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"Ah no honestly we're okay:" Learning to upgrade in a study abroad context

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Abstract

Interlanguage studies have found learners' use of internal modifiers to develop in terms of frequency, choice and variety over time spent in the target speech community. Much of this research has, however, concentrated on syntactic and lexical downgrading. Studies focusing on upgrading, i.e., intensifying forms of internal modification, remain in very short supply. This study focuses on the acquisition of upgrading in refusals of offers by 33 Irish learners of German over a period of 10 months spent in a study abroad context. Learner, German NS, and Irish English NS data were elicited using the free discourse completion task specifically designed to investigate discourse sequences. Contrary to previous findings, learners were found to employ upgraders to an extensive degree in refusal sequences prior to the year abroad. However, their use of upgraders in initial refusals was low prior to their sojourn abroad. Over time, upgrading in initial refusals increased in an L2-like movement. This development is explained by a decrease in negative transfer from Irish English in the structuring of offer-refusal exchanges, a change which led to a decrease in ritual reoffers and a consequent increase in the use of upgraders to intensify the force of the initial refusals or of the adjuncts employed therewith. In addition, the linguistic evidence points to a higher level of upgrading in initial refusals realized using formulaic utterances relative to those realized using ad hoc utterances at the end of the year abroad, a finding which underlines the explanatory power of the complexification hypothesis in explaining the acquisition of modification by learners.

1. Introduction

(1) *Ah no <u>honestly</u> we're okay*
(2) *No <u>seriously</u>. If I fail, I'll do it <u>in style!</u>*

(3) <u>No No</u> *I'll call back another day when they're all here*
(4) *No* <u>really</u>*, I'll get my brother to help me. He's* <u>brilliant</u> *at it*

Refusals of offers, such as those listed in (1) to (4), are face-threatening acts which intrinsically threaten the hearer's negative face-wants in that they are, in essence, requests made by the speaker to get the hearer to refrain from doing a future act. However, this negative face threat is lesser than in requests as the proposed future act mentioned in the preceding offer is always conditional on the hearer declaring him/herself willing and able to engage in the proposed act. In addition, refusing the proposed act means less effort on the part of the offerer given the hearer-supportive nature of offers. Nonetheless, refusals of offers potentially threaten the hearer's positive face since they may be interpreted as a rejection of friendship. Upgraders, defined as internal modifiers or intensifying "modality markers" (cf. House & Kasper 1981: 166) which intensify the impact of a particular utterance on the addressee (cf. Blum-Kulka et al. 1989: 285), play an important role in mitigating the face-threat involved in refusing offers.[1] In the examples (1) to (4) above, for instance, upgraders, such as the sentence modifiers *honestly* and *really*, the marked lexical choice of *brilliant* and the repetition of the direct refusal *no* play an important role in intensifying the impact of the refusal on the addressee. In so doing, they nurture social relations.[2]

As can be seen, upgraders play an important role on the relational level in speaker-hearer communication. Faerch and Kasper (1989: 243) note that hearers do not consciously note the use of internal modifiers when interpreting a particular utterance, however, they add, "What hearers do notice . . . , is their absence . . ." But, what about learners? Do they employ upgraders? If so, what types of upgraders? Does their use of upgrading follow a developmental path? What is the effect of a sojourn in the target speech community on learners' upgrading competence? Interlanguage pragmatic research on the acquisition of modification by learners reveals that learners' use of modification increases with increasing proficiency and also with length of stay. The development path appears, however, to be rather slow and also on occasion non-linear. To date, much of this research has concentrated on syntactic and lexical and phrasal downgrading. The acquisition of upgrading over time spent in the target speech community has received very little research attention.

The present study, a longitudinal study of the development of second language (L2) pragmatic competence focusing on the acquisition of upgrading, is designed to meet this research gap. It focuses on upgrading in refusals of offers, a speech act which has been largely neglected in previous developmental research focusing either on the effect of proficiency or

length of stay. Specifically, the study investigates the development of upgrading in refusals of offers realized by 33 Irish learners of German over ten months spent in the target speech community, Germany. Data are elicited using a production questionnaire termed the free discourse competition task (FDCT), specifically designed to investigate offer-refusal sequences (cf. Barron 2003). Base-line data elicited from thirty-four German native speakers (NS) and 27 Irish native speakers of English, also elicited with the FDCT, are also analyzed. The analysis of upgrading in offer-refusal sequences focuses on the use of upgrading in initial refusals and in refusals following a reoffer, and also on the types and realizations of upgraders employed.

The paper begins with an overview of the existing literature on the development of learners' production of internal modification in general, and of upgrading in particular. The focus is first on the relationship between modification and proficiency and then on the relationship between modification and time spent in the target speech community. Following this, a short overview is given of the nature of refusals. The methodology underlying the present investigation is then detailed and the findings of the analysis presented and discussed in the light of previous research.

2. Becoming competent in the use of internal modification

2.1. *The effect of proficiency on the development of learners' use of internal modification*

Previous longitudinal and cross-sectional studies conducted on the development of pragmatic competence have yielded evidence that internal modification does not appear in learner language until quite a late stage of development. Ellis (1992), in a classroom study of the requests of two young ESL learners, for example, finds that beginners make infrequent use of internal modification. Similar findings have been reported by Rose (2000: 48) in a study of Cantonese-speaking primary-school students' requests in Hong Kong, by Trosborg (1995) in a cross-sectional study of requests, apologies and complaints produced by Danish learners of English, and also by Félix-Brasdefer (this volume) in a cross-sectional study of requests elicited using roleplay data from American English learners of Spanish.

These levels of modification nevertheless increase with increasing proficiency. Otcu and Zeyrek (2006), in a cross-sectional study of requests produced in roleplays by Turkish learners of English, for instance, find internal modification to increase with proficiency, as does Félix-Brasdefer (this volume). Also, Hill's (1997) cross-sectional study shows Japanese

EFL learners' use of downgraders when requesting to increase with proficiency. In addition, Trosborg (1995) finds internal modification to increase with proficiency, as also does Warga (2004: 166–174), in a cross-sectional study of Austrian foreign language learners' requests in French using a discourse completion task (DCT) and closed roleplays. However, unlike Trosborg's (1995) findings, the development in Warga's study was non-linear, with learners in the lowest proficiency group in Warga's study using more markers than those in a higher proficiency group. However, Warga does find the highest proficiency group to employ the most modality markers of all three groups of learners.

Notably, however, despite increasing levels of modification with increasing proficiency, learners have only seldom been shown to reach L2 levels of modification—as shown by Hill (1997) and Trosborg (1987: 162, 1995: 427). Indeed, that the L2 norm may not be reached is supported by Hassall (1997: 222), who, in a cross-sectional study of requests produced by Australian learners of Indonesian, also finds that his advanced learners seem to produce "... highly non-native ..." request modification—this he claims to be partly due to processing complexity.

The reasons for the initial low use of modification in lower proficiency levels may on occasion be due to negative transfer. However, this is often not the case. Warga (2004: 167), for instance, suggests her learners' difficulties to relate to a lack of access to the linguistic means necessary for modification. She rules out transfer as an explanation of learners' low use of modification in lower proficiency levels, explaining that in Austrian German, levels of modifier use are higher than in the learner data (cf. also Hill 1997). Apart from transfer, the complexification hypothesis has also explanatory power. This hypothesis, initially used to explain the acquisition of syntactical forms, has been found to be relevant to the development of interlanguage pragmatic competence (cf. Hassall 1997: 286–287; Salsbury & Bardovi-Harlig 2000: 62; Trosborg 1995).[3] According to this hypothesis, learners have to first master the head act strategy of the particular speech act they wish to realize, and only then can they begin to insert modality markers, such as upgraders (cf. also Trosborg 1995: 430). Before this point is reached, the use of upgraders triggers cognitive difficulties.

Ellis (1992: 19) finds internal modification to develop prior to external modification although Hassall (1997: 251), a cross-sectional study of Australian foreign language learners' acquisition of Bahasa Indonesian, shows the opposite to be the case. Hassall (1997: 200) explains that his finding may be partly due to the fact that there are no equivalents for important English modifiers, such as the politeness marker *please*, in Indonesian. Hassall's mention of the modifier *please* in this context is very relevant since studies, such as, e.g., Scarcella (1979), a cross-sectional

study of ten beginners and ten advanced learners of English with Arabic as their first language (L1), found that *please* was one of the first politeness features to appear with requests. Also, a study by Dittmar and Terborg (1991: 359) finds *bitte* ('please') as a politeness marker to appear before the downtoner *vielleicht* ('maybe'). Such findings suggest that particular modifiers are preferred by learners in the early stages of development. These preferences change with increasing proficiency.

Overall, then, it appears that the use of modification increases in line with proficiency, and also that the types of modifiers chosen change with increasing proficiency. Indeed, Kasper and Rose (2002: 157), after reviewing a range of studies focusing on the development of various speech acts, but particularly of requests, at increasing proficiency levels note:

Investigations of requests in particular point to some rather stable findings, namely, the tendency to rely on direct strategies in the early stages of development, with a gradual move to conventional indirectness, followed by the introduction of internal and external modification of requests as proficiency increases.

The focus on requests by Kasper and Rose, and also in the overview above, is due to the extensive research conducted in this area. Research on the development of other speech acts would suggest that they follow the same path. However, further research is necessary to come to any conclusions in this area.

2.2. *The effect of proficiency on the development of learners' upgrading competence*

The findings relating to the production of upgraders by learners are broadly similar to those for internal modification in general. Specifically, it has been found that upgrader use increases with proficiency. Its development is impeded by the complexification hypothesis (cf. above) and also, on occasion, by negative transfer.

