

LENGTH OF RESIDENCE AND INTENSITY OF INTERACTION: MODIFICATION IN GREEK L2 REQUESTS

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Abstract

This paper investigates the external and internal modification devices used by native speakers and advanced learners of Greek, when making requests in formal and informal situations. The data are drawn from a discourse completion test completed by native speakers and learners of two different groups: one with extended length of residence in Greece but limited opportunities for interaction with native speakers and one with more frequent opportunities for interaction but limited length of residence in the target community. On the basis of the results, it is argued that learners with more opportunities for interaction approximate more closely to the native norm with respect to external modification and some aspects of internal modification of requests. Yet, it is shown that other aspects of internal modification remain underdeveloped, irrespective of frequency of contact with native speakers. This highlights the need for pedagogical intervention in order for the learners' pragmatic development to be promoted.

Keywords: L2 Greek; requests; Modification; Length of residence; Interaction intensity.

1. Introduction

The documentation of second and foreign language learners' pragmatic competence, i.e. the learners' "ability to employ different linguistic formulae in an appropriate way when interacting in a particular social and cultural context" (Usó-Juan & Martínez-Flor 2008: 349), has been one of the main concerns of research in the field of interlanguage pragmatics. Therefore, an area that has been extensively investigated is the ability of learners to comprehend and produce various speech acts as well as the linguistic means learners employ in order to modify the illocutionary force and to mitigate the potential face-threatening nature of their speech acts. Of even more focal interest has been the question of the ways and the extent to which these means deviate from the ones used by native speakers (cf. Economidou-Kogetsidis 2008: 111-112).

As a result, numerous studies have been undertaken to date into a variety of speech acts, with the strongest focus on requests and apologies. These studies have looked into issues involving the comprehension, production and pragmatic development of second language learners at different levels of proficiency, when performing and comprehending various speech acts. It has been consistently revealed that efficient production of speech acts can be particularly complex, since it presupposes knowledge of sociocultural and sociopragmatic norms that prevail in the target community (cf. Félix-Brasdefer 2003: 227). This complexity is confirmed by the fact that even advanced learners with extended length of residence in the target community fail to

approximate native speaker performance in terms of selection, content or form of strategies for the effective realization of various speech acts (cf. Bardovi-Harlig 2001; Rose 2005).

The study of requests has attracted the greatest amount of attention in the study of speech acts. Most relevant studies have focused on the development of requests in the learners' interlanguage (Achiba 2003; Cohen & Shively 2007; Félix-Brasdefer 2007; Hassall 2003; Jalifar 2009; Pearson 2006; Scarcella 1979; Schauer 2007), the request strategies they opt for and the mitigation devices they have at their disposal (Al-Ali & Alawneh 2010; Barron 2002; Blum-Kulka & Olshtain 1986; Economidou-Kogetsidis 2008, 2009; Faerch & Kasper 1989; Hassall 2001; Hill 1997; House & Kasper 1987; Jalifar 2009; Marti 2006; Trosborg 1995). Due to the great frequency of requests in interaction, their potential¹ face-threatening nature (see Blum-Kulka and Olshtain 1984; Brown and Levinson 1987; Sifianou 1992) and the ensuing central role of politeness in their production, in most cases, these studies have been theoretically based on various politeness models, with Brown and Levinson's (1987) being the most prevalent.

The most extensive study of Greek requests has been Sifianou (1992). She adopts a cross-cultural perspective comparing English and Greek requests, analyzing in detail their structure and modification devices and highlighting the prominent role of solidarity (positive politeness) in their expression in Greek in-group contexts.

However, there is no research on the production of requests by learners of Greek as a second language. Therefore, one objective of this paper is to provide a more holistic understanding of the production of requests, investigating the requestive behaviour of L2 learners of Greek. Specifically, the study focuses on the external and internal modification devices that advanced learners of Greek employ when performing requests in power symmetrical and power asymmetrical situations (see Scollon & Scollon 2001).

With regard to advanced learners' performance when realizing various speech acts, it has often been shown that "high levels of proficiency do not guarantee concomitantly high levels of pragmatic competence" (Bardovi-Harlig 1999: 686) and that other variables like length of stay in the target community and quality and quantity of input should be taken into account when assessing L2 learners' performance. The role of length of residence in the target community for the development of learners' pragmatic competence is an issue of utmost importance, since it may be associated with the observed long-lasting persistence of non-nativeness in L2 pragmatics (see, e.g. Bardovi-Harlig 2001). Furthermore, the inconsistency of research findings regarding the impact that length of residence might have on learners' sociopragmatic development renders the issue even more worth exploring (see Churchill & Dufon 2006; Félix-Brasdefer 2004; Kasper & Rose 2002 for detailed reviews of the relevant studies).

