sometimes.*

In her other reflection Julia also commented on the differences in the word order of the refusal and thanking semantic formulas in English and Chinese:

*NS' refusal strategies [semantic formulas] have different orders comparing with our L1. NS' refusal strategies [semantic formulas] like to apologize as the first step, then speaking reasons and thanks for understanding. But our L1 like to speak reasons first, then saying sorry and thanks for understanding.*

Moreover, the participant noted the difference in ‘action after thanking’ in the thanking speech act in English and Chinese. She wrote:

*The difference is in the action after thanking. In my L1 sometimes we need to invite somebody to eat food or drink. Even we need to buy a gift to express your appreciation.*

This explains her responses in the pre-test, when in one of the role-plays she offered a drink to a pretended manger in order to express her gratitude for being promoted: “*Have a drink, please, after work?*” (see Table 11).

#### **4.2.1.3. Marcus.**

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<sup>3</sup> NS stands for ‘native speaker’.

<sup>4</sup> The true meanings of the terms used by the L2 participant are given in the square brackets. Term ‘refusal strategy’ was used by the researcher during the explicit instruction sessions to facilitate better understanding of the material.

### ***The role of culture in the choice of formulaic expressions and/or semantic formulas***

Despite the fact that Marcus did not notice major differences between English semantic formulas and those in French, in his reflections he mentioned the difference between the two cultures:

*The strategies [semantic formulas] depend to who I talk to or I speak with. However, there are not more differences between the strategies [semantic formulas] in English and my L1. But there are differences with you culture.*

Marcus's reference to the culture difference may be a signal of his growing understanding about English semantic formulas. Even though he did not explicitly mention differences between English and French semantic structures, Marcus was still able to realize that they were not exactly the same.

#### ***4.2.1.4. Amandine.***

### ***The role of context in the choice of formulaic expressions and/or semantic formulas***

While Marcus pointed out the differences between the cultures, Amandine mentioned the role of context. In other words, she recognized that the choice of formulaic expressions always depends on a particular context. It is worth noting that the researcher was constantly referring to these two concepts (culture and context) when teaching refusal and thanking formulaic expressions during the course. Therefore, this could be the reason why these two students had mentioned culture and context in their reflections. Moreover, this might also prove that the explicit explanations of such complex from the first glance concepts significantly helped experimental group students to develop deeper understanding of the English structures.

In her during-the-course reflections on the semantic formulas Amandine again referred to the role of context:

*There is no many difference between NS<sup>5</sup> and my L1. But it depends on the context and who you are in front of you.*

### ***Difficulties with direct equivalents of formulaic expressions into other languages***

Even though Amandine stated that there were no major differences between English and French semantic formulas, she noted that translating French structures into English might be rather problematic due to the possible change of the entire meaning of the sentence:

*There are no differences between thanking strategies [semantic formulas] in English and French. But sometimes you can't directly translate thanking English to French because it change the meaning of the sentence.*

Amandine's observation here is similar to that made by Mustafa when he mentioned the lack of direct equivalents of certain English formulaic expressions like 'vote of confidence' in Arabic.

#### **4.2.2. After the course.**

The aim of the following section is to determine what might be the challenges that L2 learners face when they take part in refusal and thanking speech acts. Additionally, it was aimed at showing whether the experimental group participants did change their understanding of the nature of formulaic language and pragmatics after the course and, if yes, then how and

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<sup>5</sup> NS stands for 'native speaker'.

to what extent. Most importantly, the students were asked to reflect on their experiences with the explicit instruction course and answer the following questions:

- 1. What challenges with performing refusal and thanking speech acts have you experienced?*
- 2. Was the explicit instruction course useful for you? If yes, could you explain why? Has it helped you to overcome the challenges?*

In Question 1 the following major themes were elicited:

- Inability to perceive formulaic expressions as holistic units;
- Tendency to translate words one by one from L1;
- Inability to speak spontaneously and fluently;
- Tendency to misuse structures of English semantic formulas.

The major themes were elicited from the students' answers to each of the questions after the post- and the delayed post-tests. Answers to Question 2 contained the following major themes:

- Increase of confidence;
- Increase of fluency;
- Vocabulary enrichment;
- Time-efficient way of learning English.

Each major theme is discussed herein supported by the comments made by the participants while answering the questions.

#### ***4.2.2.1. Challenges.***

Students' answers revealed multiple challenges they have been facing while performing refusal and thanking speech acts. The following sections discuss each of the main themes that emerged during the coding of the oral reflections.

### ***Inability to perceive formulaic expressions as holistic units***

Almost all participants noted that before the explicit instruction sessions they were unable to perceive formulaic expressions as prefabricated or holistic units. For example, Mustafa was experiencing difficulties with putting words together to form a meaningful sentence, especially when the communicative situations (contexts) changed:

*For me it was difficult to combine new words. Bundles [formulaic expressions] always changed depending on situation. Before I can't [couldn't] recognize there is a formula [formulaic expression] for each situation.*

Marcus also admitted that before the explicit instruction course he could not recognize the formulaic nature of refusal and thanking expressions:

*I know the 'bundles' now. Even if I can't say it right away, I know it should be there. Before, I didn't know that.*

The instruction course was an 'eye-opener' for Amandine as well. According to her reflections, she did not understand that formulaic expressions are never separated:

*I was trying to separate... to check the meaning one by one...But then you said: "No, it's bundle, you don't have to separate them". Now I know that the bundles [formulaic expressions] cannot be separated. I didn't realize that the bundle word you have to put them together. If you say 'I can't afford that' it makes you understand that you can't separate them.*

Notably, Amandine had compared formulaic expressions with semantic formulas and concluded that it is more difficult to deal with former:

*For the strategy [semantic formula] you can learn, but with the formula, you have to remember that you have some bundle phrases and they cannot be separated.*

### ***Tendency to translate words one by one from L1***

Despite different L1s, all students shared the common tendency: they used to refer to their L1 each time they needed to produce an utterance. However, since the direct equivalents of certain refusal or thanking formulaic expressions cannot always be found in English, the pre-test results contained multiple examples of pragmatic failures as well as sounded abrupt and incomplete in some cases. For instance, Marcus said:

*In the beginning I always wanted to translate from my L1, but now I speak more fluent.*

However, due to the lack of variety of refusal or thanking formulaic expressions in her repertoire as well as inability to properly use them in various contexts, L1 learners still tended to heavily rely on the L1 when speaking in their L2. Amandine, for instance, was fully aware that when the L1 direct translation is given, it may completely change the intended meaning in English:

*So formula [formulaic expression] was very- very difficult for me. Sometimes you want to translate from your L1 but, if you do that, it's not correct because the meaning of the bundle [formulaic expression] and the meaning you want to translate from your L1 is different.*

### ***Inability to speak spontaneously and fluently***

Another challenge that the students had been facing was the ability to spontaneously engage in conversations and at the same time maintain the fluency of speech. For example, Julia noted:

*Sometimes it was hard for me to speak the 'bundles' [formulaic expressions] fluently, because my speaking is not good.*

As Marcus's reflection showed, he did not have the ability to retrieve formulaic expressions from memory at the time of speech before:

*I mean it's very easy for me to learn English according to formula [formulaic expression].*

However, after the instruction, this L2 learner became more prepared to speak spontaneously since he had developed a certain strategy for himself:

*For example, when you want to say something and you have a strategy, you always have that in your mind.*

Amandine complained about her inability to speak spontaneously and express herself to the same level as she could in her L1:

*Sometimes when you speak with someone because you don't know the word you just answer 'yes' or 'no' and you don't give the reason why because you can't. Sometimes you are very nervous when someone asks you and you answer 'yes' or 'no' and that's it.*

### ***Tendency to misuse structures of English semantic formulas***

The last major challenge that the L2 learners have faced was related with the proper use of English semantic formulas. Julia was the one who stressed the differences between the word order (structure) of semantic formulas in her L1 (Chinese) and in English:

*Sometimes I think the strategy [semantic formula] is more difficult for me. In my L1 the order is different [e.g. you first state the reason, then apologize]. In my country I can say everything, but in English I am not sure.*

Mustafa pointed out that he never thinks about semantic formulas when he speaks in his L1 (Arabic). However, it is much more challenging for him to express the same ideas in English since the semantic structures of the two languages are quite distant:

*There is a difference between our own native language and English. If I want to say ‘thank you’ to somebody in Arabic I will say it without strategies [semantic formulas], I won’t look for strategies. Maybe I say the same thing, but I don’t look for strategy, I learn it from my childhood. But in English there is more thanking of course, more thanking strategies [semantic formulas] and thanking statements [formulaic expressions] how to say in the polite way.*

The next section provides evidence in support of the explicit instruction and describes students' growing understanding of the value of formulaic expressions and L2 pragmatic competence for L2 proficiency improvement. Students' comments are presented and discussed in order to shed light on the processes that were underlying acquisition of formulaic language and pragmatics.

#### ***4.2.2.2. The role of explicit instruction.***

All students agreed that the explicit instruction course had been very helpful for them. The main arguments named by students were their ability to speak more confident and more fluently after the course, as well as the significant enrichment of their vocabulary and the ability to learn English in a time-efficient way.

### ***Increase of confidence***

Almost every participant mentioned the increase of confidence of his or her speech after the explicit instruction. For instance, Mustafa noted:

*When I speak to my English-speaking friends or neighbours, I feel better and much confident.*

Julia also mentioned that she is now able to use her newly acquired knowledge for every-day communication and that she feels more confident doing that:

*It's very useful, I think. Because every day I go outside to communicate with other persons and I use these words to talk to him. So every day I use it, it's very useful. Now I have the formulas [formulaic expressions] and strategies [semantic formulas], so I can feel more confident.*

### ***Increase in speech fluency***

The development of speech fluency was one of the main achievements of the explicit instruction course. The majority of the students pointed out that they started to speak more fluently after the course. These are some of the selected quotations from their responses:

Mustafa: *Yes, it was useful. I feel more confident now because I can a little but use language without thinking before I start talking. I think I am more fluent now.*

Julia: *Sometimes you need to use gerund or another grammar form and it is difficult. But when you have a bundle [formulaic expression] it is easier to speak fluently.*

Marcus: *Now I speak more fluent. For me it's not difficult because I just practice the strategy [semantic formula] and at the same time I learn my grammar. With the formulas [formulaic expression] I just need to practice more. So, I like it.*

### **Vocabulary enrichment**

The students as well reflected on their vocabulary enrichment due to the explicit instruction course. For example, Amandine said:

*I think that was very helpful because I learnt new words, I learnt how I can ask for something or I can ask for help. I can also reply when someone complimented me about something.*

Marcus also mentioned that he is now able to express himself in various situations:

*I know different ways to thank people or say 'no' for something I don't want or something I don't need. So for me it's very good.*

Julia realised that she had been using a quite limited range of formulaic expressions before the course and expressed her willingness to use those that she had learnt in future:

*Some formulas last time I didn't use them in my speech. So I should understand them and use them in future. Your explanations were really helpful!*

Similarly to Julia, Mustafa admitted that his repertoire of refusal and thanking formulaic expressions was very limited before. The new formulaic expressions which he had learnt are helping him to sound more polite:

*That was really useful because I was really needed statements- thanking and how to refuse things, because I always used to say only 'sorry' and 'thank you'. I feel that I am cold with people.*

### **Time-efficient way of learning English**

Marcus was the one who had been emphasizing the value of the explicit instruction course and described the methods used by the researcher to teach formulaic expressions and

pragmatics as very effective ones. In his opinion, this is a good way to learn English in a limited period of time without going to school for years and making no progress. He commented:

*It's good because people need this because we are here because we want to work. We are not here because we want to continue to go to school. I really appreciate this way to learn English. I mean it's very easy for me to learn English according to formula [formulaic expression]. For example, when you want to say something and you have a strategy, you always have that in your mind.*

#### **4.3. Conclusion**

Despite the multiple challenges that the L2 learners tended to face when engaging in refusal or thanking speech acts, the results of the study showed that it is possible to minimize the anxiety level and help students become more confident speakers within a quite short period of time. Experimental group participants convincingly spoke for the importance of explicit instruction method. Results also suggest that the explicit instruction of refusal and thanking formulaic expressions can help L2 learners to develop fluency of oral expression and enrich their lexicons; it can also help learners with producing concise and grammatically correct utterances. Moreover, teaching refusal and thanking formulaic expressions can help L2 learners in developing their pragmatic competence.