Hudson et al. (1995: 44–48), for instance, find Japanese learners of English to employ fewer upgraders in refusals of requests than their NS counterparts did in the same DCT. Such differences were suggested by Hudson et al. (1995: 48) to be related to transfer from the informants' L1, Japanese. However, other research findings point to the influence which proficiency level may have on the use of upgrading. Specifically, Trosborg (1995) found Danish learners who had been studying English for seven to eight years to use fewer upgraders than NS of English. In addition, these learners were shown to be no more proficient in their use of upgraders in complaint realizations than learners with five to six years of English. It was only those learners with ten years of English who used considerably more upgraders than either of the other groups (cf. Trosborg

1995: 358, 427). In other words, use of upgraders increased with increasing proficiency, but only after a certain degree of linguistic competence had been reached. In addition, Trosborg (1995: 430) finds that upgraders are not as easily acquired as downgraders in the speech act of complaining. Trosborg's findings relating to the slow development of upgrading are supported by a recent cross-sectional study of Catalan foreign learners of English conducted by Sabaté Dalmau (2006). This latter study revealed that intensification increased with increasing proficiency level, but that learners were rather slow to use such intensification and also employed intensifiers only in contexts characterized by the sociopragmatic constellation social distance, hearer dominance. Interestingly, Sabaté Dalmau (2006: 12–13) explains that her learners' difficulties with the use of intensification stemmed, at least partly, from the fact that intensifiers are not used widely in Catalan apologies. In Catalan, positive-face strategies, such as appealers, are preferred. In British English, on the other hand, intensifiers are widely employed in apologizing patterns.

Finally, also of relevance is the longitudinal study of beginners in a second language context by Ellis (1992), Ellis finding his learners to employ only repetition or paraphrase in upgrading their request realizations.

2.3.   *Study abroad and its effect on learners' use of internal modification*

The common conviction that study abroad results in linguistic benefits is reflected in the large numbers of students who, each year, voluntarily or increasingly as an integral part of their undergraduate program, spend time in their target speech community (cf. Coleman 1998). However, research into such benefits of study abroad periods witnessed a long period of disinterest (cf. Freed 1990: 459), and indeed, despite an increase in publications on the language-related benefits of the year abroad (cf. Churchill & DuFon 2006 for an overview), study abroad research remains rather narrow in focus, with the concentration remaining on elements of linguistic competence rather than on issues of use (cf. Schauer 2006).

Study abroad research focusing on the development of learners' competence in the use of modification has reported changes in both the levels and choices of downgrader use. Code and Anderson (2001), for instance, report of a decrease in the frequency of downgraders employed by their Japanese EFL high school students in request realizations over a ten month sojourn. However, an increase in downgrader combinations and in the variety of downgraders employed was established. Also, Barron (2003), an earlier study which I conducted on the use of requests, offers and refusals of offers by Irish English learners of German on a study abroad program in Germany, revealed changes in learners' use of modifi-

cation and choice of modifiers over time.[4] Specifically, increases were recorded in the use of lexical and phrasal downgraders with learner requests and refusals of offers. The development was particularly notable for refusals of offers, given rather low levels of modification in these refusals prior to the sojourn abroad. Nonetheless, learners' levels of use of lexical and phrasal downgrading in requests were closer to the L2 norm both at the beginning and end of the stay abroad than their use of such downgrading with refusals of offers at either stage. Also, the politeness marker *bitte* ('please') was shown to be overused in requests by advanced Irish learners of German in the initial stages of a sojourn abroad. With time, however, use of this politeness marker decreased, a development which was accompanied by increases in the use of downtoners, the lexical and phrasal downgrader preferred by German NS. Similar findings were found in the analysis of the types of syntactic downgrading employed over time, the syntactic downgrading employed at the end of the year abroad being more complex in offer and request strategies than that employed at the beginning of the year. Such findings relating to the different pace of development for different speech acts and also to the changing preferences in modifier use were suggested to add weight to the applicability of the complexification hypothesis in the development of modification. A further recent study by Schauer (2004), a longitudinal study of 12 German learners of English during a study abroad period in Britain, found lexical downgraders to be employed earlier than syntactic downgraders in requesting. However, learners' use of syntactic downgraders in requesting increased to a larger extent relative to the lexical downgrading with time spent in the target speech community. In other words, Schauer finds increases in syntactic downgraders to relate closely to time spent in the target community. Learner differences are, however, also found to influence the development pattern.[5] Finally, Félix-Brasdefer (2004) is a cross-sectional study of refusals by 24 advanced American English learners of Spanish as a foreign language who had been exposed to Latin American Spanish language input to differing extents. The study employed roleplay and verbal-report data to investigate refusals of invitations, suggestion and requests. Félix-Brasdefer finds learners having spent time in the target speech community to use a higher frequency of lexical and syntactic mitigation and also a greater variety of mitigators (cf. Félix-Brasdefer 2004: 623–630).

Overall then, internal modification does develop over time spent in the target speech community. Developments are found in the levels of use of such modification and also in the types and variety of modifiers employed. The complexification hypothesis appears to have particular explanatory value for the developmental path recorded.

2.4.   *Study abroad and its effect on learners' use of upgrading*

Studies focusing on the effects of the year abroad on the development of pragmatic competence have, to the best of my knowledge, not investigated learners' use of upgrading over time with the exception of Warga and Schölmberger (this volume), a study which investigates the development of apologies produced by Austrian learners of French over a ten month sojourn in the target speech community using a discourse completion task.[6] Warga and Schölmberger report a non-L2-like development in the increased overuse of upgrader combinations over time (explained by transfer from the L1), in the increased overgeneralization of the non-L2-like intensifier *très* ('very') and also in the decreased use of the L2-like intensifier *vraiment* ('really'). In addition, repetition of illocutionary force indicating devices (e.g., 'I'm sorry', 'Forgive me') increased in a non-L2-like movement over time in the target speech community. Warga and Schölmberger explain this latter non-L2-like development with reference to transfer and also to learner's desire for security. Finally, the overall use of upgrading modifiers was found to follow a non-linear developmental path, first increasing away from the L2-norm and then decreasing towards the L2 norm.

In addition, a further study of some relevance is Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford (1993), a longitudinal study of authentic academic advisory sessions in the second language context. In their study of authentic academic advisory sessions they found that, unlike native speakers who did not employ aggravators (negative intensifiers of pragmatic force, e.g. *I just decided to . . .*) in their realizations of suggestions, learners used aggravators with mitigators in the same situation. This inappropriate usage did not change over time spent in the target speech community (cf. also Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford 1996: 174).

3.   Refusals of offers

Refusals have been categorized as commissives given that they "commit the refuser to doing something" (cf. Félix-Brasdefer 2004: 592). In the present paper, it is argued, however, that the illocutionary point of refusals is directive in nature. Refusals, and also refusals of offers, are understood as "attempts . . . by the speaker to get the hearer to do something" (Searle 1976: 11) or, more accurately in this case, not to do something (cf. also Barron 2003: 127–130). In other words, they are requests by the speaker for the hearer not to do a future act x which the hearer has offered to do. Indeed, this categorization corresponds to that of Ed-

mondson and House (1981: 108). They describe refusals as an attitudinal illocution (Edmondson & House 1981: 49) and, within their model of discourse, as requests for non-verbal goods appearing as Contras. Contras are moves which "count interactionally as an attempt on the part of the producer of the Contra to cause his conversational partner to withdraw the preceding Proffer" (Edmondson 1981: 88). In other words, refusals serve as an attempt to persuade the interlocutor to withdraw his/her Proffer move (also termed Initiate), a move realized in the case of refusals of offers, by an offer.

As mentioned in 1 above, refusals of offers are face-threatening acts which threaten both the negative and positive face of the hearer. In conversation analytical terms, a refusal of offer is classified as a dispreferred second pair part of an adjacency pair, the first part of which is an offer. Refusals of offers are, therefore, of a high level of structural complexity (cf. Levinson 1983: 307–308). In addition, since refusals are second-pair parts, or in other words, since they fill a non-Initiating move, they have been suggested to be cognitively relatively more demanding than those moves which fill Initiates in interactional structure. This can be explained by the fact that, in refusing, a learner not only has to decide what to say and how best to say it, s/he has also to understand his/her interlocutor's utterance, decide on an answer, assess the situation and, finally, decide how to formulate the required utterance, given the relevant constraints. Due to the relatively high degree of complexity associated with refusals, researchers, such as Kasper and Schmidt (1996: 159), propose that their successful performance is acquired late in both the L1 and L2, unless positive transfer occurs. Indeed, research on the teachability of pragmatic competence by House (1996) shows learners' refusals to lag behind.

Barron (2003: 129–130) differentiates between initial refusals and subsequent refusals. Initial refusals realize a first Contra in an offer-refusal of offer exchange whereas subsequent refusals realize a third or subsequent Contra. Initial refusals can be broken down into two types—(a) ritual refusals, defined as "... polite act[s] to indicate the speaker's consideration of the hearer" (Chen et al. 1995: 152) and (b) substantive refusals (cf. Chen et al. 1995: 152), also termed genuine refusals (cf. Schneider 2000: 296). Ritual refusals are always followed by either a subsequent refusal or indeed an acceptance in a later move. Subsequent refusals usually take the form of a substantive refusal—however, depending on the particular culture in question, they may also take the form of a further ritual refusal, which is at a later stage followed by an acceptance or a subsequent refusal realized by a substantive refusal. On the other hand, some speech communities do not have ritual refusals at all—having only

substantive refusals (cf. Barron 2003: 129–130 for an overview on cultures with ritual refusals). The difference between ritual and substantive refusals is to be found in Searle's sincerity condition for refusals, i.e., "S wants H not to do x". In contrast to genuine/substantive refusals, this condition is not satisfied in ritual refusals since the speaker merely pretends to refuse the offer in question in the interest of the norms of politeness. In reality, however, the speaker expects a second offer or reoffer, which s/he can then either accept or refuse, as s/he wishes. In other words, the sincerity condition is only fulfilled in a second, or sometimes third, refusal (cf. also Barron 2003: 129–130 and Schneider 2000: 294–295 for further details of ritual refusals).