On the other hand, although the second language setting has been found to promote pragmatic awareness and pragmatic competence (Bardovi-Harlig & Dörnyei 1998; Schauer 2006), it has often been shown that, even learners with extended length of residence in the target community, fail to achieve successful pragmatic performance

¹ Although most researchers define requests as (negative) face-threatening acts, it has been stated often that certain cases of requests can be considered as enhancing the addressee's positive face at the same time as threatening his/her negative one (see e.g. Sifianou 2010: 34; Turner 1996: 4). Moreover, certain kinds of requests, such as those occurring in brief service encounters cannot be seen as threatening, "since they are performed to the mutual benefit of both interactants, in accordance with their institutional roles as buyer and seller" (Antonopoulou 2001: 242).

when not provided with adequate opportunities for social contact with native speakers (Bella 2011; Matsumura 2001; Shively & Cohen 2008). Against this backdrop, a second objective of this study is to examine whether it is length of residence or interaction intensity, i.e. opportunities that learners have for social contact with native speakers, that correlates more positively with the successful performance of requests by L2 learners of Greek. To this end, native speakers' performance is compared to two different groups of learners: one with extended length of residence in the Greek community but limited opportunities for social contact with native speakers, and one with less extended length of residence but more opportunities for social contact.²

The paper begins with a discussion of the basic theoretical concepts involved (section 2) and then proceeds to present the method of the study (section 3). The results of the study are presented in section 4 and discussed in section 5. The final section includes the conclusions and the pedagogical implications of the study.

2. Theoretical background

2.1. Requests

Following Searle's (1969) classification of illocutionary acts, researchers let requests fall under the category of directives, which are considered as attempts "to get the hearer to do an act which speaker wants hearer to do, and which is not obvious that the hearer will do in the normal course of events or hearer's own accord" (Searle 1969: 66). On such grounds, a request has been defined as a directive speech act in which the speaker asks the hearer to perform an action which is very often for the exclusive benefit of the speaker (Trosborg 1995). Therefore, requests are considered, potentially damaging for the addressee's negative face, i.e. the individual's need to have his/her freedom of action unimpeded (Brown & Levinson 1987: 61). According to Blum-Kulka et al. (1989), Sifianou (1992) and Trosborg (1995), requests consist of two main parts: the core request or head act and the peripheral modification devices. The head act consists of the main utterance which has the function of requesting and can stand by itself. Three main types of request head act realization are acknowledged in the literature: direct (e.g. *Clean up the kitchen!*), conventionally indirect (e.g. *Could you clean up the kitchen?*) and non-conventionally indirect (e.g. *The kitchen needs some cleaning*) (see Blum-Kulka et al. 1989).

In addition to variation in the directness level of a request, speakers can use request modification to mitigate its illocutionary force. Modification items are optional and can be of two types: internal, which appear within the request act itself, and external, which appear in the immediate linguistic context of the head act. Internal modifiers are of two types: syntactic and lexical/phrasal. Syntactic modifiers comprise interrogative or conditional structures, negation (e.g. *can't* you clean up the kitchen?), non-obligatory use of past tense (e.g. I *wanted* to ask you to clean up the kitchen), etc. Lexical/phrasal modifiers include devices such as politeness markers ('please'), understaters (e.g., *Could you tidy up a bit?*), cajolers (e.g. *You know, it would be nice if you cleaned the kitchen today*) etc. External modification, on the other hand, appears in the form of supportive moves which either precede or follow the head act. These

² See Bella (2011) for a similar methodological approach to L2 invitation refusals.

involve reasons or explanations for the act (grounders), preparators (e.g. *I'd like to ask you something...*), disarmers (e.g. *I know you hate housework, but could you clean up a bit today?*), etc.

Since these constitute the “means available for indexing politeness of speech acts” (Blum-Kulka 2005 [1992]: 266) and taking into account both the basic social function of politeness and the nature of this speech act as an imposition, efficient use of these devices is essential “so that the speakers’ requesting performance may be considered as appropriate in a variety of situations” (Martínez-Flor and Usó-Juan 2006: 25).