Students' written and oral reflections collected at different stages of the study (during and after the course) proved to be a very effective tool for tracking L2 learners' developing understanding of the nature of formulaicity and pragmatic structures of the target language. As can be seen from the analysis, experimental group participants were gradually acquiring meanings and pragmatic functions of refusal and thanking formulaic expressions. It is worth mentioning that their perceptions of the differences between English semantic formulas and

those in their L1s changed towards the end of the course. The participants clearly realized that they cannot simply rely on their L1s when performing refusal and thanking speech acts, but they should rather follow the pragmatic ‘strategies’ of English and use the proper situation-specific formulaic expressions that they learnt in the course.

Having presented and interpreted the results of the study, the following chapter discusses and highlights the main findings of this research in relation to the similar studies that were done before.

## Chapter 5

### Discussion

*I know the ‘bundles’ now. Even if I can’t say it right away, I know it should be there. Before, I didn’t know that.*

Marcus, L2 learner

The results of this study suggest the importance of teaching refusal and thanking formulaic expressions for developing L2 pragmatic competence. The results also imply that explicit instruction of such expressions can significantly increase learners' understanding of the complex phenomenon of formulaicity as well as help them to overcome the challenges they may face while performing refusal and thanking speech acts. After presenting the study's results in Chapter 4, this chapter discusses its main findings in relation to the literature that theoretically framed this research, and the research questions that guided the study.

In terms of the first research question: Can the explicit instruction of refusal and thanking formulaic expressions and semantic formulas: a) foster their acquisition and retention by second language (L2) learners; b) develop L2 pragmatic competence? The findings obtained from experimental group participants in the post- and delayed post-test revealed not only the fostered acquisition and ability to retain the majority taught formulaic expressions, but also showed that experimental group performance in the last 2 tests differed from the control group in various aspects. These and other findings are discussed in detail.

In addressing the second research questions: What are the challenges L2 learners may face while performing refusal and thanking speech acts? This chapter discusses the following challenges that experimental group participants have faced:

- Inability to perceive formulaic expressions as holistic units;
- Tendency to translate words one by one from L1;
- Inability to speak spontaneously and fluently;
- Tendency to misuse structures of English semantic formulas.

Finally, this chapter discusses the main findings in relation to the last research question of the study: Does the explicit instruction help L2 learners to overcome those challenges? If yes, in what way? The discussion is built around the key advantages of the explicit instruction course as described by experimental group participants. These include:

- Explicit instruction helps to increase confidence of oral expression;
- Explicit instruction increases speech fluency;
- Explicit instruction enriches vocabulary;
- A time-efficient way of learning English.

Each section considers the relation of the findings to previous research and provides suggestions for future research. The limitations of the present study are also brought forward in this discussion.

### **5.1. Acquisition and retention of refusal and thanking formulaic expressions**

The positive effect of the instruction on formulaic language acquisition and enhancing L2 pragmatic competence is consistent with the studies reviewed earlier. Wray (2000) pointed out that mastery of the idiomatic forms and expressions is an important component of successful language learning. Studies on formulaic language mention different approaches to its teaching in the L2 classroom. Boers, Eyckman and Stengers (2006) discussed drawing learners' attention to the mnemonic effects of formulaic sequences to foster their better acquisition and memorizing and found positive results. Webb and Kagimoto (2009)

investigated the effects of receptive and productive vocabulary tasks on learning collocations. The participants in this study were offered 2 matching activities (see Appendix L) where their attention was drawn to either pragmatic function or meaning of a refusal and thanking formulaic expressions. Students had multiple opportunities to return to these tasks during the 9-hour course which, as the results showed, stimulated their better understanding and retention of these expressions in the longer term.

The results of the present study showed that experimental group participants were able to retain the majority of types of refusal and thanking formulaic expressions in the delayed post-test (see Figure 9). However, it is worth noting that only few research studies showed the retention of the taught material in the long term (in the delayed post-test). Participants in Koike and Pearson study (2005) who experienced explicit pre-instruction and explicit feedback during exercises performed significantly better than the other experimental group and the control group but were not able to retain the gaining in the longer term. One of the experimental group participants of this study (Marcus) showed a decrease in the number of tokens and types in the delayed post-test (see Figure 7). Marcus spent the entire time between the post- and delayed post-test in France where he did not practice English at all. Nevertheless, his performance in the post-test was still significantly better in comparison to his pre-test results. Bardovi-Harlig and Bastos (2011) in their study found that the length of stay in the English-speaking environment did not have a significant effect on either recognition or production of formulaic expressions. On the opposite, both proficiency and intensity of interaction had a significant influence on students' performance. The results of my study suggest that even limited, but carefully planned instructional intervention can significantly improve learners' awareness and what is more valuable, their understanding of target language structures. Marcus mentioned later in one of his reflections: *I know the*

*'bundles' now. Even if I can't say it right away, I know it should be there. Before, I didn't know that.*

## **5.2. The impact of the explicit instruction of refusal and thanking formulaic expressions on developing L2 pragmatic competence and learners' performance**

The experimental group also outperformed the control group participants in terms of acquiring and retaining refusal and thanking formulaic expressions which were introduced to them during the course. As noted previously, the participants in the experimental group were exposed to various teaching techniques while the control group participants did not receive any treatment. Attention-drawing (Boers & Lindstromberg, 2012) was one of those techniques and, as the results showed, the experimental group significantly increased the number of tokens, and most importantly, types of refusal and thanking formulaic expressions in the post- and delayed post-tests. Bardovi-Harlig (2009) argued that the recognition of situation-specific formulaic expressions (conventional expressions) is a necessary condition for production, but is not sufficient for further successful retention and performance. Among the reasons for learners' low use of such expressions she mentioned lack of familiarity with some expressions and overuse of familiar expressions, which reduces the opportunity to use more target-like expressions. In addition to attention-drawing techniques, the experimental group was also encouraged to complete several activities which focused on retention of formulaic expressions as well as semantic formulas of the target language (see Appendices L and M). Whereas both control and experimental groups had these tendencies in the pre-test, only the experimental group used sufficiently more nativelike expressions in the post- and delayed post-test (see Tables 8, 10, 12, and 14). The control group, on the contrary, still tended to overuse the limited number of refusal and thanking formulaic expression in all 3 tests.

Previous research demonstrated that the explicit instruction can facilitate development of the L2 pragmatic competence. Applied linguists explored the role of teaching pragmatics and found out that developing learners' pragmatic competence can help them become more grammatically accurate (Felix-Brasdefer & Cohen, 2012). The experimental group participants in this study used more grammatically accurate phrases in the post- and delayed post-tests. Interestingly, almost all those phrases contained refusal or thanking formulaic expressions from the NS corpus. Such formulaic expressions help learners to process chunks of grammatically accurate language and help them sound more proficient without necessarily having full control over the language grammar. Explicit teaching of L2 pragmatics helps learners to notice the differences between their L1 and L2 and better understand the sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic choices that native speakers make in various speech acts (Ghobadi & Fahim, 2009). It was evident from the analysis of the post- and delayed post-test performance of experimental group participants that they started to feel more confident in their ability to speak spontaneously and fluently.

### **5.3. Challenges of the L2 learners and the benefits of the explicit instruction**

One of the most well-known features of a formulaic sequence is that it likely can be produced and retrieved from memory as a whole. However, while native speakers do not normally experience any difficulties with formulaic sequence processing, it may be rather problematic for L2 learners. Ellis, Simpson-Vlach and Maynard (2008) in their study looked at three corpus-derived metrics that affected accuracy and fluency of processing formulaic sequences: length, frequency and mutual information. They found that for the native speakers it was predominantly the frequency of the formula that determined processability, whereas for the non-native speakers the frequency of occurrence played the most important role. The results of the present study showed that all 4 participants were not able to perceive previously

unknown to them formulaic expressions as wholes until the researcher explained their meaning or function. Additionally, the participants were explicitly taught that such formulaic expressions have to be memorized and perceived as wholes since several words in one string usually has only one meaning or function. The experimental group participants in their reflections mentioned that such explanations were extremely useful and eye-opening since they were not able to recognize the formulaic nature of unfamiliar expressions before. This stresses the important role of explicit instruction in acquisition of formulaic sequences and suggests that teachers should not be afraid to discuss such aspects as formulaicity with their students, regardless of their proficiency level.

The topic of negative transfer in pragmatics was already discussed in Olshtain (1983), Kasper (1992) and Takahashi (1996). These studies discussed the effect of social-effective factors on the use and acquisition of L2 pragmatic competence. Almost every participant of the experimental group had a tendency to translate words one by one from the L1 when trying to produce an utterance. This proved to be very challenging for these students, since they did not have full control of grammar, and had insufficient vocabulary to produce accurate and pragmatically appropriate utterances. Therefore, all of them heavily relied on their L1s and produced unnatural and sometimes even bizarre utterances. As one of the participants (Amandine) noted, “sometimes you want to translate from you L1 but, if you do that, it’s not correct because the meaning of the bundle and the meaning you want to translate from your L1 is different”. The findings of this research suggest that drawing learners’ attention to the pragmatic functions of formulaic expressions and prompting leaners to pay attention to the meaning of such expressions, rather than to the literal translation, may be very beneficial.

Teaching formulaic sequences can also have a positive effect on fluent expression in a second language. A case study conducted by Wood (2009a) showed that intensive instruction helped a L2 learner significantly improve her fluency in the measures of speech rate and

length of runs. The study also concluded that the participant started to use more complex formulaic structures after the treatment. The present study revealed similar findings for the experimental group: their speech samples contain many examples of more complex and nativelike refusal and thanking formulaic expressions in the post- and delayed post-tests (see Tables 8, 10, 12, and 14). In terms of increase in fluency, the present study did not measure length of runs or pauses, but the transcripts and data analysis clearly show that the experimental group sounded more fluent and natural after the course due to the variety of refusal and thanking formulaic expressions that they used in the post- and in the delayed post-tests. Also, the decreased number of hesitations (marked by series of full stops in the transcripts) in the post- and in the delayed post-tests may serve as an indicator of increased fluency of oral expression (for a full description of markers of fluency in speech, see Wood, 2010). Interestingly, in their reflections students also spoke about the increase in the ability to express themselves more fluently and spontaneously since they were ‘equipped’ with the proper refusal and thanking formulaic expressions which they could effectively use in specific speech acts.