In Barron (2003, 2005), I highlighted the presence of ritual reoffers in Irish English and also in English English. In addition, and of considerable importance for the present study, is the fact that ritual reoffers and refusals do not exist in German (cf. Barron 2003). This difference in the interactional structure of offers/refusals of offer exchanges was found to cause difficulties on the pragmatic level for Irish learners of German. Specifically, the Irish learners in Barron (2003) were found to use ritual reoffers and refusals in their offering behavior in German. Many of these learners reported that the lack of ritual reoffers in German caused them to feel that offers made by native speakers of German were less than sincere. On the other hand, the use of ritual reoffers in German may have led native speakers of German to feel they were being pressured into doing something against their will. Over time in the target speech community, the discourse structure of the Irish learners' offer-refusal of offer exchanges became increasingly L2-like. In other words, learners employed reoffers to a significantly lower extent at the end of their year abroad compared to prior to the year abroad.

4. Methodology

4.1. *Informants*

Thirty-three Irish learners of German who spent ten months studying in a German university/institute of technology in one of 14 different cities and towns form the learner corpus in the present analysis. Immediately prior to their year abroad, these learners ranged in age from 18 to 21 years, the average age being 19.3 years. Students were judged to be advanced adult learners of German based on the extent of their exposure to German (between seven and eight years of formal instruction) and also on their subjective evaluations of their language competence. Previous time spent in

the target speech community ranged from zero to six months. In addition, native speaker production data was elicited from 34 NS of German at the University of Hamburg and 27 NS of Irish English from St. Leo's College in Carlow (cf. Barron 2003: 116–121 for further details of these learner and NS informants).

4.2. *Instrument*

Data was elicited three times from the learners at intervals of seven months (i.e. over a fourteen month span): prior to (T(1) data), during (T(2) data) and towards the end (T(3) data) of the year abroad, and once from the NS group. The present study focuses on data from time T(1) and T(3). The instrument employed was the free discourse completion task (FDCT), a type of production questionnaire developed in Barron (2003) to elicit sequential aspects of offers and refusals of offers. This research instrument essentially requires respondents to imagine themselves in a series of situations and to write both sides of an open role-play or dialogue for each situation (cf. Appendix for an example).

The FDCT offered many advantages over authentic data or role-play data for the present analysis. Firstly, it allowed for efficient elicitation of comparable data from large groups of different informants across time. It also permitted the researcher to manipulate contextual variables. The primary reason for the choice of this instrument for the present study was, however, the fact that the FDCT, given its written form and the time available for contemplation, allows investigation *not* of learners' use of upgrading in authentic discourse, but rather of their declarative knowledge thereof since it facilitates the collection of data "off-line," i.e., the participant is required to recall pragmatic information from memory and report on it rather than use it (cf. Kasper 2000: 317). This is a crucial point since learners' underlying level of knowledge may otherwise not be reflected in the data gathered, if they are overburdened by fatigue, complex interpersonal relationships, or cognitive overload as a result of difficulties which they may experience interacting in a particular "on-line" situation where time for contemplation is at a minimum (cf. Barron 2003: 83–93, 2006: 69–71). As far as the NS data is concerned, the FDCT enables elicitation of stereotypical interactions in the minds of respondents and, as such, portrays the socially accepted shape of offers/refusals of offers in a particular culture (cf. Turnbull 2001: 49).[7]

Table 1 provides an overview of the FDCT situations. The situations represent varying constellations of social distance and social dominance. In all situations, one informant in each dialogue is a student since the informants were required to put themselves in the particular situation

Table 1.   *Situational descriptions of FDCT items*

Situation	Synopsis of Situation
Accident	Following being knocked off his/her bike by a car driven by a priest, student refuses the priest's offer to bring him/her to hospital.
Beverage	Uncle in area calls by. Niece/nephew (student) offers him refreshments. Uncle refuses.
Lift	After guest-lecture, professor offers students who live near him a lift home. They refuse.
Work experience	Student offers to help new boss's son with economics. Boss refuses help.
Bag	Student offers stranger of same age help carrying suitcases in airport. Stranger refuses help.
Math	Student offers friend help in math before an exam. Friend refuses help.

described. The identity of the other interlocutor and the relationship be-
tween the student and this person is communicated via clues pertaining
to age, degree of familiarity, social status, and other variables given in
the situational descriptions.

4.3.   Coding

Beebe et al. (1990) identify both direct and indirect semantic strategies for
realizing refusals (cf. Appendix). For each of these, a number of super-
strategies are given, which in turn encompass a variety of sub-strategies.
Direct refusals include, for instance, non-performative statements, such as
no, *not now* and *no way*. Indirect refusals, on the other hand, are attempts
to conceal the illocutionary force. Examples include excuses (e.g. *I have to
do x*) or attempts to dissuade the interlocutor (e.g. *I'm fine*, *There's no
need*). Adjuncts to refusals are also used to modify the refusal. Examples
include statements of positive opinion and expressions of gratitude (e.g.
Thanks but . . .) (cf. Appendix). Upgraders may accompany direct and in-
direct refusal strategies and also adjuncts to refusals. The categorization
of upgraders employed is based broadly on Blum-Kulka et al. (1989:
285–286). An overview of the upgraders employed in the present dataset
is displayed in the Table 2.
    The coding of the German lexical item *ganz*, however, proved problem-
atic. This adverb has an upgrading function in such utterances as *Er be-
kommt Nachhilfe von seinem Vater, das ist ganz umsonst!* ('He's getting
extra tuition from his father, that's <u>completely</u> free') taken from the pres-
ent German NS data. *Ganz* may also, however, serve a downgrading
function, as in *ich kann das ganz gut* ('I'm <u>fairly</u> good at that') or *Ich
habe Mathe eigentlich ganz gut bestanden* ('I actually got a <u>fairly</u> good

Table 2. *Overview of upgraders used in refusals*

	Description	Realizations	Example
1. Intensifiers	Adverbial intensifiers used to increase the impact of certain elements of the proposition on the hearer	– *sehr/very* – *wirklich/echt/ total/really* – *so/so* – *viel a lot* – *gar/at all*	*Ja, es ist schon <u>sehr</u> schwer, aber ...* ('Yes, it is <u>very</u> heavy, but ...')
2. Commitment indicators	Sentence modifiers used to indicate a heightened degree of commitment on behalf of the speaker regarding the proposition referred to in the utterance	– *ehrlich/honestly* – *ich bin sicher, dass/I'm sure that* – *bestimmt/ definitely* – *auf jeden Fall/by all means* – *glauben sie mir/ Glaub mir/believe me* – *ich finde/I find/I believe* – *seriously*	*Ah no, we're fine <u>honestly</u> ...*
3. Time intensifiers	Adverbial intensifiers used to increase the credibility of the refusal for the hearer	– *gleich/in a minute* – *sofort/ immediately* – *bald/soon*	*Nein, nein. Wirklich nett, aber ich muß auch <u>gleich</u> wieder gehen.* ('No, no. That's very kind, but I have to go <u>now in a minute</u>')
4. Lexical uptoners	A marked lexical choice whereby the credibility of the refusal is increased	– *wunderbar/ wonderful* – *schrecklich/awful*	*Ah no, any other time. I better get going because the traffic is going to be <u>awful.</u>*
5. Repetition of direct refusal	Literal repetition of a direct refusal or a paraphrase of same		*<u>No, no</u> don't worry seriously I'm not hurt*
6. Emphatic addition	Set lexical collocations which add emphasis		*... I could not <u>eat or drink another bite</u>*
7. Expletive		– *Oh God*	*<u>Oh God</u> no. I've got to go to the bank and it closes within the hour and with all this traffic*

Table 2.   (*Continued*)

	Description	Realizations	Example
8. Orthographical/ suprasegmental emphasis	Used to achieve heightened effects	– Exclamation mark (*!*) – Underlining – Capitalization (in the written mode)	*No, thanks I was going home anyway I just said I'd call in on the way!*
9. Combinations			*. . . Ich bin <u>wirklich</u> o.k. Ich habe auch <u>gar</u> keine Zeit, um ins Krankenhaus zu fahren . . .* ('. . . I'm <u>really</u> okay. I haven't any time <u>at all</u> to go to the hospital . . .') (2 intensifiers)

grade in math'), also from the present German NS data. However, *ganz* used in such instances is only downtoning when it is left unstressed. When stressed, it serves to upgrade the given utterance (cf. Langenscheidt 2002). Stress was coded in the present data where underlining, upper case letters, or exclamation marks were used with *ganz*. In addition, the upgrading function of *ganz* was communicated in a number of cases based on the propositional content. The use of *ganz* in utterances, such as *Ja ich bin* ganz *sicher* ('Yes, I'm quite sure'), were interpreted, for instance, as upgrading based on the propositional content and also given the direction in the description of the item that a refusal was required. The learner data proved, however, somewhat problematic. In some instances, the upgrading force of *ganz* was clear, as in the latter example. However, in other cases, it was not clear whether learners meant utterances, such as *ich bin ganz gesund*, to be upgrading (as in 'I am perfectly healthy') or downgrading (as in 'I am fairly healthy'). Given a lack of orthographic emphasis, a downgrading force might be assumed. However, it would seem from a number of instances where *ganz* is used in the learner data, that learners may have been unaware of the fact that *ganz* may also have downgrading force. The following refusal taken from the learner data is one such example where it may be suggested that an upgrading force may have been more likely to have been meant:

(5)   *Ich bin sehr dankbar für das Angebot aber ich bin <u>ganz</u> gesund und ich bin schon spät für meine Klasse. Ich muß auch mit meinem lehren sprechen und deshalb ich beeile mich.*[8]

'I am very thankful for the offer but I am perfectly/fairly healthy and I am already late for my class. I also have to speak with my teacher and therefore I am in a hurry ...'