The production of requests calls for a great deal of both pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic expertise³ on the part of the users, in order for successful interaction to be accomplished and potential unwelcome effects on the hearer to be reduced or softened. In other words, the requester needs to possess both knowledge of the linguistic resources for formulating a request in a particular language and knowledge of the contextual and sociocultural variables that render a particular pragmalinguistic choice appropriate in a particular speech situation. Hence, requests may present inherent difficulties for language learners, who need to know how “to perform requests successfully and to avoid the effect of being perceived as rude, offensive or demanding” (Usó-Juan 2010: 237). Therefore, it comes as no surprise that the relevant research has revealed major deviations between native and non-native speakers of different languages with regard to the pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic choices involved in the performance of requests. Studies have shown differences with respect to the amount and type of modification employed by native and non-native participants, as well as variation depended on situational factors involved (Achiba 2003; Barron 2002; Blum-Kulka & Olshtain 1986; Faerch & Kasper 1989; Hassall 2001; Hill 1997; House & Kasper 1987; Kobayashi and Rinnert 2003; Schauer 2004; Trosborg 1995; Zhang 1995).

With respect to external modification, Kasper (1981) reported that both learners and NSs used the same amount of this type of modifiers, in contrast to Trosborg (1995) who shows that learners underused external modifiers when compared to native speakers. However, most relevant studies have revealed that learners tend to overuse external modifiers, often creating an effect of verbosity or ‘waffling’ (Achiba 2003; Bella 2011; Blum-Kulka & Olshtain 1986; Edmondson & House 1991; Hassall 2001; House and Kasper 1987; Schauer 2004).

Regarding internal modification, Blum-Kulka & Olshtain’s (1986) study revealed no differences in the amount and type of modifiers between learners and native speakers. In their majority, however, relevant studies have consistently found that learners tend to use less internal request modification as well as different types of request modifiers compared to native speakers and that, even advanced learners, rarely seem to approach target language norms in this respect (Barron 2002; Bella 2011; Hendriks 2002; House and Kasper 1987; Woodfield 2008). These findings have led to the assumption that internal modifiers, especially lexical/phrasal ones, are particularly

³ For instance, knowing the acceptable ways of asking how much someone has paid for her new flat (e.g. *Would you mind telling me how much it has cost you?* or *God, this flat must have cost a fortune!*) would be an indication of pragmalinguistic knowledge, while knowing whether it would be acceptable to ask in a given language and a given context how much somebody paid for a new flat would be an indication of sociopragmatic knowledge.

hard to acquire due to their affective and highly context sensitive nature (cf. Barron 2002: 234; Bella 2011: 1737).

This study focuses on the use of external and internal modifiers in the requests of L2 learners of Greek. Since both types of modifiers are strongly connected with matters of politeness, the findings will be discussed in the light of Brown and Levinson's (1987) account of politeness. As is well known, Brown and Levinson's model has received not only extensive support but also substantial criticism on a number of grounds (see, e.g. Bargiela-Chiappini 2003; Eelen 2001; Watts 2003). However, for the purposes of the present study, I will side with Locher's (2006: 250) contention that Brown and Levinson's "astute description of linguistic strategies is useful when analyzing linguistic interaction", as well as Christie (2005), who, while not ignoring Brown and Levinson's weaknesses, argues that their model "still has a great deal of analytical mileage in that it provides a framework for understanding social behaviour" (2005: 6).

2.2. Length of residence vs. intensity of interaction

Length of residence in the target environment has often been proved to be one of the most critical variables responsible for the development of language learners' pragmatic competence. Various studies have revealed that several aspects of pragmatic competence are enhanced during a period of stay in the target language community; these aspects include comprehension of conversational implicature (Bouton 1992, 1994), directness and politeness (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain 1986; Han 2005; Siegal 1994), comprehension and/ or production of routine formulae in speech acts (Barron 2002; Hoffman Hicks 1999; Owen 2002; Shively 2008), speech act strategies (Barron 2002; Cohen & Shively 2008; Schauer 2007) and lexical and syntactic modification of speech acts (Cohen & Shively 2007; Félix-Brasdefer 2004).

However, as suggested by Félix-Brasdefer (2004: 598), the results of studies dealing with the effects of length of residence on pragmatic ability "should be viewed with caution", due to the variation research findings present regarding both the pragmatic measure used (comprehension, production, etc.) and the time span proposed for pragmatic development to take place.