Cohen and Olshtain (1993) reported a study describing ways in which non-native speakers execute different speech acts and found multiple deviations from the patterns of English speech. This study, similarly, found the tendency of L2 participants to misuse structures of English semantic formulas in their responses to the refusal and thanking speech acts. The main reason for such pragmatic violations, as reported by experimental group participants in their reflections, was the difference in cultural norms and different understanding of what appropriate and polite communication means. For instance, Julia wanted to invite her pretend manager for a drink as an expression of her gratitude for promotion. Later in her reflection Julia explained that it is considered appropriate in China to give gifts to your colleagues whenever you want to thank them for a favour. The explicit

explanations about the English cultural norms helped Julia to better understand why her response in the ‘thankng your manager’ scenario was pragmatically inappropriate.

Another important finding that arose from the students’ reflections is that focused teaching of situation-specific formulaic expressions can not only improve learners’ pragmatic competence, but it can also serve as one of the ways to save classroom time on tiring explanations of complex grammar structures and having learners memorize long lists of vocabulary items. LINC students represent a unique student population that differs extensively from international students in, for example, English for academic purposes (EAP) programmes. LINC learners, as opposed to international university students, usually have poor educational backgrounds and sometimes have interrupted education due to wars or other conflicts in their countries of origin. It is crucial that such students adjust to their new country as soon as possible so they can find employment and become members of their communities. As Marcus emphasized in his reflection, “we are here because we want to work. We are not here because we want to continue to go to school”. Unfortunately, the majority of the LINC students are not able to find good jobs and are usually perceived as undereducated and lower-class people due to their low level of English proficiency. This study proved that teaching formulaic language in combination with pragmatics can be a very effective way to help L2 learners become more proficient speakers in a less time-consuming way.

#### **5.4. Limitations of the study and suggestions for future research**

Although this study’s results spoke persuasively for the effectiveness of the explicit instruction and its positive influence on L2 learners’ acquisition and retention of refusal and thanking formulaic expressions as well as developing L2 pragmatic competence, there were several factors that limited the study. First of all, the case-study design did not allow for

engaging more participants. Therefore, the results of the study cannot be generalised beyond the four participants of the experimental group. Secondly, the limited time allocated for this study only allowed for dealing with 2 speech acts: refusal and thanking. It would be interesting to investigate the effects of explicit instruction of formulaic expressions that occur in other speech acts and see if the findings will be similar.

One more limitation of the study is that the researcher was the only person who developed and taught the entire 9-hour course. Future research in this area might consider hiring and training more ESL instructors who will also teach similar courses. Such sessions could be video-recorded and analysed in order to gain deeper understandings of the processes happening in the classroom during such type of instruction. Additionally, it would be beneficial to extend the period of explicit instruction session to approximately 3-6 months to observe their interlanguage development within a longer period of time. Collecting students' written and oral reflections was only an attempt to expand our limited understanding of the cognitive processes that underlie the execution of speech acts by non-native English speakers. Future avenues may include conducting more structured interviews and giving out the questionnaires to students which would track their growing understanding of formulaic language and L2 pragmatic norms. Collecting students' reflections prior to the instruction may be also beneficial.

Having discussed the major findings in relation to the guiding research questions, the final chapter of this thesis will summarize the findings and discuss implications for language teaching based on the conducted research.

## Chapter 6

### Conclusion and implications for language teaching

#### **6.1. Summary of the findings**

The results of this research suggest that students can significantly benefit from explicit instruction in terms of acquisition and retention of situation-specific formulaic expressions and, by this means, develop L2 pragmatic competence. The study also demonstrated that, while teaching formulaic language helps with developing fluency and grammatical accuracy, focused instruction of L2 pragmatics leads to the ability to produce more concise and effective utterances in a second language. The conducted study also shed light on the potential of teaching formulaic sequences to L2 learners of various proficiency levels and backgrounds in a very limited period of time.

The results of the analysis of students' written and oral reflections revealed their growing understanding of how L2 pragmatics and formulaic language (areas very often ignored in the classroom) can significantly develop all the components of communicative competence. This includes not only organizational knowledge (grammatical competence), but also pragmatic knowledge (sociolinguistic competence) of the target language (Bachman & Palmer, 1996). Despite the multiple challenges that L2 learners tend to face when engaging in refusal or thanking speech acts, the results of the study imply that it is possible to minimize the anxiety level and help students become more confident speakers within a quite short period of time. All in all, the responses of the experimental group became more pragmatically appropriate, more grammatically accurate, more fluent, concise and confident, as opposed to the control group participants, whose performance did not sufficiently develop despite the constant exposure to the language instruction. In conclusion, the ability to use target

language structures spontaneously and at the same time in a pragmatically accurate manner may ensure smooth transition period for newcomers to Canada and help them fully engage in the English-speaking society.

## **6.2. Implications for language teaching**

The results of this study strongly support the crucial role of acquiring a wide repertoire of situation-specific formulaic expressions for developing L2 pragmatic competence. This suggests incorporating more of those activities described in the Methodology section into day-to-day classroom practice. Although the design of the activities is not new, the content of those activities used in this study for teaching formulaic language and pragmatics was quite unique. Drawing learners' attention to such aspects of language is unfortunately a quite rare practice in LINC classrooms. However, the results of this research convincingly spoke for the need of introducing L2 learners to such activities, especially if the final outcome of the course is enhancing the oral proficiency.

Teachers might as well consider initiating whole-class discussions about the meanings and pragmatic functions of various formulaic expressions that commonly occur in English speech acts. In this study, such discussions were an integral part of each session and proved to be very effective for fostering learners' acquisition and retention of formulaic expressions and semantic formulas.

The value of this study is that it made an attempt to fill the gaps in the research that exists so far and explore and the role that explicit instruction of situation-specific formulaic expressions can play in developing L2 pragmatic competence. Collecting written reflections proved to be a very useful tool of tracking students' progress. It might be a good idea to consider including such reflections into students' portfolios as a part of portfolio-based

language assessment (PBLA) as this might be one of the alternative assessment tools that teachers can use. Reflecting on their language learning helps students to deepen their understanding of the target language structures and facilitate L2 acquisition. Also, this avenue is quite promising for future research in this area, as the research done in this study was only the first step towards deepening our understanding of the processes that underlie L2 acquisition of formulaic expressions as well as pragmatic structures of a target language. A much longer and detailed observation of students' development of pragmatic competence through formulaic language teaching might be considered for future studies.

Finally, I received many 'thank-you' e-mails from the experimental group participants after the study ended (long after delayed post-test). One of the participants wrote that she was able to use her knowledge of thanking formulaic expressions for one of the final assignments in her class. Other participants reported that they started to use more formulaic expressions with their English-speaking neighbours and friends after the course and that they felt more confident in their speaking ability. I would like to end this thesis by saying that I enjoyed conducting this study as both language teacher and researcher. The positive feedback received from experimental group participants about the explicit instruction course showed that it made a significant difference in their language learning experience. This study has given me additional motivation to continue future research in this area as well as has strengthened my passion for language teaching.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A

#### **6 Multiple-turn Written Discourse Completion Tasks (WDCTs)**

##### ***1. Refusing friend's invitation (refusal)***

Scenario: One of your friends is organizing a party at his/her house. You knew about the party two weeks prior and confirmed your attendance. However, your child suddenly got sick and you will have to take him/her to the hospital on that very day. How would you refuse his invitation in a polite way? In the dialogue below please fill in the blanks and write your possible replies (what would you say in this situation). Make sure you have read the whole dialogue before you fill in the blanks.

Your friend: Hello! How are you doing? I hope you did not forget about the party. It is going to be this Wednesday at 7 pm at my place, just a reminder. Hope to see you there!

You: \_\_\_\_\_

Your friend: Oh. That's too bad. I hope your child will get better soon! We will miss you at the party.

You: \_\_\_\_\_

Your friend: Yes, for sure. There is always next time. Don't worry about it.

##### ***2. Rejecting sales offer (refusal)***

Scenario: You have received a call from a telecommunication company. A sales agent is offering you to sign up for a new monthly plan. You realize that this plan is quite expensive and you won't be able to afford it. How would you refuse his offer in a polite but firm way? In the dialogue below please fill in the blanks and write your possible replies (what would you say in this situation). Make sure you have read the whole dialogue before you fill in the blanks.

Sales agent: Good afternoon! My name is John and I am calling you with 'Canada Phones'. Do you have a minute to talk?

You: \_\_\_\_\_

Sales agent: I would like to bring to your attention our new cell phone plan that includes unlimited internet and unlimited Canadian long distance calling for up to 3 years. If you sign up before the end of this week, you will be saving at least \$ 50 dollars per month.

You: \_\_\_\_\_

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Sales agent: Not a problem. Thank you for your time and have a wonderful day!

### ***3. Refusing manager's request (refusal)***

Scenario: Your manager is asking you to stay for several extra hours after work today. However, you have an appointment scheduled with your family doctor that you have been waiting for more than a month. How would you explain the reason of your inability to stay in a polite way? In the dialogue below please fill in the blanks and write your possible replies (what would you say in this situation). Make sure you have read the whole dialogue before you fill in the blanks.

Manager: Hi ... (name)! Will you be able to stay for some extra time today after work? We really need to finish that report.

You: \_\_\_\_\_

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Manager: Oh, that's a pity. Do you think you can still reschedule your appointment? I would really appreciate it if you could stay with us today.

You: \_\_\_\_\_

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Manager: Okay, I see. I understand you have to take care of your health first. I will e-mail you the details of our meeting later today then.

You: \_\_\_\_\_

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### ***4. Responding to compliment (thanking)***

Scenario: Your friend has just complimented you on your new haircut. How would you thank him/her for this? In the dialogue below please fill in the blanks and write your possible replies (what would you say in this situation). Make sure you have read the whole dialogue before you fill in the blanks.

Your friend: Wow! Look at you! I like your new haircut!

You: \_\_\_\_\_

Your friend: Yes, absolutely. It suits you so well. Would you recommend your hairdresser/barber to me?

You: \_\_\_\_\_

Your friend: Thank you very much. I will be looking forward to meeting her/him.

You: \_\_\_\_\_

### ***5. Thanking colleague for a favour (thanking)***

Scenario: One of your co-workers has taken your shift on the day when you couldn't work. How would you thank him/her for doing this favour? In the dialogue below please fill in the blanks and write your possible replies (what would you say in this situation). Make sure you have read the whole dialogue before you fill in the blanks.

You: \_\_\_\_\_

Your friend: No problem at all. I am happy I was able to help!

You: \_\_\_\_\_

Your friend: No sweat. You helped last month so I am returning the favour now.

You: \_\_\_\_\_

### ***6. Thanking your manager (thanking)***

Scenario: You have been informed by your manager that you will be promoted next month. How would you express your gratitude and demonstrate understanding of your new responsibilities? In the dialogue below please fill in the blanks and write your possible replies (what would you say in this situation). Make sure you have read the whole dialogue before you fill in the blanks.

Your manager: Dear ... (name)! We have been observing your hard work and dedication to our company's success. Therefore, the management board has decided to promote you starting from next month.

You: \_\_\_\_\_

Your manager: You have certainly earned it. You will be given the position of head of your department.