Given this uncertainty, *ganz* was coded in the present learner data both as an upgrader and as a downgrader in cases where its meaning was ambiguous based only on the propositional content. In other words, findings for both interpretations are given in the analysis.

The following example from the present IrEng NS dataset serves to illustrate the coding system employed. The strategies are identified first and then any modification employed. The super-strategies are given in square brackets ([ ]), the sub-strategies in round (( )) brackets.

(6) *No, really there is no need, I'm grand*[9]
Semantic strategies: *No* [Non-performative statement (No)] + *there is no need* [Attempt to dissuade interlocutor (Let interlocutor off the hook)] + *I'm grand* [Attempt to dissuade interlocutor (Let interlocutor off the hook)]
Modification: sentential modifier *really*: commitment indicator

Example (6) shows a single utterance. However, as Levinson (1983: 289) points out, refusals of offers follow offers in a sequence. Offer sequences are analyzed in this study using the framework for discourse analysis presented in Edmondson (1981) and Edmondson and House (1981) mentioned above (cf. 3). There are a number of exchanges possible. The simplest type of offer-refusal exchange takes the form Initiate-Contra-Satisfy, as in the following case taken from the present German NS corpus:

(7)	Du:	*Soll ich Dir einen Koffer abnehmen*	(INITIATE)
	Frau:	*Ach danke, aber das geht schon. Die sind zwar groß aber nicht schwer. Trotzdem, vielen Dank*	(CONTRA)
	Du:	*Keine Ursache.*	(SATISFY)
	(You:	'Shall I take one of your cases for you'	(INITIATE)
	Girl:	'Oh thanks, but I'm all right. They're big all right but they're not heavy. Thanks all the same'	(CONTRA)
	You:	'No problem.'	(SATISFY))

In this example, a Contra follows the Initiate, and a Satisfy the Contra. The Satisfy brings the outcome to a negative outcome by functioning as an "... 'accepting' move ..." (Edmondson 1981: 99, original emphasis) with respect to the immediately preceding valid interactional move, a refusal in this case. In other words, it is the initial refusal of offer rather

than the initiative offer which is accepted in this case. The exchange structure can be described as Initiate-Contra-Satisfy.

Exchanges involving offers are, however, not always as simple as those presented above, and complex negotiation is a common feature, i.e., where an Initiate is followed by a number of Contras. Such Contras occur when a refusal is not accepted. The following example from the present Irish English dataset serves as an illustration:

(8)   You: *I can go back over some of the stuff with*   (INITIATE)
             you if you like
      Friend: *No, it's ok, I can do it myself if I just*   (CONTRA 1)
             settle down and concentrate
      You: *Yeah but it's easier to revise with two.*   (CONTRA 2)
             We can compare answers
      Friend: *thanks, but I find it easier to revise alone*   (CONTRA 3)
      You: *Ok ...*   (SATISFY)

Here the initiative offer of assistance is refused, i.e., the Initiate is Contraed. However, this initial refusal is not accepted; instead a reoffer taking the ad hoc form, *Yeah but it's easier with two. We can compare answers*, Contras it (Contra 2), and in this way the initiative offer is effectively reiterated. Despite two opportunities to accept the offer, however, the friend again refuses, and so we have a further Contra (Contra 3). Finally, after two attempts to persuade the friend in question to accept the offer of assistance, the offer is withdrawn in the final Satisfying move and the exchange comes to a close with a negative outcome. The exchange structure can be described as Initiate-n(Contra)-Satisfy, n = 3.

The same complex exchange structure is also relevant in cases of ritual refusals—common in Irish English but not in German. The follow example is from the present Irish English NS dataset:

(9)   You: *I noticed you have two big bags, I was*   (INITIATE)
             wondering do you need a hand?
      Girl: *No thanks, I can manage*   (CONTRA 1)
      You: *Are you sure?*   (CONTRA 2)
      Girl: *Yeah. Thanks anyway*   (CONTRA 3)
      You: *Alright*   (SATISFY)

Here, the initiative offer is followed by an initial refusal (i.e., the Initiate is Contraed). However, the offerer does not withdraw the offer; instead, s/he reaffirms it in a conventional manner (*Are you sure?*) (Contras the Contra), whereupon the refuser again produces a Contra, and the offerer then finally withdraws the initiative offer of help by Satisfying the preceding Contra and the exchange comes to a close with a negative outcome.

The ritual nature of the second Contra in this dialogue is communicated via the pragmatic routine, *Are you sure?* Again, the exchange structure can be described as Initiate-n(Contra)-Satisfy, n = 3.

The present analysis of upgraders focuses on upgraders in both initial and subsequent refusals of offers or adjuncts of offers.

5.   Analysis

5.1.   *Upgrading in the L2*

Prior to the year abroad, learners were found to employ upgraders in all six refusal situations under analysis. Specifically, upgraders were employed in both learners' initial refusals and, with the exception of the work experience situation (where simple offer-refusal structures dominated anyway), also in their first subsequent refusals (i.e. in the first refusal following an initial refusal and a reoffer). The findings are presented in Table 3. Here, information is given on the number of upgraders employed in initial refusals. Following this, details are given of the number of offer-refusal exchanges which included more than one Contra (% I-nC-Sa, n > 1), i.e. data is presented on the number of times an offer was reiterated and, thus, a first subsequent refusal realized. Finally, figures are given on the levels of upgrading employed in those first subsequent refusals present and also on the total number of upgraders employed when initial and first subsequent refusals are taken together. Table 3 also takes into account that the adverb *ganz* may be coded as a downgrader or as an upgrader in ambiguous cases (cf. above). Where two figures are given, the figure given in bold represents the findings where *ganz* is coded as an upgrader. The figure directly above the figure given in bold represents the findings where *ganz* is coded as a downgrader in these same ambiguous instances.

A comparison of the T(1) and German NS data for initial and first subsequent refusals taken together reveals no statistically significant differences in the upgrading employed. Interestingly, however, statistically significant differences are found in the upgrading levels employed in the initial refusals in the German NS and in the T(1) data. Specifically, an independent t-test reveals that the German NS upgrade their initial refusals to a higher degree than the learners in time T(1) in the accident (p = 0.043), bag (p = 0.019) and math (p = 0.032) situations (cf. Figure 1), regardless of how *ganz* is coded. In addition, as also seen in Figure 1, the German NS and T(1) data for the lift and work experience situations also shows the same trend towards a higher level of upgrading in the

Table 3. *Frequency of upgraders in initial refusals, first subsequent refusals and in initial and first subsequent refusals combined*

		Accident	Beverage	Work Exp	Lift	Bag	Math
T(1)	Numbers of items completed & understood	(n = 31)	(n = 30)	(n = 16)	(n = 33)	(n = 33)	(n = 31)
	% upgraders in initial refusals	32.3% (10)	46.7% (14)	50% (8)	39.4% (13)	30.3% (10)	32.3% (10)
	% I-nC-Sa, n > 1	*83.9% (26)*	*43.3% (13)*	*18.7% (3)*	*30.3% (10)*	*66.7% (22)*	*41.9% (13)*
	% upgraders in first subsequent refusals	65.4% (17)	53.8% (7)	—	30% (3)	50% (11)	46.2% (6) **53.8% (7)**
	% upgraders in initial & first subsequent refusals	67.7% (21)	60.1% (18)	50% (8)	48.5% (16)	60.6% (20)	32.3% (10) **38.7% (12)**
T(3)	Numbers of items completed & understood	(n = 32)	(n = 30)	(n = 33)	(n = 32)	(n = 33)	(n = 33)
	% upgraders in initial refusals	46.9% (15) **53.1% (17)**	36.7% (11)	54.5% (18)	59.4% (19) **65.6% (21)**	54.5% (18)	39.4% (13)
	% I-nC-Sa, n > 1	*62.5% (20)*	*6.7% (2)*	*18.2% (6)*	*15.6% (5)*	*30.3% (10)*	*12.1% (4)*
	% upgraders in first subsequent refusals	40% (8) **45% (9)**	50% (1)	66.7% (4)	20% (1)	70% (7)	25% (1)
	% upgraders in initial & first subsequent refusals	62.5% (20) **71.9% (23)**	36.7% (11)	57.6% (19)	62.5% (20) **68.7% (22)**	69.7% (23)	42.4% (14)
German NS	Numbers of items completed & understood	(n = 31)	(n = 34)	(n = 33)	(n = 34)	(n = 34)	(n = 34)
	% upgraders in initial refusals	61.3% (19)	50% (17)	69.7% (23)	58.8% (20)	58.8% (20)	58.8% (20)
	% I-nC-Sa, n > 1	*35.5% (11)*	*8.8% (3)*	*3% (1)*	*5.9% (2)*	*14.7% (5)*	*17.6% (6)*
	% upgraders in first subsequent refusals	63.6% (7)	66.7% (2)	100% (1)	50% (1)	60% (3)	16.7% (1)
	% upgraders in initial & first subsequent refusals	67.7% (21)	50% (17)	72.7% (24)	61.8% (21)	61.8% (21)	61.8% (21)