Furthermore, findings of studies like Matsumura (2001), who examined changes of Japanese students' sociocultural perceptions with respect to the speech act of offering advice during an eight-month period of study-abroad in Vancouver and found no association between these students' pragmatic development and length of residence in the target speech community, raise questions regarding the effect of length of residence on pragmatic development and performance. On the other hand, Matsumura (2001) observed a positive correlation between richness of input and pragmatic development (see also Kim 2000).

Such results point to the potentially more influential role of quality and quantity of input on learners' pragmatic ability. Therefore, reservations are expressed by some researchers as to whether pragmatic ability is influenced "by the *quality* of nonnative speakers' exposure and social contacts [...] rather than the quantitative measure of length of residence" (Kasper & Rose 2002: 196). These researchers consider length of residence an "uninteresting variable" (Klein et al. 1995: 277) and claim that what really matters is "intensity of interaction" (ibid.).

Indeed, Bella's (2011) study on invitation refusals by L2 learners of Greek revealed that opportunities for interaction are much more critical than length of residence in the target community for the development of learners' sociopragmatic competence with regard to this particular speech act.

Bella (2011) used role-plays in order to compare the performance of native speakers with two groups of L2 learners of Greek when refusing an invitation from an intimate: the first group had extended length of residence, but few opportunities for social contact with native speakers, whereas the second group's length of residence was shorter, but opportunities for interaction with native speakers were considerably more. The study's results indicated that learners with more opportunities for interaction, regardless of their limited length of residence in Greece, overperformed learners with more extended length of stay with regard to the structure of their contributions in the two stages of the refusal sequence as well as the appropriate use of external modification strategies. These findings suggest that the impact of length of residence in the target community and intensity of interaction with native speakers on pragmatic development remains an open question which is worth exploring further.

In light of the above theoretical discussion, the present paper aims to provide additional insights both to the study of requests with special reference to Greek L2 requests and to the role that length of residence in the target community and intensity of interaction with native speakers might play on the performance of learners of Greek as an L2.

Specifically, the following research questions will be investigated:

1. In what ways do L2 learners of Greek deviate from native speakers with regard to the amount and type of external and internal modifiers they employ when performing requests in different situations?
2. Is length of residence in the target community a sufficient condition for the development of sociopragmatic ability in request modification or is intensity of interaction a more decisive factor?

3. Method: Participants and data collection procedures

3.1. *Participants*

A total of 150 subjects participated in the study: 50 native speakers of Greek (25 males and 25 females), all coming from Athens (mean age: 23.8 years), and 100 non-native speakers (40 males and 60 females, mean age: 26.2) from various L1 backgrounds (Albanian, Ukranian, Bulgarian, Russian, Serbian, Spanish, Arabic, Hebrew, Turkish).

The non-native speakers were second language learners of Greek taking language courses at the University of Athens' Teaching Centre of Greek as a Second Language. All learners had passed the C1 level test, administered by the University of Athens, which is based on the Common European Framework for the Teaching and Assessment of Languages (2001) and certifies them as being of advanced level in the four basic language skills (reading, writing, speaking and listening). Most of them had some prior knowledge of Greek before receiving formal instruction but none had

completed more than 20 months of formal instruction.⁴ The learners were divided in two different groups according to their answers to a questionnaire that was distributed before the data collection to 220 advanced level students of the University of Athens' Teaching Centre of Greek as a Second Language. The questions concerned their educational background, the extent of formal instruction they had received in Greek, their length of residence in Greece and their opportunities for social contact with Greek native speakers. The subjects were also asked to report the approximate number of hours per week they interacted with Greeks they considered intimates or friends.

On the basis of their responses, the first group (hence Ls1) consisted in 50 learners (21 males and 29 females) who had obtained scholarships in their own countries in order to study in Greece and were already registered in graduate or postgraduate University courses, while at the same time they attended language courses in order to enhance their language competence. These learners' length of residence in Greece was quite limited (M=2.2 years), but their opportunities for interaction with native speakers were reported to be considerably frequent (M= 33 hours per week, sd=2.1). The second group's participants (hence Ls2) consisted in 50 economic migrants (19 males and 31 females) who in their majority (80%) had obtained a University degree in their own countries and attended Greek language courses in order to pursue further studies or employment in Greece. These learners reported a rather extended length of residence in Greece (M=4.8 years, sd=0.51), but limited opportunities for social contact with native speakers (M=14 hours per week of interaction, sd=1.81)