You: \_\_\_\_\_

Your manager: I am sure you will do well. Good luck!

You: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix B

### Native Speaker (NS) corpus of collected responses

#### ***1. Refusing friend's invitation (refusal)***

**1:** I'm sorry, I won't be able to make it. My child is very sick; Yeah, I'm sorry. Hopefully, we can get together soon

**2:** Hey! Unfortunately I can't make it, my child is sick. Sorry!  
Thanks, I'm sure she'll be fine. Enjoy the party!

**3:** Sorry, can't make it tonight, my daughter is sick; Thanks for the invite, I'd like to see you!

**4:** Oh, I'm sorry. Shira just got really sick and I need to take her to the hospital on Wednesday; Oh, I'm sorry. But I should still be able to make it next month.

**5:** Hey! I'm sorry but my son is really sick and I have to take him to the hospital; Thank you. Have fun! I'll miss you all as well.

**6:** Oh, I'm so sorry. Actually, it turns out I have to take my child to the hospital.

**7:** I'm so sorry, I'm afraid I won't be able to make it this time. My child is sick...; Thanks! I promise I will make it next time!

**8:** Unfortunately, I will not be able to come to the party anymore because my child is sick...; Thank you for understanding, I'll definitely come to the next party

**9:** Sorry, I can't make it tonight. I have to take Justin to the hospital and we might be there for a long time; Thanks, I hope it's nothing serious. I hope you have a good time though

**10:** Oh, I was going to tell you—I just got an appointment with a specialist for Megan and it's Wednesday evening. I won't be able to make the party. So sorry. I was really looking forward to it; Thanks. We'll have to get together another time

**11:** Yes, I was just going to give you call because unfortunately I won't be able to make it.

My daughter has a high fever and I am really worried. So I am going to take her to the hospital for an assessment. I am sorry about the party. I will miss you all too. Say hi to everyone.

**12:** I am glad you called. Mickey is sick. I can't come. Thank you. I am really sorry. Have a great time.

**13:** I meant to call you. I'm sorry I can't make it because my child is sick and I have to take her to the hospital. Thanks. I was looking forward to it.

**14:** Oh I'm so sorry. My daughter is sick so I can't come. I was looking forward to it. Maybe another time.

**15:** Oh sorry I forgot to call, but I won't be able to make it to the party. My son's sick and I have an appointment at the hospital on Wednesday evening. Yes, sorry again. I was really looking forward to getting together.

**16:** Oh crap, I might be delayed due to a situation, ah if I can make it all, family 'child' crisis. Talk later. Well it is unpredictable you know.

**17:** I am really sorry, but my kid has fallen ill and I have to take him to the hospital. I'll have to cancel this evening. I apologize again! Thank you, I wish I could have made it. Please let everyone know I would have loved to come over.

**18:** Hey! Nope, didn't forget, but actually I wanted to tell you: Sean got sick!! I have to take him to the hospital right now. Sorry about that.

**19:** Oh, ah – I can't make it – my son is sick.  
Don't worry, I'm sure we'll find another time.

**20:** Hello, I was just about to call you. My child woke up with a higher fever and a rash. I need to take him to the hospital. Sadly, I won't be able to attend your party.

## ***2. Rejecting sales offer (refusal)***

**1:** I'm a little busy, but, yeah, okay, go ahead;  
Thank you but I'm quite happy with my current phone plan. I'm afraid I'm not interested

**2:** That sounds like a great plan, but I'm satisfied with my current plan.

**3:** Now is not a good time; I'm not interested, thank you.

**4:** Oh, no I'm sorry, I can't afford that.

**5:** I'm not in a position to afford this plan right now.

**6:** Thank you, but I really like my current plan.

**7:** Sorry, I'm not interested.

**8:** This is not a good time to talk, can you call back another day? Thank you for the offer but now is not a good time.

**9:** Yes, but it will have to be quick; I already have a plan I am satisfied with, so I don't need a new one right now.

**10:** I'm sorry, I'm not interested.

**11:** Hi, not really. I am not going to work. What's this about? Sorry, I am not currently in a position to deal with this. Thanks anyway.

**12:** No, thank you.

**13:** All right. I'm sorry. I am not interested.

**14:** Actually I'm kind of busy. I'm not interested, thanks.

**15:** Although that sounds interesting, I think I will stick with my current plan.

**16:** No not really, bad time. Ya, great, but bad time. Sorry, not interested.

**17:** Sure. I am sorry, but I am not interested in the plan.

**18:** No, I am not interested. Thank you, but I am not interested.

**19:** OK, go ahead. Thanks, but I don't need a new phone plan.

**20:** Thanks for your offer, but I'm not interested.

### ***3. Refusing manager's request (refusal)***

**1:** I'm sorry, I can't stay. I have a doctor's appointment right after work; I'm afraid not; Thank you. I'm sorry I couldn't stay longer.

**2:** I don't think I will be able to, I have Drs appointment; Unfortunately I can't, but I'd be willing to stay longer another day; Thanks for understanding

**3:** I have a doctor's appointment today, sorry; This appointment is very important, sorry; Thank you for understanding

**4:** No, I'm really sorry, but I have an appointment to go to; Yes, I see, but I've been on the waitlist to see my doctor for over a month; Thank you for your understanding

**5:** No, I am sorry, I have a doctor's appointment after work; Unfortunately, I can't. I've been waiting over a month to see the Doctor; Thank you for understanding. I will make sure to check for your e-mail after my appointment.

**6:** I'm sorry, I have an appointment after work. Unfortunately, this is the only time my doctor can see. Thank you. Sorry again.

**7:** I'm terribly sorry, I have a doctor's appointment scheduled for tonight; I really wish I could, it is just that I have been waiting for this appointment for a month. I really can't miss it; Thank you and sorry again. I'll be happy to help next time.

**8:** I'm sorry but I won't be able to stay as I have scheduled appointment at the doctors tonight; Again, I'm sorry, I've been waiting for a month for this appointment that is important to me; Thank you for understanding!

**9:** Unfortunately, I have a prior appointment and can't stay late today; No, sorry. It's a medical appointment that we have scheduled months ago and I can't change it now; Thanks. Normally I would change my plans, but on this occasion I really can't. Sorry. I'll appreciate getting the information following the meeting though

**10:** Oh, I'm afraid I can't stay today. I have a doctor's appointment that's been booked for a while; I'm really sorry, but I can't. I've been waiting for this appointment for a while. I can walk on the report at home; Okay, thanks.

**11:** Oh dear. I can't. I have a doctor's appointment right after work. Me too, but I am so sorry. I have been waiting a long time for this appointment and it was difficult to get. Perfect, thanks so much.

**12:** I'm sorry, no. I have an appointment. No, I've been waiting for a month to see this doctor. Thank you.

**13:** I made a prior commitment. Sorry, I have to go. I'm sorry, but I have a prior commitment that can't be changed. Thanks.

**14:** Sorry, I have a doctor's appointment. I've been waiting over a month for this appointment. Sorry but I can't change. Thank you very much I appreciate your understanding.

**15:** I would love to stay and help, but unfortunately I have a doctor's appointment after work. You know that I would always help out if I could, but this appointment has been scheduled for months. Thank you so much for your understanding.

**16:** Wow, I have doctor's appointment, I would like to help, but health issues are important. Great, this can't be ignored.

**17:** Unfortunately, I do not think so. I have an important doctor's appointment this afternoon that I must attend. I am really sorry to inconvenience you, but I really don't think I will be able to stay. Thank you. I will read it and work on the report as soon as possible.

**18:** How long do you need? I have a doctor's appointment I can't miss. I've been waiting for month, actually, so it wouldn't be helpful to me to reschedule. Sorry about that. Perfect, thanks. In the meantime, let me know if I can do anything to help prepare.

**19:** I am sorry, but I have a doctor's appointment I have to go to in 45 minutes. Ordinarily I would be happy to help, but I need to go to this appointment because I've waited a month for it. Thank you.

**20:** I'm very sorry, but I have scheduled an appointment for after work today. Unfortunately, I can't. I've waited for over a month for this appointment with my doctor. Thank you for your understanding.

#### ***4. Responding to compliment (thanking)***

- 1:** Thanks a lot!
- 2:** Thank you! Do you really like it?
- 3:** Thank you! Do you really like it?
- 4:** Really? Thanks!
- 5:** Thank you! Do you think it suits me? It's pretty different!
- 6:** Oh, thank you for noticing.
- 7:** Oh thanks! You really like it?
- 8:** Thank you, that's so sweet of you!
- 9:** Thanks! Do you think it suits my face?
- 10:** Oh yeah. You like it?
- 11:** Do you? It's so short, I don't think I like it. Does it look alright?
- 12:** Oh really? Thank you. You think it looks nice?
- 13:** Thanks! I love it too.
- 14:** Thanks a lot. Do you think it's better?
- 15:** Thanks, I love it.
- 16:** Thanks, cost ten dollars, excellent deal.
- 17:** Oh, thank you. Do you think it looks okay?
- 18:** Thanks! I just got it. Glad you like it.
- 19:** Thanks! Do you like the way the hair's pulled back?
- 20:** Thank you. Do you like the way she cut my bangs?
- 5. *Thanking colleague for a favour (thanking)***
- 1:** Thanks a lot for filling in for me today; Yeah, I really owe you one; Well, thank again. Have a good day.
- 2:** Hey! Thank you so much for taking that shift for me; You're the greatest; It's what friends are for.
- 3:** Thanks so much for taking my shift. I really appreciate it; I just wanted you to know how much it meant! Let me know if I can ever do anything for you!
- 4:** Thanks again for taking my shift the other day.

**5:** Thank you for taking my shift! I was in a really tight spot. Are you sure? I am sure you had other things to do. I owe you one. Thank you! If you ever need to switch just let me know!

**6:** Thanks so much for taking my shift. If you need anything, just let me know.

**7:** Thanks! You don't know how much of a relief it is.  
I can't thank you enough. You're the best.

**8:** Thank you for taking my shift the other day.

**9:** Thank you so much for agreeing to take my shift tonight. I don't know what I would have done if you hadn't agreed to do it. Well, it means a lot to me. Thanks, again.

**10:** Hey thanks again for working for me yesterday! I really appreciate it cuz I couldn't change my doctor's appointment.

**11:** Thanks so much for taking my shift. I really appreciate it. I was in a bind.  
Let me know if I can re-pay the favor sometime.

**12:** Thanks for working for me yesterday. Still, it was exhausting for you. I am really grateful. Well, thank you. I appreciate it.

**13:** Thanks for filling in for me. I really appreciate it. It's good to be part of a good team.

**14:** Thank you so much for taking my shift! It really helped me cause I had to take my child to the doctor. I'll be happy to help you any time. Just ask.

**15:** Thanks so much for taking my shift.

**16:** Hey, that is much appreciated! Cheers!

**17:** Hey, thank you so much for covering me! I really appreciate it! I was stressing about missing this event, you've made my life infinitely less stressful. Thanks again! Hope you have an awesome shift!

**18:** Hey! Thanks for taking my shift yesterday. I really appreciate it. Okay, cool. Well, thanks again.

**19:** Thanks for covering my shift yesterday. I really appreciate it – I was able to go see my son perform – thanks so much. Well, if you ever need a shift covered, just give me a call.

**20:** Thanks so much for taking my shift. I hope that I can return the favour soon. It meant a lot to me. Thanks again.