IrEng NS	Numbers of items completed & understood	(n = 26)	(n = 27)	(n = 26)	(n = 27)	(n = 27)	(n = 27)
	% upgraders in initial refusals	76.9% (20)	48.1% (13)	46.2% (12)	40.7% (11)	37% (10)	29.6% (8)
	% I-nC-Sa, n > 1	*61.5% (16)*	*70.4% (19)*	*15.4% (4)*	*59.3% (16)*	*77.8% (21)*	*55.6% (15)*
	% upgraders in first subsequent refusals	50% (8)	63.2% (12)	50% (2)	56.2% (9)	47.6% (10)	53.3% (8)
	% upgraders in initial & first subsequent refusals	80.8% (21)	70.4% (19)	53.8% (14)	59.3% (16)	70.4% (19)	55.5% (15)

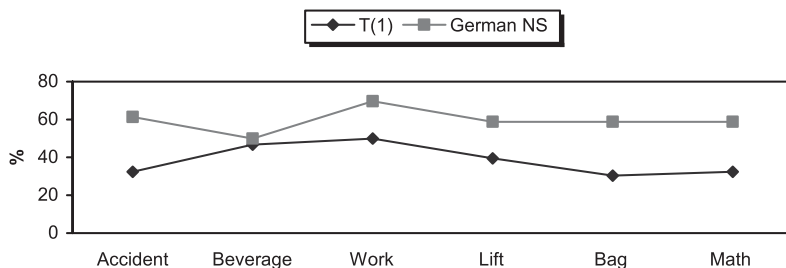I = Initiate, C = Contra, Sa = Satisfy.

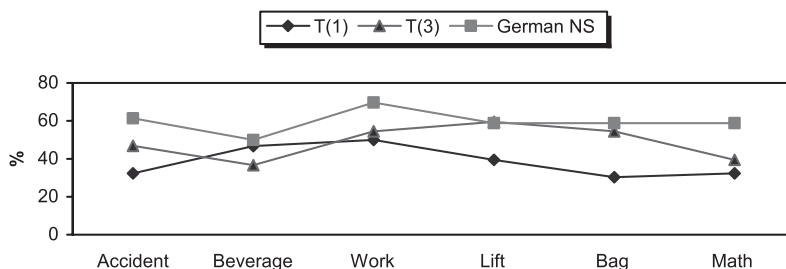Figure 1.   *Use of upgraders by learners in T(1) and German NS in initial refusals*

Figure 2.   *Use of upgraders by learners in T(1), T(3) and German NS in initial refusals; (ganz) coded as a downgrader in ambiguous cases (i.e. according to the German NS understanding)*

German data relative to the T(1) data. However, these latter differences are not statistically significant.

The learners' use of upgrading in initial refusals undergoes some change over time spent in the target speech community (cf. Table 3, Figure 2). Specifically, a paired t-test reveals that learners' levels of upgrading increased to a statistically significant degree in the bag situation (bag: $p = 0.03$). In addition, a notable increase in upgrading is also seen in the lift situation. Indeed, where *ganz* is coded as an upgrader in ambiguous situations, the difference between the T(1) and T(3) levels is significant not only in the bag situation, but also in the lift situation (lift: $p = 0.044$). Also notable, though not statistically significant, are the increases in upgrading levels in the initial refusals in the accident situation. The result of these changes is that in time T(3), the significant differences which had existed in the upgrading levels in the German and learner data in the initial refusals of the accident and bag situations have disappeared. In addition, the difference found between the T(1) and German NS data in the math situation is no longer significant. However, differences remain
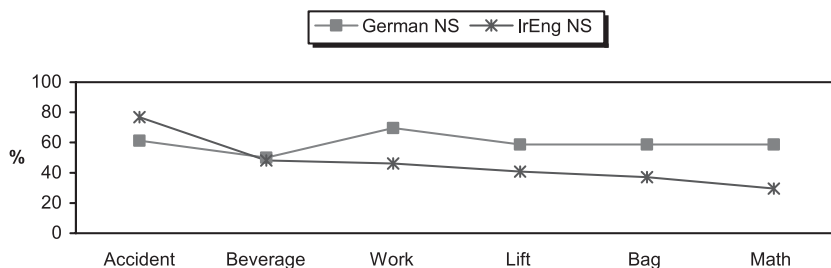
Figure 3. *Use of upgraders by German NS and IrEng NS in initial refusals*

between the learner and German NS levels in this situation (cf. Figure 2). It is noticeable that the increases in upgrading in the initial refusals are recorded in situations involving strangers—i.e. in the bag, lift and accident situations. Only in the math situation, i.e. a situation where the offer is to a friend, is there no increase in upgrading.

Overall then, learners' use of upgrading in initial refusals increased with time spent in the target speech community. They thus became more L2-like. The reason for this L2-like increase is suggested to relate to a decrease in transfer on the level of the discourse structure. As detailed above, in contrast to German, ritual reoffers and ritual refusals are a feature of language use in Irish English. The extensive use of reoffers by native speakers of Irish English and the minimal use of reoffers by German native speakers can be seen in Table 3 under I-nC-Sa, n > 1.[10] Table 3 also reveals that learners make extensive use of reoffers in German in time T(1). Indeed, Barron (2003) showed these differences between the offer-refusal exchange structure elicited from the German NS and the informants in T(1) to be statistically significant (p < 0.01) in all situations except in the work experience situation. The work experience situation revealed a very low level of reoffering in the Irish English NS and in the T(1) learner data due, it is suggested to a possible lack of sincerity of the offer or possibly to the situational constellation where the offer is issued to a person of higher status. The learners' higher levels of reoffering were found in an analysis of these reoffers and also of retrospective data elicited from these same learners (cf. Barron 2003: 155–167) to be motivated by the ritual reoffers used in the L1 (cf. row I-nC-Sa, n > 1).

Of relevance for the present study is the fact that this more complex discourse structure appears to have an effect on the use of upgrading in initial refusals. Figure 3 (cf. also Table 3) contrasts upgrading levels used in initial refusals in German and Irish English. The general trend points towards a higher use of upgrading in the German NS initial refusals. The accident situation is the only situation where the level of upgrading

in IrEng NS initial refusals was not below the German NS level. It is suggested that this difference relates to the urgency and severity of the situation—in other words, it is clear to the injured party in this case that the offer is meant—there is no need to test the sincerity of the offer by using a ritual refusal—the refusal in this case is rather of a substantive nature in both cultures.

The lower use of upgrading in initial refusals in Irish English is suggested to be motivated by the wide-spread ritual nature of the offer-refusal exchange in this culture. In other words, speakers, being aware of the presence of ritual reoffers, expect a reoffer, and, thus, do not upgrade their refusal until this reoffer is made. Alternatively, the low use of upgraders may be explained in relation to the strength of the offer. In a culture with ritual reoffers, the sincerity condition of an offer is often not fulfilled until the ritual reoffer itself is made. Unsurprisingly, therefore, refusals may not be upgraded to a large extent before this reoffer occurs. The following example taken from the present IrEng NS data demonstrates this. The upgraders employed are underlined.

(10) You: *I'm not too bad at calculus. I can give you a hand if you like*
      Friend: *No, I'll be alright*
      You: *Are you sure? I don't mind*
      Friend: *No <u>seriously</u>. If I fail, I'll do it <u>in style!</u> Thanks anyway.*

The initiative offer is downgraded somewhat with the use of the explicit conditional *if you like* which underlines the conditional nature of the offer (cf. Barron 2005). This offer is refused using a direct refusal (*No*) and an indirect off-the-hook refusal (*I'll be alright*). The subsequent offer is stronger than the first. It involves use of *are you sure?*, a conventionalized expression used to realize a ritual reoffer, followed by the supportive move *I don't mind*. In other words, the offerer shows that he/she is willing and able to help. This conventionalized offer—and the offer overall—is finally rejected using three upgraders, i.e. using the commitment indicator *seriously*, the lexical uptoner *in style* and the orthographic emphasis *!*.

The learners in T(1) make extensive use of reoffering. The following example illustrates the ritual nature of many of these.

(11) You: *Hallo, kann ich dir helfen*   ('Hello, can I help you?')
      Girl: *Nein danke, es geht.*   ('No thanks. I'm fine')
      You: *Bist du sicher*   ('Are you sure?')
      Girl: *Ja wirklich es ist nicht so*   ('Yes really it's not that
              schwer, aber vielen Dank   heavy, but thanks a lot')
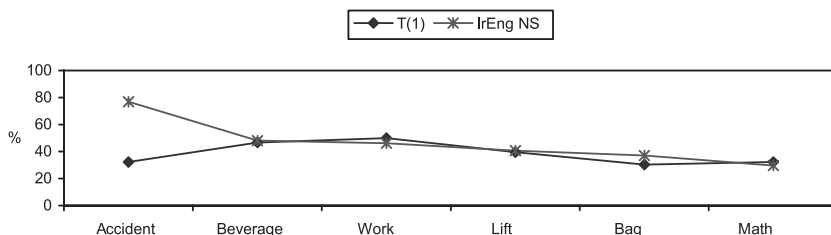
Figure 4. *Use of upgraders by learners in T(1) and IrEng NS in initial refusals*

In this situation, the offer to help is refused twice. In the initial refusal, a simple *nein* ('no') is followed by an off-the-hook semantic strategy, *es geht* ('I'm fine'). The ritual reoffer, realized using the routine *Bist du sicher* ('are you sure?') transferred from Irish English to German, where it does not have the status of a routine formula (cf. Barron 2003), is rejected more forcefully using the commitment indicator *wirklich* ('really') and the intensifier *viel* in *vielen Dank* ('thanks a lot'). Indeed, a comparison of the learners' levels of upgrading in T(1) in initial refusals with those of the IrEng NS shows just how alike these data sets are (cf. Figure 4). Only in the accident situation do the learners employ less upgraders in T(1).