3.2. Data collection

The instrument for data collection was a discourse completion test (DCT) designed in order to elicit requests in 8 different situations. For the present purposes, the production of the subjects in three of these situations was analysed (see Appendix): In the first situation the subject's flat-mate had thrown a party the night before and left the kitchen untidy. Therefore, the subject has to ask his/her flat-mate to clean it. In the second situation, the subject is having lunch with a friend when she/he discovers that she/he has left their wallet at home. She/he should ask her/his friend to pay for both their meals. Therefore, whereas the first situation can be considered 'standard' in the sense that the requester has an obvious right to perform the request and the requestee seems to have the obligation to fulfill it, the second one is 'non-standard', since neither the requester's right to ask nor the requestee's obligation to comply could be taken for granted (see House 1989).

Finally, in the third situation, the subject is a student who should go to his/her professor's office and ask for an extension for her/his assignment. Thus, while the first two situations are symmetrical in the sense that they involve familiarity and no power difference, the third one is asymmetrical, since it involves distance and power (Scollon & Scollon 2001: 54-57).

The choice to examine both symmetrical and asymmetrical situations was based on the fact that, despite Economidou-Kogetsidis (2009: 81) contention that power asymmetrical situations are more demanding and difficult to handle for non-native speakers, recent research on Greek learners' production of speech acts has indicated that

⁴ These learners attended an intensive (4h a day) course five days a week.

learners find it more troublesome to express intimacy rather than formality (Bella 2011, Bella forthcoming). Therefore, I opted to also test this hypothesis comparing two different symmetrical situations with an asymmetrical one.

Furthermore, although I agree with those who argue that natural data constitute the best source for analysing interactions (see, e.g. Kasper 2000: 318, Wolfson 1981: 9) there are at least two important limitations to the benefits of ethnographic research on speech acts: first, contextual variables cannot be controlled and, second, the occurrence of a particular speech act cannot be predicted (Gass and Houck 1999: 25). Furthermore, as Kasper (2000) points out, in cases that the research focuses on a particular pragmatic element, e.g. a particular speech act, “it may take an unreasonable amount of [authentic] data to obtain sufficient quantities of the pragmatic feature under study” (2000: 320).

Therefore, an open DCT was selected as a more adequate instrument for the present research purposes, since, unlike authentic interactional data, it permits us to design contexts that are likely to elicit specific speech acts. Moreover, in spite of the fact that DCTs have been often criticized (see e.g., Félix-Brasdefer 2010, Rose 1992) especially with regard to the extent to which written answers can reflect natural interactional features, “the ease of comparing and the possibility of collecting large amounts of data in a short period of time still seem to be of advantage in providing useful information about the types of semantic or verbal formulas that [...] speakers use or might use” (Marti 2006: 1843). As Kasper contends, when designed carefully, DCTs “are useful to inform about speakers’ pragmalinguistic knowledge of the strategies and linguistic forms by which communicative acts can be implemented, and about their sociopragmatic knowledge under which particular strategic and linguistic choices are appropriate” (2000: 329). Furthermore, there has been no conclusive evidence showing that the DCT is ineffective for collecting data on a wide range of linguistic phenomena, that are, otherwise, difficult to observe in a systematic fashion (Billmyer & Varghese 2000: 518; Economidou-Kogetsidis 2008: 117).

Nevertheless, data elicited by means of DCTs “can never be the same as authentic conversation” (Kasper 2000: 318). Therefore, the findings of the study should be understood in view of the fact that DCT data are brought into being for research purposes and, hence, they are subject to certain limitations (see also section 6).

4. Results

Each of the situations was analyzed independently both in regard to external modification and in regard to internal modification added to the request head act.

The statistical analysis of the data was carried out using version 19 of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. Descriptive statistics was used to compute the frequency of external and internal modifiers employed by the informants of each group in each situation. The statistical tests used to examine the data were one-way ANOVAs. Post hoc analyses were carried out using the Scheffe test. For all analyses the alpha level was set at .05. Apart from the researcher, the data were coded by a second coder, a postgraduate student finishing her PhD on interlanguage pragmatics in the Department of Linguistics, Faculty of Philology, University of Athens. The coding of the second coder coincided with the researcher’s coding in 99% ($\kappa=0.91$) for external modifiers and 96% ($\kappa=0.86$) for internal modifiers. The discrepancies noted were discussed by the two coders and a consensus was reached.