#### ***6. Thanking your manager (thanking)***

**1:** Wow! Thank you so much. That's wonderful news. I really appreciate it; That sounds like a big responsibility. I guess I'm now in charge of the entire sales team. I hope I'm up to it; Thank you and thanks for the promotion.

**2:** Thank you so much! I am really grateful; I won't let you down; I know I'm ready for the

job! Thanks again!

**3:** Thank you so much! I'm happy that you think I'm ready! Thank you, again!

**4:** Really? Wow, thank you very much, sir! I'll do my best. Thank you.

**5:** Oh my, thank you! This is so exciting! What position am I promoted to? This is incredible! I've got a lot of work ahead of me. Thank you very much.

**6:** Wow, thank you. I appreciate you giving me this opportunity. Again, I really appreciate you giving me such an opportunity. Thank you!

**7:** Thank you so much, that is so great to hear! I'm so thrilled. I'm really looking forward to this new opportunity. Thank you again.

**8:** Woah! I am so surprised, thank you very much! So thoughtful on you! I will not disappoint you!

**9:** This is wonderful if unexpected, news. Thank you. This is a great opportunity for me to further support the department's goals. Thank you so much for the confidence you are showing in my work. I'll endeavor to do my very best in the new position.

**10:** Oh wow! Thank you so much! I'm really honored that I was considered for this promotion. Thank you. This means a lot to me and I won't let you and the board down. Thanks again!

**11:** Thank you, that is good news. I have worked hard. I will do my best to fulfill the job requirements. Thank you very much.

**12:** Really? That's great! Thank you. Awesome. I am very excited to hear this. Thank you.

**13:** Thank you very much. I'll do my best. I promise you that! Thank you for putting your confidence in me.

**14:** Thank you, Sir. That's wonderful news. I'm looking forward to my new responsibilities. You can count on me. Thanks again.

**15:** Thank you so very much for your kind words. I will do my best to excel in the new position. Wow, thank you again. I look forward to this new opportunity and I will not make your regret this decision. Once again, thank you for your confidence in me.

**16:** Great, I much appreciate this. Fantastic, I am looking forward to this Thank you, Sir.

**17:** Wow, thank you very much for this honour! I eagerly look forward to the new position. This is amazing! I hope I'm prepared to the promotion. Thank you again, Mr \_\_\_\_\_. I look forward to sharing this news with my husband.

**18:** Woo hoo! Thank you, so much! I really appreciate the recognition. Wow, that's unexpected. I hope I can live up to your expectations. Thanks again!

**19:** Thank you. I'm honoured. That's wonderful news. Wonderful. That is a really vote of confidence. I will get right to it.

**20:** Thank you very much. I'm very honoured. I will work hard to meet this new challenge. Thank you for your confidence.

## Appendix C

### Refusal formulaic expressions in the Native Speaker (NS) corpus

| <u>Identification criteria</u>   | <u>Formulaic expression</u>   |
|--|---|
| Recurrent formulaic expressions used for pragmatic purpose of refusal  | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Sorry, I am not interested</li> <li>2. It's not a good time to talk</li> <li>3. Sorry, I can't make it</li> <li>4. I won't be able to make it</li> <li>5. Sorry, I can't afford that</li> <li>6. Unfortunately I can't make it</li> </ol>   |
| Greater length or complexity   | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. I wish I could have made it</li> <li>2. I'm afraid I won't be able to make it this time</li> <li>3. Unfortunately I can't, but I'd be willing to stay longer another day</li> <li>4. I promise I will make it next time</li> <li>5. I'm not in a position to afford this</li> <li>6. I am not currently in a position to deal with this</li> <li>7. It will have to be quick</li> <li>8. I am really sorry to inconvenience you</li> <li>9. I appreciate your understanding</li> <li>10. Hopefully, we can get together soon/another time</li> </ol>                      |
| Formulaic expressions that frequently occurred in a speech act but did not explicitly perform refusal function | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. I already have a ___ I am satisfied with</li> <li>2. I am glad you called</li> <li>3. Go ahead</li> <li>4. Prior commitment</li> <li>5. I will stick with</li> <li>6. I am satisfied with ___</li> <li>7. Look forward to</li> <li>8. Be willing to</li> <li>9. Sounds like a good plan, but</li> <li>10. Current plan</li> <li>11. Have fun</li> <li>12. Have a great time</li> <li>13. Say hi to everyone</li> <li>14. I'll miss you all as well</li> <li>15. Thank you for understanding</li> <li>16. Thank you for the offer</li> <li>17. Sorry about that</li> </ol> |

|  |   |
|--|---|
|  | 18. Let me know<br>19. It will have to be quick<br>20. Perfect, thanks<br>21. Thanks so much<br>22. Thanks anyway<br>23. Thank you and sorry again<br>24. Thank you so much/very much |
|--|---|

*Note.* Terminology of identification criteria is based on Bardovi-Harlig (2012); Wray and Perkins (2000); researcher's personal judgement.

## Appendix D

### Thanking formulaic expressions in the Native Speaker (NS) corpus

| <u>Identification criteria</u>  | <u>Formulaic expression</u>   |
|---|---|
| Recurrent formulaic expressions used for pragmatic purpose of thanking  | 1. Thanks so much for + doing something<br>2. Thank you for + doing something<br>3. Thank you, that's so sweet of you<br>4. Thank you for your confidence<br>5. Thank you, that's so thoughtful of you<br>6. Thank you! Do you really like it?<br>7. Thank you! Do you think it suits me?<br>8. Thanks, I love it<br>9. Thanks again  |
| Greater length or complexity  | 1. Let me know if I can ever do anything for you<br>2. If you need anything, just let me know<br>3. Let me know if I can repay the favor sometime<br>4. I am glad you liked it  |
| Semantic irregularity close to idioms or metaphors  | 1. I really owe you one<br>2. I'll do my best<br>3. How much of a relief it is<br>4. I can't thank you enough<br>5. You can count on me<br>6. It meant a lot to me<br>7. Thank you for putting your confidence in me<br>8. That's a real vote of confidence<br>9. That's wonderful news<br>10. You're the greatest<br>11. It's what friends are for<br>12. I was in a tight spot<br>13. I was in a bind |
| Formulaic expressions that frequently occurred in a speech act but did not explicitly perform thanking function | 1. I really appreciate it<br>2. I'm honoured<br>3. I am so surprised<br>4. This is amazing  |

|  |  |
|--|--|
|  | 5. This is awesome<br>6. I am very excited to hear this<br>7. That's wonderful news<br>8. I will work hard |
|--|--|

*Note.* Terminology of identification criteria is based on Bardovi-Harlig (2012); Wray and Perkins (2000); researcher's personal judgement.

## Appendix E

### Semantic formulas in the Native Speaker (NS) corpus (refusal)

| Semantic formula  | Verbal equivalent   |
|---|---|
| Statement of regret+ statement of negative ability+ promise of future acceptance                                | I'm sorry, I won't be able to make it. Hopefully, we can get together soon.   |
| Statement of regret+ statement of negative ability+ reason+ polite ending of a conversation                     | Hey! Unfortunately I can't make it, my child is sick. Enjoy the party!  |
| Statement of regret+ statement of negative ability+ reason+ gratitude+ promise of future acceptance             | Sorry, can't make it tonight, my daughter is sick. Thanks for the invite, I'd like to see you!                                  |
| Statement of positive opinion+ excuse   | That sounds like a great plan, but I'm satisfied with my current plan.  |
| Statement of negative ability+ gratitude  | I'm not interested, thank you   |
| Statement of regret+ statement of negative ability  | Oh, no I'm sorry, I can't afford that.  |
| Gratitude+ excuse   | Thank you, but I really like my current plan.   |
| Statement of negative ability+ promise of future acceptance+ gratitude  | Unfortunately I can't, but I'd be willing to stay longer another day. Thanks for understanding.                                 |
| Reason+ statement of regret+ explanation+ regret+ gratitude   | I have a doctor's appointment today, sorry. This appointment is very important, sorry. Thank you for understanding.             |
| Statement of negative ability+ statement of regret+ statement of positive opinion+ promise of future acceptance | I won't be able to make it to the party. So sorry. I was really looking forward to it. We'll have to get together another time. |
| Statement of regret+ reason+ excuse+ gratitude  | Sorry, I have a prior commitment that can't be changed.   |
| Appreciation+ statement of negative ability+ statement of regret+ polite ending of a conversation               | I am glad you called. I can't come. Thank you. I am really sorry. Have a great time.  |
| Gratitude+ explanation+ excuse  | Thank you but I'm quite happy with my current phone plan. I'm afraid I'm not interested.  |

*Note.* The terminology of semantic formulas is based on Beebe et al. (1990). The total number of semantic pragmatic formulas used: 13.

## Appendix F

### Semantic formulas in the Native Speaker (NS) corpus (thankng)

| Semantic formula  | Verbal equivalent  |
|---|--|
| Thanking+ expressing surprise and delight   | Thank you! Do you really like it?  |
| Thanking + promising to do or give something because something similar was done or given to you | Thanks a lot for filling in for me today. I really owe you one.                                      |
| Thanking+ reassuring the listener   | Thank you so much! I am really grateful. I know I'm ready for the job!                               |
| Thanking+ emphasizing the depth of the gratitude+ expressing affection                          | Hey! Thank you so much for taking that shift for me. You're the greatest! It's what friends are for. |
| Thanking+ emphasizing the depth of the gratitude  | Wow, thank you. I appreciate you giving me this opportunity.   |
| Thanking+ expressing surprise and delight+ emphasizing the depth of gratitude                   | Thank you so much, that is so great to hear! I'm so thrilled.  |
| Thanking+ expressing affection  | Thank you, that's so sweet of you!   |
| Thanking+ expressing surprise and delight+ confirming commitment                                | Woah! I am so surprised, thank you very much! So thoughtful on you! I will not disappoint you!       |

*Note.* The terminology of semantic formulas is based on Eisenstein and Bodman (1986) and Schauer and Adolphs (2006). The total number of semantic pragmatic formulas used: 8.