Over time spent in the target speech community, learners increasingly perceive ritual reoffers to be specific to their L1 (cf. Barron 2003 for details of the metapragmatic data). They consequently discontinue transferring the L1 offer-refusal exchange structure to their L2 to a large extent, and their offer-refusal exchanges become less complex. In other words, reoffers are employed to a lesser extent. Indeed, Barron (2003) shows that the changes in discourse structure from time T(1) to T(3) are statistically significant for all situations except for the work experience situation where reoffering was low in Irish English and in T(1) anyway (cf. above). That is, as seen in Table 3, the number of complex exchanges of the form Initiate-n(Contra)-Satisfy, where n > 1, decreased over time from T(1) to T(3) in favor of simple exchanges of the exchange structure, Initiate-Contra-Satisfy. In other words, the use of reoffers and subsequent refusals is significantly lower in the T(3) data relative to the T(1) data. Consequently, the percentages for upgrading in subsequent reoffers given relate to very small absolute figures. Such decreases in ritual reoffers, and consequently also in first subsequent refusals, at least partly explain the increases recorded above in the use of upgrading with initial reoffers over time. In other words, it appears that the learners became more German not only in the exchange structure employed, but also in the use of upgrading in initial refusals. They increasingly saw initiative offers as sincere

rather than ritual and therefore upgraded their initial refusals to a larger extent given that they did not see a reoffer as necessary.

Overall then, transfer is found to have a powerful influence on learners' use of upgrading in T(1). With time, this influence decreases and learners' upgrading becomes more L2-like due to an L2-like shift in the offer-refusal exchange structure employed. We have, however, yet to explain the lack of increase in upgrading found in the initial refusals in the math situation, the only situation in which the offer is made to a friend. An analysis of the actual utterances in which the upgraders are employed sheds light on this issue since many of the upgraders employed by learners and native speakers alike appear in formulaic utterances, such as, for instance:

(12)   *Das ist <u>wirklich</u> nicht nötig* ('That's <u>really</u> not necessary')
(13)   *Mir geht es <u>wirklich</u> gut* ('I'm <u>really</u> fine')
(14)   *<u>Vielen</u> Dank* ('Thanks <u>very</u> much')
(15)   *Ich bin <u>sehr</u> dankbar* ('I'm <u>very</u> grateful')
(16)   *Das ist <u>sehr</u> nett von ihnen* ('That's <u>very</u> nice of you')

Such formulaic expressions are used extensively in situations with strangers. In the math situation, on the other hand, upgraders are used to a large extent with ad-hoc formulations, such as the following (examples taken from the present German NS data):

(17)   ... *ich habe bis dahin <u>überhaupt</u> keine Zeit mehr, mich zu treffen* ('I've no time <u>at all</u> to meet until then')
(18)   ... *Ich muß das <u>endlich</u> auch mal alleine schaffen!* ('I have to do it myself <u>for once!</u>')
(19)   *Oh, nein, ich glaube, das macht mich nur <u>noch nervöser</u>* ... ('Oh no, I think that'd only make me <u>even more nervous</u>')

Pragmatic routines, defined as "... highly conventionalized prepatterned expressions whose occurrence is tied to more or less standardized communication situations" (Coulmas 1981: 2–3), represent an efficient and low-risk way of performing recurrent pragmatic or discourse functions which arise in a particular linguistic community (cf. Kecskes 2003: 80–81; Laver 1981: 292). They offer a great sense of security, particularly to learners, given their ease of decoding and their association with a particular inter-actional purpose (Lüger 1993: 8; Wray 1999: 216). In addition, pragmatic routines are stored in memory as chunked wholes and can thus be retrieved quickly and easily, demanding little in terms of attention. They, therefore, allow speakers time for conversational planning, the production of creative utterances, and also, of particular importance to learners, time to monitor utterances (cf. Coulmas 1981: 9; Edmondson 1989: 293; Kecskes 2003: 79–80). Indeed, so significant is this added planning time

for learners, in particular, that such routines are often described as "islands of reliability" (Dechert 1983: 183–184), due to their function as a "safe base" for learners in dealing with recurrent situations. In other words, the use of formulaic routines reduces any cognitive load the learner may be experiencing. They free capacity and allow learners to engage in upgrading to a greater extent than when they are forced to create utterances themselves. In the present context, it would seem, therefore, that the use of upgrading in the initial refusals in situations with strangers was facilitated by the fact that they could be attached easily to pragmatic routines. In the math situation, in contrast, it appears that, given that formulaic utterances were not available to ease the cognitive load and free processing capacity, learners were forced to concentrate on being creative and producing ad hoc utterances. Upgrading was, consequently, too much of a cognitive burden for learners.

5.2. *Upgrader types*

Table 4 shows the learners' and native speakers' preferences for upgrading types. As in Table 3, the findings presented also take into account that the adverb *ganz* may be coded as a downgrader or as an upgrader in ambiguous cases (cf. 5.1 above). The figures presented in Table 4 do not sum to 100% since combinations are also included in the figures given for the use of upgraders.

The upgraders employed by German NS are also employed by the learners in T(1) and T(3) with the exception of the emphatic addition which is not used in T(1). However, this upgrader is employed very sparingly by the German NS. In addition, the upgraders employed most frequently in the learner and German NS data are rather similar, with all three groups using the intensifier and the time intensifier extensively. The commitment indicator, orthographical/suprasegmental emphasis and repetition are also used relatively frequently in all data sets, albeit to a lesser extent overall than the intensifier and time intensifier.

In T(1), the most popular upgrader is the intensifier followed by the time intensifier and orthographical/suprasegmental emphasis. Indeed, this use of upgraders is remarkably similar to the German NS' choice of upgraders. Over time in the target speech community, however, the time intensifier gained in popularity among learners in the beverage and bag situations, while the intensifier lost in popularity in these same situations. In the beverage situation in T(1), 55.6% of those learners who used an upgrader employed at least one intensifier; in the same situation in T(3), however, the level of intensifiers had decreased to 18.2%. On the other hand, the use of time intensifiers increased in this same situation from

Table 4. *Upgrading types employed in initial and first subsequent refusals*

		Accident	Beverage	Work Exp.	Lift	Bag	Math
T(1)	*% upgraders in initial and first subsequent refusals*	*67.7% (21)*	60% (18)	*50% (8)*	*48.5% (16)*	60.6% (20)	*32.3% (10)* **38.7% (12)**
	% Orthographical/suprasegmental emphasis	19% (4)	16.7% (3)	—	6.3% (1)	20% (4)	50% (5) **41.7% (5)**
	% Intensifier	52.4% (11)	55.6% (10)	100% (8)	68.8% (11)	80% (16)	40% (4) **50% (6)**
	% Time intensifier	33.3% (7)	44.4% (8)	—	25% (4)	25% (5)	—
	% Commitment indicator	14.3% (3)	—	12.5% (1)	6.3% (1)	15% (3)	20% (2) **16.7% (2)**
	% Repetition	14.3% (3)	16.7% (3)	—	6.3% (1)	—	20% (2) **16.7% (2)**
	% Lexical uptoner	9.5% (2)	5.6% (1)	—	—	—	—
	% Expletive	—	—	—	—	—	—
	% Emphatic addition	—	—	—	—	—	—
T(3)	*% upgraders in initial and first subsequent refusals*	*62.5% (20)* **71.9% (23)**	*36.7% (11)*	*57.6% (19)*	*62.5% (20)* **68.7% (22)**	69.7% (23)	42.4% (14)
	% Orthographical/suprasegmental emphasis	15% (3) **13% (3)**	9.1% (1)	10.6% (2)	—	17.4% (4)	—
	% Intensifier	50% (10) **60.9% (14)**	18.2% (2)	89.5% (17)	75% (15) **77.3% (17)**	43.5% (10)	64.3% (9)
	% Time intensifier	25% (5) **21.7% (5)**	81.8% (9)	—	40% (8) **36.4% (8)**	69.6% (16)	—
	% Commitment indicator	40% (8) **34.8% (8)**	—	15.8% (3)	—	13% (3)	28.6% (4)
	% Repetition	5% (1) **4.3% (1)**	—	—	—	—	—