4.1. External modification

The categories of my classification scheme for external modification are based on those by Blum-Kulka et al. (1989), Trosborg (1995) and Schauer (2007) and include the following:

- Preparator (e.g. *Μου κάνεις μια χάρη;* ‘Can you do me a favour?’).
- Grounder (e.g. *Καθάρισε την κουζίνα γιατί θα έρθουν οι γονείς μου απόψε* ‘Clean up the kitchen *because my parents are coming tonight*’).
- Disarmer (e.g. *Ξέρω ότι είσαι κουρασμένος, αλλά πρέπει να καθαρίσουμε την κουζίνα,* ‘*I know you are tired but we have to clean up the kitchen*’).
- Sweetener⁵ (e.g. *Ξέρω ότι είστε πολύ καλός άνθρωπος και θα με βοηθήσετε,* ‘*I know you are a very good person and you will help me*’).
- Imposition minimizer (e.g. *Θα σου επιστρέψω τα χρήματα αύριο οπωσδήποτε,* ‘*I will definitely pay you back tomorrow*’).
- Promise of reward (e.g. *Θα σου δώσω τα λεφτά αύριο και θα σε κεράσω κι ένα ποτό!* ‘*I will return the money tomorrow and I will buy you a drink!*’).
- Smalltalk (e.g. *Κύριε καθηγητά τι κάνετε; Είστε καλά;*, ‘*Professor, how are you? Are you ok?*’).
- Appreciator (e.g. *Θα ήμουν ευγνώμων, αν μου δίνετε μια παράταση.* ‘*I would be grateful if you granted me an extension*’).
- Apology (e.g. *Χίλια συγγνώμη που στο ζητάω, αλλά ξέχασα το πορτοφόλι μου* ‘*A thousand apologies for asking, but I left my wallet*’).
- Self-denigrating statement (e.g. *Είμαι βλάκας! Ξέχασα το πορτοφόλι μου στο σπίτι!* ‘*I am stupid! I left my wallet at home*’).
- Considerator (e.g. *Αν έχεις βέβαια λεφτά πάνω σου, αλλιώς να πάω στην τράπεζα,* ‘*If you have enough money of course, or else I could go to the bank*’).
- Insult (e.g. *Πώς είναι έτσι η κουζίνα; Δεν ντρέπεσαι;*, (What is this mess in the kitchen? *Aren't you ashamed?*)).
- Threat (e.g. *Καθάρισε την κουζίνα γιατί θα σου σπάσω το κεφάλι!* ‘*Clean up the kitchen or I'll break your neck!*’).

Table 1 presents the distribution of external modifiers used by the three groups in the three situations. The statistical analysis revealed that Ls2 differed significantly from both NSs and Ls1 in all situations. Specifically, it was shown that Ls2 used significantly fewer external modifiers than the other two groups in Situation 1 ($F(2.147)=5.85$, $p < 0.05$, (NSs: $M=2.64$, $sd=0.66$, Ls1: $M=2.54$, $sd=0.64$, Ls2: $M=1.98$, $sd=1.54$). However, they were found to use considerably more external modifiers than the other groups both in Situation 2 ($F(2.147)=5.85$, $p < 0.05$, (NSs: $M=4.20$, $sd=0.4$, Ls1: $M=3.64$, $sd=0.48$,

⁵ One of the referees questions the term “sweetener” and suggests that the term “cajoler” might be more appropriate. Although this is a fair observation, since cajoling is closely connected to flattery, I opted for the term “sweetener” here which is used by Trosborg (1995: 217) to refer to external modifiers aiming to flatter the requestee. Both Trosborg (1995: 214) and Sifianou (1992: 180) save the term “cajoler” for lexical/phrasal modifiers that attempt to “make things clearer for the addressees and invite them, at least metaphorically, to participate in the speech act” (Sifianou 1992: 180). Following the above researchers, I used the term “cajoler” to refer to lexical/phrasal modifiers, such as *as you know, you see, I mean* etc.

Ls2: $M=5.6$, $sd=0.94$) and in Situation 3 ($F(2,147)=76.64$, $p< 0.05$, (NSs: $M=5.30$, $sd=0.76$, Ls1: $M=5.12$, $sd=0.94$, Ls2: $M=6.86$, $sd=0.57$).

Several points regarding each of the situations are worth highlighting.