## Appendix G

### Experimental group responses in the pre-test

| L2 participant | Pre-test responses   | Speech act |
|----------------|--|------------|
| Mustafa        | Sorry about that. I just want to tell you that I will decline your invitation because something happened and I can't be there. Thank you, I wish but I... I wish but I can't be with you at this party, but sorry about that...                                | Refusal 1  |
|                | Yes, of course. Thank you, but I'm sorry I will not take it because I take this plan with Virgin mobile from three weeks ago.  | Refusal 2  |
|                | I'm really sorry I can't because I'm waiting for this appointment my family doctor for three months ago and I can't cancel it now. But I'm sorry. I don't think so. The clinic is always crowded and I don't think they can give me another appointment. Okay. | Refusal 3  |
|                | Good, thank you. My wife don't think so.   | Thanking 1 |
|                | I don't how to thank you, Alisa. I was really... I am really thankful that you taking this day at  | Thanking 2 |

|        |   |            |
|--------|---|------------|
|        | work instead of me. I really busy today, I was looking for somebody to work this day. I wish that I can make something for you another day. You are welcome!  |            |
|        | Oh, thank you! I don't know how to tell you that I very happy and [pause] how I... how you... the level that you trust me, trust my work... Oh, I will... I am very happy now that I wish that I will be... I will show you that I am.., I will be the... a perfect person for the position... Thank you! | Thanking 3 |
| Julia  | Okay, I hope so, but [pause], very sorry, because my son is sick, I should take him to a hospital, so very -very sorry. Maybe after my son out of the hospital, I can go with you together.   | Refusal 1  |
|        | Oh, I see... But [pause] my cell phone, the... the... [pause]. I don't know how to say, now... the... the... is okay I think. So I don't like to adjust that... Okay, thanks.   | Refusal 2  |
|        | Oh, no, very sorry, because after work I have appointment. Oh [hesitation] before [unclear] every month I make made the appointment, so I'm so sorry, today I can't work. No, because I made this appointment before several months, so I'm so sorry. Okay, that's okay.                                  | Refusal 3  |
|        | Yeah... [pause]. That's... that's good! I think it looks... it's looks like better and younger. Yes, sure.  | Thanking 1 |
|        | Okay, I very appreciate your help. Thank you very much. Okay, have a drink, please? After work?   | Thanking 2 |
|        | Oh, really?! Thank you very much! Thank you for have me in working and thank every colleagues... Okay, thank you. Okay, I will try my best to work hard! Thank you very much!   | Thanking 3 |
| Marcus | Yes, I know... I know, yeah... I didn't forget. Forgot or forget? I am very sorry, I can't because my child [pause] are sick, so I have to take him on hospital. Yes, me too, I very want to be with us, but now I can't, you know, I have to bring my child to the hospital...                           | Refusal 1  |
|        | Yes, of course. Okay, yes madam, I understand what you are saying, but right now I have new plan with Rogers, so I can't change the plan, but I understand that your plan is very interesting [pause], so I very understand, but I can't change my plan because Rogers give me a good plan.               | Refusal 2  |
|        | Yes, I very want to, but... I have appointment with my family doctor, because I take this appointment three weeks ago, so I can't [unclear]   | Refusal 3  |

|          |   |            |
|----------|---|------------|
| Marcus   | it. No, I am very sorry, Alisa, I can't. Thank you very much for your understanding.  |            |
|          | Oh, thank you, I just got it right now, thank you very much to be attentive for myself. Yes, of course, he is just right there in Catherine street, I can give you the right address. Thank you very much for your attention.   | Thanking 1 |
|          | Today I am very busy, I have something very important at home. Can you help me to do a shift with me? Thank you very much, you don't know what you are doing, it's very great. Thank you!   | Thanking 2 |
|          | Thank you very much, Alisa, I am very happy for this promotion. I know you are.... You have a good confidence in me, so I promise you that I cannot disappoint you, so I will try to do my best to work very hard, to continue to work very hard to assume my responsibilities. | Thanking 3 |
| Amandine | Okay, I didn't forget it, but you know, I have some problem now. My daughter is sick, so I have to send him to the hospital, so I am not sure to come on your party, I am sorry. Thank you.   | Refusal 1  |
|          | Yes. Okay, your... [pause]. Your proposition is very good, but I think it's expensive for me, so I cannot accept your proposition.  | Refusal 2  |
|          | Yes, sir, I would like, but you know, I have some appointment in the hospital with my family doctor. So I can't stay, but I am sorry for that. Yes, I would like, but you know, family doctor is very important for me, so... Okay, thanks.                                     | Refusal 3  |
|          | Oh really? Thanks! Yes, no problem.   | Thanking 1 |
|          | My friend... my colleague, I would like just to thank for you [pause] because you did [pause] you work for me last time because I wasn't able to do that, I will just like to say thank you for you. Okay, thanks!  | Thanking 2 |
|          | Oh, this is good news for me and I am very happy for the new promotion and I am sure I will not [unclear] you. [Unclear] I will do that my job very well. Thanks... thanks very much.   | Thanking 3 |

## Appendix H

### Control group responses in the pre-test

| L2 participant | Pre-test responses   | Speech act |
|----------------|--|------------|
|                | Oh, thank you for telling me, sorry for that because I want to come at your party... But I have a problem now, my child is sick so I need to take to hospital my child, so sorry about that. Thank you, I will do my | Refusal 1  |

|         |   |            |
|---------|---|------------|
| Anand   | best.   |            |
|         | Thank you for telling us... telling me... but sorry about that, I am using another internet and another home phone and I am already the using...already the having the phone so I cannot accept that. Thank you.  | Refusal 2  |
|         | I am happy to stay...to wait...do my duty and my work, I like it, but I have a problem at my home. My family doctor's appointment...family doctor wants to meet me...and I have medical the issue that I need to check up my health...so I cannot. Sorry, because...I many times I... cancelled my appointment with my family doctor, so in this time I need to go there anyway. Thank you! | Refusal 3  |
|         | Thank you! Yes.   | Thanking 1 |
|         | Oh thank you for doing my work, It's really... thank you for it.  | Thanking 2 |
| Tisha   | Oh thank you, thank you, sir, I am very happy. Yes, thank you. Yes, thank you, bye.   | Thanking 3 |
|         | Hi, thank you, I didn't forget. So I have little problem, my son is sick and maybe we will stay in hospital, I don't know. If it possible I call you before, if it not possible I call you too to tell you.   | Refusal 1  |
|         | Wow, it is very interesting, so but I have a gift with my brother and I don't need to add anything to my... yeah...   | Refusal 2  |
|         | Oh, today I have an appointment to see my family doctor because I have a problem and I am waiting for long time this appointment... hmm... so do you have any of my colleague who can help you? I can try, I can call my family doctor to ask her to delayed my appointment for tomorrow. If it's possible I can stayed and we can finish the project.                                      | Refusal 3  |
|         | Oh, thank you, you are very kind! Yeah, she is very friendly.   | Thanking 1 |
|         | Oh, thank you Alisa because when I was missed you do all my job and it's very kind because you are not mandatory to do that and I think I am gonna have the opportunity to give the same thing for you.   | Thanking 2 |
| Brianna | Oh, it's good news, I am very happy to know you recognize my work and to give me lucky and have the promotion, so I am gonna do all my best to succeed the missions and.... Okay, I am gonna manage very well my new teams. Thanks!   | Thanking 3 |
|         | Oh sorry, my son is sick...and now I am... I stay, or...I am hospital. I can't come, sorry. Thank you   | Refusal 1  |
|         | I think this is very expensive, I need for lower, um, phone. One month for thirty-five dollars or   | Refusal 2  |

|     |  |            |
|-----|--|------------|
|     | something... Thank you.  |            |
|     | Oh sorry, today I can't, because I waiting for my... I have appointment, I waiting for one month for appointment, and today, three o'clock I have appointment, this way, I need to go. I think... I waiting for long time, this way I need to talk, I need to see for doctor. Ok, thank you. | Refusal 3  |
|     | Oh thank you so much. I think this is...I could... I don't know this is? Yeah...   | Thanking 1 |
|     | Oh, thank you so much! I am lucky, because I need this very much, thank you!   | Thanking 2 |
|     | Thank you, very much! Thank you, thank you so much! Thank you.   | Thanking 3 |
| Kim | Oh hi, I am sorry, my son is sick so I will not go to your party, I am sorry. I have to go to the hospital, I am so sorry, I will call you after I go to hospital.   | Refusal 1  |
|     | Yes, okay. Yes, I am so sorry, I have another plan, another company so I wanna keep going ...now...so sorry.   | Refusal 2  |
|     | Today? I have an appointment with doctor, I have to go to the hospital, so I don't work extra. Yes, I am not changing to meet doctor, if you want to work extra time I can come from hospital...I can work.  | Refusal 3  |
|     | Thank you. Yes, ok, thank you.   | Thanking 1 |
|     | Hi, I am thank you, because you can change my work schedule, so it is very difficult to you... and so, thank you so much.  | Thanking 2 |
|     | Aha, yes, thank you [unclear]. Yes, I am really...   | Thanking 3 |

## Appendix I

### **Multiple-turn oral discourse completion role-plays (DCRPs) in the post-test**

#### ***1. Refusing friend's invitation (refusal)***

Scenario: You can't join your friend and go to a restaurant this weekend, because you have made prior plans to visit your family in a different city. How would you refuse his/her invitation in a polite way? Role-play this situation.

#### ***2. Rejecting sales offer (refusal)***

Scenario: A sales agent came to your house and he is offering you an internet plan, but you are happy with the one you have right now. How would you refuse his offer in a polite but firm way? Role-play this situation.

#### ***3. Refusing manager's request (refusal)***

Scenario: Your manager is asking you to work on a new project. However, you are still working on the project that had been assigned to you before, and you cannot handle these 2 projects at the same time. How would you refuse your manager's request politely? Role-play this situation.

#### ***4. Responding to compliment (thanking)***

Scenario: Your friend has just complimented you on the meal you had treated him with. How would you thank him/her for this? Role-play this situation.

#### ***5. Thanking colleague for a favour (thanking)***

Scenario: Your friend lent your money last month, while you were in a difficult situation. How would you thank him/her for doing this favour? Role-play this situation.

#### ***6. Thanking your manager (thanking)***

Scenario: Your manager has just informed you that your salary will be raised for the excellent performance this year. How would you express your gratitude? Role-play this situation.

## **Appendix J**

### **Multiple-turn oral discourse completion role-plays (DCRPs) in the delayed post-test**

#### ***1. Refusing friend's invitation (refusal)***

Scenario: Your friend is inviting you to go to the movies this Friday. However, you have already made plans to spend this time with your family. How would you politely refuse your friend's invitation? Role-play this situation.

#### ***2. Rejecting sales offer (refusal)***

Scenario: Imagine that you are at a shopping centre. In one of the shops you are being offered a deal: buy any microwave in the store and get a free knife set as a gift. You don't really need a microwave or a knife set at the moment. Refuse the offer politely and role-play this situation.

#### ***3. Refusing manager's request (refusal)***

Scenario: Your manager is asking you to train a new employee in your department. However, you realize that you will be very busy till the end of the month, and you won't be able to handle it. Refuse this request in a polite way and state the reason why you cannot do this. Role-play this situation.

#### ***4. Responding to compliment (thanking)***

Scenario: Your friend has just complimented you on your outfit. How would you thank your friend for this compliment? Role-play this situation.

### **5. Thanking colleague for a favour (*thanking*)**

Scenario: Imagine you are moving to a new house/apartment next week. You co-worker, who has a large truck, has offered his/her help with moving the furniture. How would you express your gratitude and thank your friend for this favour? Role-play this situation.

### **6. Thanking your manager (*thanking*)**

Scenario: A company you work for is short-staffed at the moment. However, you need to request a day off in the middle of the week to visit your dentist. Despite the busy season, your manager approved your day off. Express your gratitude and thank your manager for doing this favour. Role-play this situation.

## **Appendix K**

### **An example of a lesson plan**

#### ***Focus on thanking***

*Time:* 9:00- 10:30 am

*Date:* December 1, 2014

*Number of students:* 4

*Objective:* To draw learner's attention to the common English formulaic expressions and semantic formulas which occur in thanking speech acts; give learners an opportunity to discuss the differences between their L1s and English in terms of the usage of such expressions and semantic formulas.