	% Lexical uptoner	5% (1) **4.3% (1)**	9.1% (1)	10.5% (2)	—	4.3% (1)	14.3% (2)
	% Expletive	—	—	—	—	—	—
	% Emphatic addition	5% (1) **4.3% (1)**	—	—	—	—	—
German NS	*% upgraders in initial and first subsequent refusals*	*67.7% (21)*	*50% (17)*	*72.7% (24)*	*61.8% (21)*	*61.8% (21)*	*61.8% (21)*
	% Orthographical/suprasegmental emphasis	23.8% (5)	17.7% (3)	12.5% (3)	28.6% (6)	47.6% (10)	23.8% (5)
	% Intensifier	80.9% (17)	47.1% (8)	87.5% (21)	85.7% (18)	42.9% (9)	76.2% (16)
	% Time intensifier	28.6% (6)	41.2% (7)	12.5% (3)	4.8% (1)	33.3% (7)	9.5% (2)
	% Commitment indicator	33.3% (7)	5.9% (1)	12.5% (3)	—	4.8% (1)	—
	% Repetition	28.6% (6)	23.5% (4)	—	9.5% (2)	14.3% (3)	—
	% Lexical uptoner	4.8% (1)	5.9% (1)	4.2% (1)	4.8% (1)	4.8% (1)	33.3% (7)
	% Expletive	—	—	—	—	—	—
	% Emphatic addition	—	—	4.2% (1)	—	—	—
IrEng NS	*% upgraders in initial and first subsequent refusals*	*80.8% (21)*	*70.4% (19)*	*53.8% (14)*	*59.3% (16)*	*70.4% (19)*	*55.5% (15)*
	% Orthographical/suprasegmental emphasis	—	5.3% (1)	—	6.3% (1)	—	6.7% (1)
	% Intensifiers	33.3% (7)	57.9% (11)	50% (7)	31.2% (5)	47.4% (9)	33.3% (5)
	% Time intensifier	28.6% (6)	31.6% (6)	—	6.3% (1)	36.8% (7)	—
	% Commitment indicator	71.4% (15)	36.8% (7)	14.3% (2)	43.7% (7)	15.8% (3)	66.7% (10)
	% Repetition	9.5% (2)	36.8% (7)	7.1% (1)	12.5% (2)	5.3% (1)	6.7% (1)
	% Lexical uptoner	9.5% (2)	10.5% (2)	28.6% (4)	18.7% (3)	10.5% (2)	20% (3)
	% Expletive	—	5.3% (1)	—	—	5.3% (1)	—
	% Emphatic addition	—	5.3% (1)	7.1% (1)	—	—	—

Table 5.   *Realizations of the time intensifier*

T(1)	T(3)	German NS
1. *in 5 Minuten, in 10 Minuten, in einer Viertel Stunde, in einigen Minuten* ('in 5 minutes', 'in 10 minutes', 'in a quarter of an hour', 'in a couple of minutes')	1./2./3. *gleich/in 5 Minuten, in 10 Minuten, in einer Viertel Stunde, in einigen Minuten/ jetzt* ('in a few minutes'/'in 5 minutes', 'in 10 minutes', 'in a quarter of an hour', 'in a couple of minutes'/'now')	1. *gleich* ('in a few minutes')
2./3. *jetzt* ('now')/*gleich* ('in a few minutes')		2. *jetzt* ('now')
4./5. *bald/sofort* ('soon', 'immediately')	4./5. *bald/sofort* ('soon'/ 'immediately')	3./4. *schon endlich* ('already', 'at last')

44.4% in T(1) to 81.8% in T(3). Similarly, in the bag situation, the level of intensifiers used decreased from 80% in T(1) to 43.5% in T(3) while the use of time intensifiers increased from 25% in T(1) to 69.6% in T(3). In neither situation did the coding of *ganz* affect the levels of use. These changes represented a movement away from the L2 norm in both situations.

Transfer cannot account for the increased use of time intensifiers in the learner data over time. Indeed, the IrEng NS' use of intensifiers and time intensifiers is rather similar to the T(1) data in the beverage situation. In the bag situation, the use of intensifiers in T(3) is more similar to the IrEng NS data than are the T(1) levels. However, the use of time intensifiers in T(3) is considerably higher than their levels of use in the IrEng NS data for this situation. Consequently, the explanation would appear to lie elsewhere. Indeed, the analysis of the actual linguistic realizations of these upgraders sheds some light on the learners' changing preferences. It is found, namely that the realization of the time intensifiers differs in the learner and German NS data. The relative realization preferences are presented in Table 5.

The learners clearly prefer the ad hoc formulation *in 5/10 Minuten* ('in 5/10 minutes') or a variety of such to realize a time intensifier in time T(1). Notably, this formulation is not used at all by the German NS. Rather, the German NS prefer to use the adverb *gleich*. *Gleich* is also used by learners in T(1) but it is a clear second preference. However, with time in the target speech community, the use of *gleich* increases. Indeed, in time T(3), *gleich* is employed to the same extent as *in 5/10 Minuten* ('in 5/10 minutes') or varieties of same. It is suggested that the large increases in the use of the time intensifier in the beverage and bag situations may have been triggered due to learners desire to show off. In other

Table 6.   *Realizations of the intensifier*

T(1)	T(3)	German NS
1. *sehr* ('very') 2. *viel* ('many')	1. *sehr* ('very') 2. *viel* ('many')	1. *viel* ('many') 2./3. *wirklich/sehr* ('really'/'very')
3./4. <u>*ganz*</u> ('completely' [if downgrading use in German misunderstood as upgrading]) /*wirklich* ('really')	3. *ganz* ('completely') [if downgrading use in German misunderstood as upgrading]	
	4. *wirklich* ('really')	

words, learners may have seen the bag and beverage situations as an op-portunity to try out their newly acquired upgrader, *gleich*.

Finally, a word on the actual intensifiers employed by learners. The most popular intensifiers employed by the learners and German NS over all situations together are seen in Table 6. The learners' first and second preferences did not change over time. *Sehr* ('very') was the upgrader employed most, followed by *viel* ('many'). The German NS, on the other hand, preferred *viel* ('many') over *sehr* ('very'). They also employed *wirklich* ('really') extensively. As explained in detail above, the adverb *ganz* posed coding problems in the learner data. If it was the case, as is suggested above may have been the case, that the learners wrongly believed *ganz* to function as an upgrader in the data (not being aware of the potential downgrading force of this adverb), then *ganz* was the third most popular upgrader employed in both T(1) and T(3). As such, it held potential for pragmatic misunderstandings.

Although the native speakers and learners were largely in agreement as to the preferred intensifiers to employ, there was a rather large range of other intensifiers used by individuals. These included, for instance, lexical items such as *überhaupt* ('at all'), *voll* ('completely'—slang), *echt* ('really'), *weitaus* ('by far'), *herzlich* ('sincere'/'warm') and *total* ('totally'). The range of realizations of intensifiers employed by learners increased with time spent in the target speech community. While in T(1), a total of 12 different intensifiers were employed, this number had increased to 17 in T(3). The German NS used in total 19 different realizations.

6.   Conclusion

The present analysis focused on the use of upgraders by Irish advanced learners of German in initial and subsequent refusals, viewed separately and in combination. In contrast to previous findings on the use of lexical

and phrasal downgraders with refusals by these same learners (cf., e.g., Barron 2003), the present findings show a rather high overall level of competence in learners' upgrading prior to a year abroad spent in the target speech community. Indeed, interestingly, this finding contrasts with those by Trosborg (1995) and Sabaté Dalmau (2006), both of whom found upgraders to be slow to emerge. The differences between the present findings and those by Sabaté Dalmau can be explained by the fact that upgraders are used extensively in Irish English refusals of offers in contrast to Sabaté Dalmau's (2006) finding that upgrading is less seldom in Catalan than in English apologies. Hence, transfer did not negatively influence upgrading levels in the Irish learners' German refusals. On the other hand, the differences between the present findings and Trosborg's (1995) findings for the use of upgraders in complaints and requests may be due to the different speech act or indeed to the extensive use of upgrading in formulaic rather than in ad hoc utterances found in the present study.

Despite relatively high levels of upgrader use prior to the year abroad, significant differences were, however, found in the use of upgraders in learners' initial refusals prior to the year abroad relative to the use of upgraders in initial refusals by German NS. Over time in the target speech community, however, upgrader use in initial refusals characterized by social distance increased, an L2-like development explained by a decrease in transfer from the learners' L1, Irish English. Specifically, the development related to changes recorded in the exchange structure of learners' offers and refusals of offers. While transfer from Irish English accounted for a weak initial refusal in the T(1) due to the expectation of a reoffer, learners in T(3) adhered rather to the German NS norm and did not engage to the same degree in reoffering. As a result, a reoffer was not expected and so the initial refusal was treated as a sincere refusal more often than in T(1). The initiative offer was, therefore, more forceful.

These increases in upgrading in initial refusals related, however, only to situations in which strangers interact. In the math situation, a situation in which a friend offers another friend help, no increases are found in learners' use of upgrading in initial refusals in T(3) despite statistically significant differences between the learners in T(1) and the German NS data. Indeed, the levels of upgrading remain in general low in this situation in both the learners' initial and first subsequent refusals relative to the remaining situations and indeed also relative to the German NS norm. Interestingly, this finding supports that by Sabaté Dalmau (2006) who finds upgrading to increase with increasing proficiency only in those situations characterized by social distance and hearer dominance. In the present study, these situational differences are explained by the fact that

formulaic utterances are employed to a larger extent in interactions with strangers in the data at hand. A possible explanation is found in Wolfson's (1988) bulge theory—that is, more complex negotiation (and thus more ad hoc creations) is required in interactions with friends than in interactions characterized by social distance.[11] Pragmatic routines are, therefore, ideal for interactions with strangers. In contrast, ad hoc utterances are more frequent in situations among status equal familiars. In such situations, upgrading appears to be overly cognitively demanding for learners. In interactions with strangers, however, the use of pragmatic routines serves to decrease any cognitive burden and, thus, free capacity for upgrading. This explanation would point to a relatively slow rate of development in upgrader employment by learners in non-formulaic utterances. In other words, it seems that the complexification hypothesis, put forward to explain developments in interlanguage grammatical competence is also relevant to the development of interlanguage pragmatic competence (cf., e.g., Barron 2003: 245–246; Hassall 1997: 286–287; Trosborg 1995 and Salsbury & Bardovi-Harlig 2000: 62). Indeed, the complexification hypothesis would seem to be particularly relevant for refusals, given the high level of cognitive complexity (cf. 3). In other words, it appears that learners have to first master the head act strategy of the particular speech act they wish to realize. Only then can they begin to insert modality markers, such as upgraders (cf. also Trosborg 1995: 430). The findings of the present study suggest that the use of upgraders is possible at an earlier stage when formulaic utterances are used to realize the speech act itself. The year abroad led to an increase in upgrading where upgrading was employed with formulaic utterances, but not when non-formulaic utterances were involved.