Table 1: Distribution of external modifiers

External modifiers	Situation 1-kitchen						Situation 2-money						Situation 3-extension					
	NS		Ls1		Ls2		NS		Ls1		Ls2		NS		Ls1		Ls2	
	n	%	n	%	N	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Preparator	26	19.6	20	15.7	13	12.8	35	16.6	8	4.4	17	6.1	38	14.5	40	15.6	30	8.8
Grounder	66	50	69	54.3	40	39.6	77	36.7	69	37.9	83	29.6	88	33.7	96	37.5	114	33.2
Disarmer	15	11.4	16	12.6	9	8.9	10	4.8	16	8.8	22	7.9	30	11.5	26	10.2	19	5.5
Sweetener	3	2.3	2	1.6	3	3	0	0	6	3.3	12	4.3	3	1.1	4	1.6	27	7.9
Imposition minimizer	5	3.8	3	2.4	4	4	21	10	29	15.9	43	15.4	17	6.6	22	8.6	28	8.2
Promise of reward	10	7.6	7	5.5	2	2	22	10.5	5	2.8	18	6.4	0	0	0	0	6	1.8
Smalltalk	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	11	4.2	15	5.8	22	6.4
Appreciator	0	0	1	0.8	2	2	4	1.9	7	3.8	16	5.7	20	7.7	6	2.3	42	12.2
Apology	3	2.3	4	3.1	0	0	16	7.6	21	11.5	37	13.2	19	7.3	24	9.4	35	10.2
Self denigrating	0	0	0	0	0	0	11	5.2	5	2.8	20	7.1	8	3.1	3	1.2	9	2.6
Considerator	0	0	3	2.4	2	2	14	6.7	16	8.8	12	4.3	27	10.3	20	7.8	11	3.2
Insult	0	0	1	0.8	9	8.9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Threat	4	3	1	0.8	15	14.8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total modifiers	132	100	127	100	101	100	210	100	182	100	280	100	261	100	256	100	343	100

4.1.1. Situation 1-kitchen

No statistically significant difference in the frequency of use of external modification strategies was evident between NSs (n=132) and Ls1 (n=127) in the kitchen situation. These two groups used similar strategies with similar frequencies in this situation. Ls2 differed from the other groups in a statistically significant way using fewer external modification devices (n=101) and more ‘zero marking’, thus producing more bare requests than the other groups. As shown in Table 1, important differences emerged between NSs and Ls1, on the one hand, and Ls2 on the other, in relation to the use of preparators and grounders, with the Ls2 participants using significantly fewer of both kinds of modifiers.

Furthermore, the kitchen situation differed from the other two in that a number of aggravating supportive moves (insult and threat) surfaced. Whereas such instances were rare in the performance of NSs and Ls1, quite a few exemplars of these moves appeared in the performance of Ls2 (9 instances of insult and 15 instances of threat). Examples (1), (2) coming from the data of NSs and Ls1 respectively, and (3) and (4) from the data of Ls2, are indicative of such differences between the groups in this respect:

(1) NSs

Ρε Γιαννάκη, δεν καθαρίζεις λίγο την κουζίνα; Θα έρθουν οι γονείς μου το βράδυ και δε θέλω να τη δουν έτσι. [grounder]

‘Re⁶ Giannis [diminutive], why don’t you clean up the kitchen a bit? My parents are coming over tonight and I don’t want them to see it like that. [grounder]’

(2) Ls1

Μπορείς να καθαρίσεις την κουζίνα, Μαρία; Έτσι που είναι δεν μπορούμε να μαγειρέψουμε και έχουμε και άλλους καλεσμένους αύριο. [grounder] Ξέρω ότι έχεις δουλειές, [disarmer] αλλά πρέπει να γίνει.

‘Can you clean up the kitchen, Maria? The way it is we cannot cook and we have more guests coming over tomorrow. [grounder] I know you are busy, [disarmer] but this has to be done.’

(3) Ls2

Χτες άφησες την κουζίνα χάλια μετά το πάρτυ! Και θα έρθουν οι φίλοι μας απόψε! [grounder] Καθάρισε την παρακαλώ, γιατί εγώ δεν θα ξανακάνω τίποτα εδώ μέσα! [threat]

‘You left the kitchen in a mess after the party yesterday! And our friends are coming over tonight! [grounder] Clean it up please, or I will never do anything in here again!’ [threat]

(4) Ls2

Πώς είναι έτσι η κουζίνα; Δε ντρέπεσαι; [insult] Καθάρισε γρήγορα!