Proficiency level: LINC- 5

#### **1. Explicit instruction (1 hour)**

- Students are given examples of ***thanking formulaic expressions*** from the NS corpus. Each student is given 15 formulaic responses, 5 from each scenario, in random order.
- Students are given some time to review the responses and then asked to assign the type of ***semantic formulas*** used in each response to its verbal equivalent. They choose from the following types:

Thanking+ complementing

Thanking + expressing affection

Thanking + reassuring the listener

Thanking + promising to repay

Thanking+ expressing surprise and delight

Thanking+ exaggerating to emphasize the depth of the gratitude

(Eisenstein & Bodman, 1986)

Thanking+ confirming interlocutor's commitment

Thanking + stating intent to reciprocate (to do or give something, because something similar was done or given to you)

(Schauer & Adolphs, 2006)

- The meaning of semantic formula is explicitly explained by the researcher before students start completing the task to make sure every learner understands the task.

## **2. Discussion and reflections (30 min)**

- The objective of the discussion session is to check how many semantic formulas were properly identified by the learners as well as to direct students' attention to the thanking formulaic expressions that those responses contain.
- Students are asked to write a short reflection and answer the following question (30 min):

Which thanking formulaic expressions and semantic formulas from those that you have just reviewed would you use when:

- complimenting your friend
- thanking your co-worker for taking your shift
- thanking your manager for promotion?

## **Appendix L**

### **Activities on refusal and thanking formulaic expressions**

*Activity 1: Focus on refusal formulaic expressions*

| <u>Formulaic expression</u>   | <u>Meaning/function</u>   |
|-------------------------------|---|
| 1. To make a prior commitment | a. To wait for something impatiently  |
| 2. Look forward to            | b. a commitment that you have to finish before you start the next one someone is asking you to do |
| 3. Get together               | c. I really like this idea  |
| 4. Be willing to              | d. To go to a small informal meeting or social gathering  |
| 5. Sounds like a good plan    | e. I can't talk right now because I am busy   |
| 6. Can't make it              | f. I don't want to accept it/have it  |
| 7. Can't afford that          | g. I am not able to do it   |
| 8. Not a good time to talk    | h. To gladly agree to do something  |
| 9. Not interested             | i. Won't be able to do it   |
| 10. Won't be able to make it  | j. I don't have money/time to buy/do something  |

*Note.* Answer key: 1. B; 2. A; 3. D; 4. H; 5. C; 6. G; 7. J; 8. E; 9. F; 10. I.

#### *Activity 2: Focus on thanking formulaic expressions*

| <u>Formulaic expression</u>          | <u>Meaning/function</u>   |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| 1. I really owe you one              | a. An expression of approval or support   |
| 2. I'll do my best                   | b. Said to thank someone for helping you and as a way of saying that you will do something for them in the future |
| 3. That's so sweet of you            | c. A very polite expression of gratitude  |
| 4. So thoughtful of you              | d. That's very kind of you  |
| 5. How much of a relief it is        | e. This is a great privilege  |
| 6. I can't thank you enough          | f. You can rely on me (trust me)  |
| 7. You can count on me               | g. A way to emphasize your gratitude  |
| 8. I really appreciate it            | h. I will try very hard to accomplish something   |
| 9. I'm honoured                      | i. I feel really better now   |
| 10. It meant a lot to me             | j. Thank you for being so attentive to me   |
| 11. That's a real vote of confidence | k. What you've done was really important  |

*Note.* Answer key: 1. B; 2. H; 3. D; 4. J; 5. I; 6. G; 7. F; 8. C; 9. E; 10. K; 11. A.

## Appendix M

### Activities on semantic formulas in refusal and thanking speech acts

#### *Activity 1: Focus on semantic formulas in refusals*

| <u>Verbal equivalent</u>  | <u>Semantic formula</u>  |
|---|--|
| 1. I'm sorry, I won't be able to make it. Hopefully, we can get together soon.  | a. Statement of regret+ statement of negative ability+ reason+ polite ending of a conversation         |
| 2. Hey! Unfortunately I can't make it, my child is sick. Enjoy the party!   | b. Statement of positive opinion+ excuse   |
| 3. Sorry, can't make it tonight, my daughter is sick. Thanks for the invite, I'd like to see you!                                   | c. Statement of regret+ statement of negative ability+ promise of future acceptance                    |
| 4. That sounds like a great plan, but I'm satisfied with my current plan.   | d. Statement of regret+ statement of negative ability+ reason+ gratitude+ promise of future acceptance |
| 5. I'm not interested, thank you.   | e. Gratitude+ excuse   |
| 6. Oh, no I'm sorry, I can't afford that.   | f. Statement of negative ability+ promise of future acceptance+ gratitude                              |
| 7. Thank you, but I really like my current plan.  | g. Reason+ statement of regret+ explanation+ regret+ gratitude   |
| 8. Unfortunately I can't, but I'd be willing to stay longer another day. Thanks for understanding.                                  | h. Statement of regret+ statement of negative ability  |
| 9. I have a doctor's appointment today, sorry. This appointment is very important, sorry. Thank you for understanding.              | i. Statement of negative ability+ gratitude  |
| 10. I won't be able to make it to the party. So sorry. I was really looking forward to it. We'll have to get together another time. | j. Statement of regret+ reason+ excuse+ gratitude  |
| 11. I'm sorry, but I have a prior commitment  | k. Appreciation+ statement of negative   |

|  |  |
|--|--|
| that can't be changed. Thanks.   | ability+ statement of regret+ polite ending of conversation                          |
| 12. I am glad you called. I can't come. Thank you. I am really sorry. Have a great time. | 1. Statement of negative ability+ statement of regret+ statement of positive opinion |

*Note.* The terminology of semantic formulas is based on Beebe et al. (1990). Answer key: 1. C; 2. A; 3. D; 4. B; 5. I; 6. H; 7. E; 8. F; 9. G; 10. L; 11. J; 12. K.

#### *Activity 2: Focus on semantic formulas in thanking*

| Verbal equivalent   | Semantic formula  |
|---|---|
| 1. Thank you! Do you really like it?  | a. Thanking+ reassuring the listener  |
| 2. Thanks a lot for filling in for me today. I really owe you one.                                | b. Thanking+ expressing affection   |
| 3. Thank you so much! I am really grateful. I know I'm ready for the job!                         | c. Thanking+ expressing surprise and delight  |
| 4. Wow, thank you. I appreciate you giving me this opportunity.                                   | d. Thanking+ promising to do or give something because something similar was done or given to you |
| 5. Thank you, that's so sweet of you!   | e. Thanking+ expressing surprise and delight+ confirming commitment                               |
| 6. Woah! I am so surprised, thank you very much! So thoughtful on you! I will not disappoint you! | f. Thanking+ emphasizing the depth of gratitude   |

*Note.* The terminology of semantic formulas is based on Eisenstein and Bodman (1986) and Schauer and Adolphs (2006). Answer key: 1. C; 2 D; 3. A; 4. F; 5. B; 6. E.

## Appendix N

### Experimental group responses in the post-test

| L2 participant | Post-test responses   | Speech act |
|----------------|---|------------|
| Mustafa        | I am glad you called me because I won't be able to be with you on the weekend. I already have a commitment with my family. I wish we will see each other later. | Refusal 1  |
|                | Yes, of course. I am afraid to tell you that I am really satisfied with my current plan, but thank you for the offer.   | Refusal 2  |
|                | Oh, Alisa, I appreciate that you promote me for   | Refusal 3  |

|        |  |            |
|--------|--|------------|
|        | this job, but I am really very busy with my project and I am working on it. So I think that I can't do it with each other. So can you wait a month and I will take it? Thank you, I appreciate that you understand me.                     |            |
|        | Yes, I made it by myself with the help of the recipe. Can you imagine that I made it from my home scratches?   | Thanking 1 |
|        | Alisa, I can't tell you how I appreciate your help and that's what friend is for. Without your help I don't know what to do. Thank you very much.  | Thanking 2 |
|        | Oh, I can't imagine this promotion! I am really very happy and I am very surprised by this thing. I will be waiting for it. Thank you very much!   | Thanking 3 |
| Julia  | I'd like to but I have appointment with my family, so thank you for your invitation. Enjoy your time! Okay, see you next time.   | Refusal 1  |
|        | Okay. Oh, sounds great, but I think my current plan is good. So thank you.   | Refusal 2  |
|        | Oh, I'd like to, but I have another project to do because I didn't finish that old project. I will finish this one and next time I will work together with you. Thank you for understanding.   | Refusal 3  |
|        | Oh yes! Do you really think so? Do you think that it's good? Okay, no problem.   | Thanking 1 |
|        | Thank you for the money. In a difficult situation you helped me, so thanks a lot! Thank you! If you need help, please, tell me!  | Thanking 2 |
|        | Oh, really? Wow, I am so surprised! It's thoughtful of you. Thank you! Okay, I'll do my best for my work in future. Thank you!   | Thanking 3 |
| Marcus | I am very sorry, I have prior plans with my family. So I am sorry because this week I won't be able to be there with you. Thank you for your understanding.  | Refusal 1  |
|        | Yes, but you have to be quick. Good, I understand what you are saying, but right now I am very satisfied with my current plan.   | Refusal 2  |
|        | I am afraid I won't be able to manage two projects in the same time because I don't finish with my current project. I am so sorry for that.  | Refusal 3  |
|        | Yes, do you like it? I cooked it myself. I am so happy that you really liked it.   | Thanking 1 |
|        | Oh, Alisa, thank you very much for your help last time, for lending me money. I really appreciate it. If you need something else, I will be happy to give you back, to repay what you did for me. Oh, thank you so much. You are so sweet! | Thanking 2 |

|          |  |            |
|----------|--|------------|
|          | Thank you so much, that is very great. I appreciate your confidence in me. I promise I will continue to work very hard. Once again, thank you so much. You will not be disappointed. | Thanking 3 |
| Amandine | Hi Alisa! Yeah, but unfortunately I can't because I have another prior commitment with my family and I need to travel. Thank you and I hope we'll get together another time.         | Refusal 1  |
|          | Yeah, go ahead. That's sounds like a good plan but I am happy with my current plan.  | Refusal 2  |
|          | Yes, I would like, but you know, I have my current project but I am not finished and I would like to be on time. Okay, no problem, thank you for understanding.                      | Refusal 3  |
|          | Are you sure? Because I made it by myself. Yes, of course.   | Thanking 1 |
|          | Hi Alisa, I was happy yesterday when you lent me some money. I had big trouble and this money helped me very much.   | Thanking 2 |
|          | \$500? I am very happy for this money! And I am also happy because you have confidence in me and I am able to work hard. I will wait for this.                                       | Thanking 3 |