The use of upgrader types was largely similar to that in the L2 prior to and at the end of the year abroad. Only in the beverage and bag situations, i.e. in those two situations in which a time intensifier was easily employed, was a non-L2-like movement recorded towards an increased use of a time intensifier. These increases are explained against the background of the actual realizations of time intensifiers. Prior to the year abroad, learners clearly preferred the non-L2-like ad hoc formulation *in x Minuten* ('in x minutes'). With time spent in the target speech community, however, learners' use of *gleich*, the time intensifier clearly preferred by the German NS, increased. It is therefore suggested that learners exploited the opportunity to show off their newly acquired time intensifier in the bag and beverage situations. As a result, the use of this upgrader increased. Finally, the range of realizations of the intensifier increased over time spent in the target speech community—also a movement towards the use of upgraders in the German NS dataset.

To conclude, the present study adds to the research on the development of learners' competence in the area of modification, most specifically in the area of upgrading. It confirms the findings of previous studies which reveal negative transfer and the complexification hypothesis to have explanatory power in accounts of the acquisition of L2 modification and upgrading, but it also goes a step further in that it draws attention to the importance of analyses beyond the level of the single utterance and also in that it highlights the role of formulaic utterances in the acquisition of L2 upgrading. Research in this area is, however, still in its infancy. Therefore, it remains for me only to employ some upgraders to underline the continuing and very pressing need for research focusing on the acquisition of L2 pragmatics!

Appendix

FDCT sample item:
Du bist am Flughafen. Du siehst eine Frau in Deinem Alter mit zwei riesigen Koffern. Da Du selbst wenig Gepäck hast, bietest Du ihr Hilfe an. Sie <u>LEHNT DEIN ANGEBOT AB</u>.

Du:
Frau:
:
:
:
:
:

(You are in the airport. You see a girl your own age with two huge bags. As you haven't much luggage yourself, you offer to help. She REFUSES.

You:
Girl:)

Table 7.   *Semantic refusal strategies—coding categories*

	Sub-strategies/Realizations	Example
I DIRECT		
A. Performative	Performative statement	*No really you're okay, thank you very much Sir, you're very kind, but <u>I'm afraid we will have to refuse</u>.*
B. Non-performative statement	1. *No, Not now, Forget it, No way, Nein*	1. <u>*No*</u> *thanks. I'm really okay.*
	2. Negative willingness	2. *Forget it, <u>I don't want your help or your sympathy</u>.*
	3. Negative ability	3. *Thank you very much but <u>I can't</u>*
	4. Speaker preference	4. *… ich glaub' ich krieg' das <u>am besten</u> allein hin.* ('I think, <u>I'd be better</u> to do it myself').
	5. Insistence	5. *Danke, aber <u>das muß ich selber schaffen</u>, sonst würde ich nie lernen.* ('Thanks, but <u>I have to do it myself</u>, otherwise I'd never learn it').
II INDIRECT		
A. Statement of regret	*I'm sorry*, *Es tut mir leid*	<u>*Tut mir leid*</u>*, aber ich habe wenig Zeit,…* ('<u>Sorry</u>, but I don't have much time').
B. Excuse, reason, explanation		*Nein, <u>ich muß weiter</u>. Mir geht es wirklich gut …* ('No, <u>I can't stop</u>. I'm okay—really …').
C. Statement of alternative	Suggest alternative	*… <u>Wenn Sie vielleicht die Kosten für die Fahrradreparatur übernehmen</u>, wäre mir weitaus mehr geholfen!* ('… It'd be a much bigger help, <u>if you'd maybe agree to pay for the cost of repairing the bicycle!</u>')
D. Attempt to dissuade interlocutor	1. Criticize the offer/offerer	1. *Wie kannst du mir helfen? <u>Ich bin besser als Dir</u>* ('How can you help me? <u>I'm better than you</u>').
	2. Let interlocutor off the hook	2. *Nein … <u>Es geht schon</u>* ('No … <u>I'm all right</u>').
ADJUNCTS TO REFUSALS	Statements which modify refusals but do not themselves function as refusals	

Table 7   (*Continued*)

	Sub-strategies/Realizations	Example
A. Statement of positive opinion/ feeling or agreement	*That would be great but …/ Das wäre klasse aber …, That would be good/Das wäre gut, …, eigentlich ja, Not a bad idea/Keine schlechte idee.*	*Das wäre klasse, aber …* ('<u>That would be great</u>, but …').
B. Pause fillers	*Well, Oh, hmm, ach, also*	*Hmm, eigentlich ja, aber …* ('<u>Hmm</u>, yes, but').
C. Gratitude/ appreciation	*Thanks, Thank you, Danke, Ich danke Dir/ Ihnen, That's kind of you/wie nett, das ist nett.*	*Wie nett, aber …* ('<u>How nice</u>, but …').
D. Disarming comments	*Don't misunderstand me/ Nimm's mir nicht übel.*	*Du, <u>nimm's mir nicht übel</u>, aber …* ('<u>Don't misunderstand me</u>, but …').
E. Request for information/ clarification	*How …?/Wie …?*	*<u>Wie kannst du mir helfen?</u>…* ('<u>How can you help me?</u>…').
F. Reference to possible future request	*If …/In case …/Wenn …, Falls …*	… *<u>Falls</u> er dann immer noch nicht besser werden sollte, komme ich gerne nochmal auf Ihr Angebot zurück* ('<u>If</u> he still doesn't improve, I'd be happy to come back to your offer').

Notes

1. Upgraders are a type of internal modifier. Downgraders and upgraders are co-hyponyms, downgraders being modality markers which mitigate the impact of a particular utterance on the addressee.
2. While the use of upgraders in refusals serves to nurture social relations, their use may also aggravate social relations. The relevant effect depends on the particular speech act in which they are employed. Used in complaints, for instance, upgraders increase the face-threat involved by underlining the force of the complaint (cf. Trosborg 1995: 327).
3. The complexification hypothesis claims that certain features, e.g., German word order and English negation, are acquired in line with a developmental principle. The order of development is stable and dependent on structural complexity and, therefore, on the degree of processing capacity necessary. According to this principle, those linguistic structures which demand a high degree of processing capacity will be acquired

late; those requiring a minimum of processing capacity, early (cf. Clahsen et al. 1983: 164).

Recently, the complexification hypothesis has been suggested to explain development in interlanguage pragmatic competence (cf., e.g., Barron 2003: 245–246; Hassall 1997: 286–287; Trosborg 1995 and Salsbury & Bardovi-Harlig 2000: 62). In other words, it has been suggested that learners may first have to gain control over the head act strategy of the particular speech act they wish to realise. Only then can they begin to employ modification, for instance (cf. also Trosborg 1995: 430).

4. This 2003 study concentrated on lexical and phrasal downgrading, syntactic downgrading, the use of pragmatic routines and also discourse structure. Upgraders were not analysed. The informants were the same as those in the present study.

5. It should be noted, however, that Schauer's (2004) informants appear to have had different levels of proficiency in English. Schauer notes, for instance, that only six of the 12 informants had studied English up to the equivalent of A-level English in the British scheme (i.e. six of the 12 had studied English for their *Leistungskurs* in the German system) (cf. Schauer 2004: 258). Consequently, the effect of differing proficiency level rather than, or as well as, individual factors may have explanatory power (cf. also Schauer 2006).

6. In addition, Code and Anderson (2001), a longitudinal study of thirty-five Japanese students of English on a ten-month homestay focusing on requests, does report that upgraders are only used in one situation. No details are given, however, on developments in upgrader usage despite the developmental focus of the study.

7. Several researchers have highlighted the limitations of DCTs (also termed production questionnaires) in general. Mey (2004: 40), for instance, comments that the DCT rather "clinically" removes the discourse presented from real life and forces informants to interact with an imaginary interlocutor until an appropriate compromise is found. Kasper (2000) and Kasper and Rose (2002: 90–96) provide an overview of the many criticisms leveled at the instrument. In addition, Barron (2003: 83–93) also discusses possible limitations of the FDCT. Despite this, however, the FDCT was seen as a suitable instrument for the task at hand (cf. also Bardovi-Harlig 1999: 238 on the necessity of customizing the instrument chosen to the task at hand).

8. Learner data has not been altered. Therefore, grammatical, lexical, and orthographical errors do appear.

9. *Grand* is an Irish English term for *fine*.

10. The accident situation is the only situation which yields any substantial degree of reoffering in the German NS data. Barron (2003: 158) explains the relatively high level of reoffers in this situation to be a reflection of the substantive nature of reoffers when they occur in German as the obligation to offer is strong in this situation. In other words, it appears that reoffers in German are substantive, or genuine, rather than being motivated by convention (cf. 3 above).

11. The bulge theory states that a higher relative level of politeness is invested in exchanges between non-intimates, status equal friends, co-workers and acquaintances relative to interactions involving intimates and status unequals and strangers. According to this theory, less effort has to be invested at the two extremes of social distance due to the low negotiability of the relationship (cf. Wolfson 1988).

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