## Appendix O

### Control group responses in the post-test

| L2 participant | Post-test responses  | Speech act |
|----------------|--|------------|
| Anand          | Oh, thank you for remind me, but sorry, I want to say...very sorry for...because I have a problem at my home, so I need to stay at my home...so sorry about that. Okay, thank you.   | Refusal 1  |
|                | Oh, thank you for telling me but I have...I already... I am using another company, "Ultima" is called, I am using the internet, since two years ago, it is using, so sorry for that. | Refusal 2  |
|                | Thank you for telling me for that, but...a little bit, I have a problem. So I had already, I am doing the job and I  | Refusal 3  |

|       |   |            |
|-------|---|------------|
|       | cannot do another job, because my health problems, so I need make appointment with doctor and... so many things I need to do, so sorry about that.  |            |
|       | Oh, thank you very much, thank you for this... for that. Yes, sure.   | Thanking 1 |
|       | Thank you very much, I was problem, you gave me this money, thank you for that.   | Thanking 2 |
|       | Oh, thank you very much, thank you very much. Oh, thank very much, have a nice day!   | Thanking 3 |
| Tisha | Oh, I didn't forget, I don't forget that. So, I have...ummm, I have a trouble to do, because I am mandatory to go see to my parents and I am very sorry, so I think next time I will go with you. Okay, see you next time. Okay, see you next time. | Refusal 1  |
|       | Hi Alisa, I am happy, I know your plan is really interesting, so I have a new one and it's very good and we have no problem with us and I think we are gonna keep it [unclear]. If we have problem or if we plan to change, maybe we can call you.  | Refusal 2  |
|       | I am sorry, because I think if I start with you to work in this project I am not very productive because I am very tired and I have headache so I think it's good to leave earlier...   | Refusal 3  |
|       | Oh, thank you, if you want, I can give you my secret! My recipe, yeah...  | Thanking 1 |
|       | Hi Alisa, I bring you your money you owe me... yeah, you owe me, and just to say you thank you very much,   | Thanking 2 |

|         |  |            |
|---------|--|------------|
|         | because it was useful help. And I will remind this help [unclear].   |            |
|         | Oh, thank you, I am very happy for your recognizing my hard job and it's a good opportunity to me because I need it, so I am gonna do more. Thanks.  | Thanking 3 |
| Brianna | Oh, sorry, I have appointments in a doctor for seven pm, that's why I can't come to that... See you next time!   | Refusal 1  |
|         | Oh, sorry, I have [unclear] and now I have... a [unclear] Rogers company.  | Refusal 2  |
|         | Yes, sorry, I have appointments and today... doctor... three o'clock. Oh, sorry, I can't makes appointment for cancel, so that's why...  | Refusal 3  |
|         | Oh, yeah, I make this rice, all the time I make this rice. Yeah, sure, thank you.  | Thanking 1 |
|         | Hi, my friend, I needs to send for my mother, my mother feel very sick and you borrow for \$ 500, please? Thank you, my friend, you borrow for your money and my mother is... my mother feel very well, thank you very much! | Thanking 2 |
|         | Oh, thank you so much for my manager, God bless you! Okay, thank you so much!  | Thanking 3 |
| Kim     | I am so sorry, I have appointment with my family after this, so I can't go to the restaurant with you. So sorry! Yes, okay...  | Refusal 1  |
|         | I am so sorry, I already have another company's plan, so I can't use your plan, I am so sorry. Have a nice one!  | Refusal 2  |
|         | Oh my God, I didn't finish my last project, so I didn't... I can't work on other project.  | Refusal 3  |

|  |   |            |
|--|---|------------|
|  | If I finish my last project, so I can agree, I can accept your suggestion.  |            |
|  | Really?! Thank you! Oh, yes, of course, I can give you my recipe!   | Thanking 1 |
|  | Thank you so much for your helping, I don't forget your helping. Thank you so much!   | Thanking 2 |
|  | Oh, thank you so much, it's amazing! I am so... hmm... thank you so much... I can work very hard next year. Yes, okay, thank you! | Thanking 3 |

## Appendix P

### Experimental group responses in the delayed post-test

| L2 participant | Delayed post-test responses  | Speech act |
|----------------|--|------------|
| Mustafa        | Unfortunately, my friend, I won't be able to do it because I already have family commitment. I am sorry, I can't do it. Sure, I will be looking forward for that.                                      | Refusal 1  |
|                | That sound good, but I am not interested.  | Refusal 2  |
|                | Thanks for this opportunity but I really can't do it, I can't afford that, I am very busy these days. Maybe next month I will be able to take it, but I am sorry for now. Thank you for understanding. | Refusal 3  |
|                | Oh, thank very much! Do I really look like this? That's sweet of you.  | Thanking 1 |
|                | That's really awesome, I really appreciate this! That's what friends are for! Yes, sure, thank you!  | Thanking 2 |
|                | Sir, I want to thank you for the day off that you gave to me. I really appreciate it and I am really thankful because I know we are very busy in the department these days.                            | Thanking 3 |
| Julia          | Oh, thank you for inviting but I won't be able to make it because I have to spend time this weekend with my family, so I am sorry. Okay, thank you for understanding.                                  | Refusal 1  |
|                | Thank you for your offer, but I am not interested  | Refusal 2  |

|          |   |            |
|----------|---|------------|
|          | in it. And I am a student and I can't afford it.  |            |
|          | I'd like to but I am so sorry because next week is very busy and I will work on a new project, so I am afraid I won't be able to make it. I am so sorry, I really have no time to help you, so very sorry. Thank you for understanding! | Refusal 3  |
|          | Oh, do you really like it? That's very sweet of you! I also like it. It's very nice, it's colourful, but it's not expensive.  | Thanking 1 |
|          | Thank you for your helping to move your furniture, you are very nice. I really appreciate it. Okay, thank you again!  | Thanking 2 |
|          | Thank you for giving a day off, because I made a prior commitment and the commitment cannot be changed, so I have to go. Let me know if I can do anything anytime in future. Thank you for understanding.                               | Thanking 3 |
| Marcus   | Oh, Alisa, that will be great, but I promised to my children to stay at home with them, so I can't. I am so sorry. Thank you!   | Refusal 1  |
|          | Sorry, right now I am not interested. It is a good deal, but I always have someone at home, sorry.  | Refusal 2  |
|          | No, sorry. I would like to do that but as you know I just come back from my vacation, so I have many things to do till the end of the month. Once again, I am very sorry about that.  | Refusal 3  |
|          | Oh, really?! Thank you so much!   | Thanking 1 |
|          | Yes, of course, that would be very good for me. I hope I will have a chance to give you back this favour. Thank you.  | Thanking 2 |
|          | Thank you, Alisa, to give me this day off to go see my doctor because I very need to see him. Thank you for your understanding, I very appreciate it.   | Thanking 3 |
| Amandine | Oh, I am sorry, I won't be able to make it! Hopefully, we can get together soon.  | Refusal 1  |
|          | Okay, that sounds like a great deal, but I am sorry, I am not interested now. Okay, thanks, bye!  | Refusal 2  |
|          | Okay, I see, I 'd like to do, but at this moment I don't have a lot of time because I have a lot for work to do in a short time so I am so sorry, but I can't. Maybe if I can, I will let you know. Thank                               | Refusal 3  |

|  |   |            |
|--|---|------------|
|  | you for your understanding.   |            |
|  | Thank you so much! Do you really like it? Oh, thank you so much, that's so sweet of you!  | Thanking 1 |
|  | Thank you so much, I think your help will be very helpful for me so thank you so much for helping.  | Thanking 2 |
|  | I'd like to thank you because you gave me the opportunity to go see my dentist. I was waiting for a long time for this appointment. So just thank you and let me know if you have anything to do next time. | Thanking 3 |

## Appendix Q

### Control group responses in the delayed post-test

| L2 participant | Delayed post-test responses   | Speech act |
|----------------|---|------------|
| Anand          | Thank you for telling me, but sorry to say that I have an appointment with doctor, so I need to take my father to the doctor, so at that time... [pause] I could not attend... maybe. Thank you very much!  | Refusal 1  |
|                | Oh, that's great, but... ah... I like this, but... ah... I have knives and microwave at my home, I have already at my home so I don't need more, but I like it very good, thank you.  | Refusal 2  |
|                | Thank you for thinking about that work but now I am also busy with my personal problem also and my [unclear] and I have to do a lot so I am [unclear] so if there is any possibility to find someone... ah... it's a good idea to keep someone... | Refusal 3  |
|                | Oh, thank you!  | Thanking 1 |
|                | Oh, yes, I am moving this week and I was worried about this my all the things   | Thanking 2 |

|       |   |            |
|-------|---|------------|
|       | and here... Thank you for your helping.   |            |
|       | I am coming for say the thank you for giving me the leave for my dentist appointment. I was thinking that our company is so busy, even though you gave me the leave for my dentist appointment and I am very happy. Thank you for that!   | Thanking 3 |
| Tisha | Oh, it's a good idea, but ... hmm... I have dinner [unclear] with family so I think [unclear] next Friday if you want, you have time?   | Refusal 1  |
|       | It's real a good deal but I think I don't need it. Because we have microwave, new microwave at home. So I think I can refer my friend because I think her microwave was broken and she need a new one. I think maybe if she buys a microwave she is gonna give me the set knife for gift maybe because I refer her. Thank you!  | Refusal 2  |
|       | Oh, thank you for thinking... thank you for thinking me... ah... So, you know, we have very big project to present at the end of this month. So, it's not done and it's on my responsibility to do it well and you know because the profile of the company depend on it, so I think it will be good to ask to Soyeon to handle her and if they gonna have any problem maybe she gonna ask she ... if Soyeon will she can ask me I am gonna explain her how the way to handle the new employee. Thank you. | Refusal 3  |
|       | Oh, thank you, really? You like it? Oh, me too. Yeah, I like it, that's why I take it! I  | Thanking 1 |

|         |  |            |
|---------|--|------------|
|         | think your earring is very nice!   |            |
|         | Thank you for proposition, it's very nice and I think it will be helpful for me because I was thinking to rent a truck so now... if you... It would be a pleasure to help us. So I think after when I finish to move out, I will organize a dinner to say thank you for you and your friends.  | Thanking 2 |
|         | Hi, Alisa! I am just here to say thank you because I think it's very ... it's very nice to accept because I have we have ... we are in... on rush [unclear] activity and you also understand it's not easy to have an appointment to the ... to dentist , so I am very thankful . So if you need anything for your job, just let me know. I am gonna handle your... [unclear]. | Thanking 3 |
| Brianna | Oh, sorry, I have another explain. My sister in law invite a party that's why I want to go to my family. Okay, thank you.  | Refusal 1  |
|         | I don't need a microwave and I need a something and only microwave... only special deal.... So I don't need microwaves.  | Refusal 2  |
|         | I think today is very busy in my schedule... next week... I explain to next week...  | Refusal 3  |
|         | Oh, thank you! This is my favourite colour!  | Thanking 1 |
|         | Okay, thank you so much, I want to move next Friday, next Friday and I don't make appointment in truck so thank you very -very much. Thank you so much.  | Thanking 2 |
|         | Manager, I have appointment this week this day dentist appointment. This week is   | Thanking 3 |

|     |   |            |
|-----|---|------------|
|     | very busy because I have appointment and day off Tuesday and I need day off... Okay, thank you so much, God bless you!  |            |
| Kim | It's pretty good but I have an appointment with my family so I can't go there. So I am so sorry. Oh, I am sure I can go there next week.  | Refusal 1  |
|     | It's a really good deal but I wanna refuse your suggestion because I have a knife set in my home so I wanna just buy a microwave. So sorry!   | Refusal 2  |
|     | Well, I am so busy because I have to finish this project this month so... hm... I can't train new... new worker for this month... I am so sorry!  | Refusal 3  |
|     | Oh thank you! You also has good outfit!   | Thanking 1 |
|     | Thank you so much, I need a truck to move my furniture so... I will ask to you or to rent your truck...so you suggest to me... [unclear].   | Thanking 2 |
|     | I know our office is so busy but I have an appointment so you accept I may go... I go to my appointment so thank you so much. If I finish early I come for my office so I work very hard. | Thanking 3 |