‘What kind of a mess is this in the kitchen? Aren’t you ashamed? [insult] Clean it up quickly!’

As indicated by the examples, NSs and Ls1 used more elaborate external modifiers in this situation, mainly grounders and disarmers, avoiding at the same time any insulting or threatening moves. On the contrary, Ls2, not only made less effort to support their requests externally, but they also used aggravating moves. Specifically, in (3) the imperative *καθάρισε* (‘clean up’) is preceded by the insulting statement *χτες άφησες την κουζίνα χάλια μετά το πάρτυ* (‘you left the kitchen in a mess after the party yesterday!’) and is accompanied by the threat *εγώ δεν θα ξανακάνω τίποτα εδώ μέσα* (‘or I will never do anything in here again!’). Along similar lines, the bare imperative *καθάρισε* (‘clean

⁶ *re* is an untranslatable item expressing solidarity.

up’) in (4) is intensified by the adverb *γρήγορα* (‘quickly’) and is preceded by the insult *δεν ντρέπεσαι;* (‘aren’t you ashamed?’)

The combination of the low frequency of supportive moves in general and the rather high frequency of aggravating moves, in particular, marked this group’s performance as blunt and at times even rude as compared to the other two groups’ behaviour in this situation.

4.1.2. Situation 2-money

A different picture regarding external modification emerged in the case of Situation 2. Unlike the kitchen situation, Ls2 displayed higher frequency of using external modification (n=280) than the other two groups (NSs, n=210, Ls1, n=182) in this situation. This difference proved to be statistically significant.

What is particularly impressive with regard to Ls2 participants’ performance in this situation, is the overwhelming use of several external modification devices that surface less frequently or are completely absent from both the NSs’ and the Ls1 participants’ performance. Specifically, as shown in Table 1, Ls2 exhibited high frequencies of apologies and imposition minimizers in this situation. Furthermore, more often than not, their contributions combined these particular devices. Therefore, these speakers tended to sound far more apologetic and formal⁷ in this situation, as indicated in example (5).

(5) Ls2

Κωνσταντίνε συγγνώμη πολύ που στο ζητάω, [apology] αλλά ξέχασα το πορτοφόλι μου στο σπίτι νομίζω. [grounder] Μπορείς να πληρώσεις εσύ για το φαγητό ίσως; Θα σου δώσω οπωσδήποτε τα λεφτά μόλις γυρίσουμε στην εστία. [imposition minimizer] Σου ζητάω συγγνώμη, [apology] θα σου έχω μεγάλη υποχρέωση γι’ αυτό. [imposition minimizer]

‘Konstantinos I am very sorry for asking you [apology] but I think I left my wallet at home. [grounder] Can you perhaps pay for our food? I will definitely give the money to you as soon as we return to the hostel. [imposition minimizer] I apologize, [apology] I will be greatly indebted to you for this. [imposition minimizer]’

In (5) the main request *μπορείς να πληρώσεις εσύ για το φαγητό ίσως;* (‘Can you perhaps pay for our food?’) is supported by two apologies (one at the beginning and another one at the end of the contribution) and two imposition minimizers (*θα σου δώσω οπωσδήποτε τα λεφτά μόλις γυρίσουμε στην εστία, θα σου έχω μεγάλη υποχρέωση γι’ αυτό*)

Furthermore, these learners tended to overuse self-denigrating statements, like the ones attested in (6).

(6) Ls2

Είμαι πολύ βλάκας Μαρία! [self-denigrating] Δεν πιστεύω ότι έκανα αυτό!⁸ [self-denigrating] Δεν πήρα λεφτά μαζί μου! Θα μπορούσες να μου δανείσεις εσύ και θα σε πληρώσω πολύ γρήγορα. [imposition minimizer] Με συγχωρείς για αυτή βλακεία, [apology] δεν έχω μωαλό. [self-denigrating]

⁷ In Brown and Levinson’s (1987) model both apologies and imposition minimizers are considered negative politeness strategies (Brown & Levinson 1987: 176, 187).

⁸ For this utterance to be grammatically correct a weak form of the pronoun *αυτό* (this) (a clitic) should be posed before the verb, i.e. *Δεν πιστεύω ότι το έκανα αυτό!* (lit., ‘I can’t believe that it I did this’).

‘I am so stupid, Maria! [**self-denigrating**] I can’t believe I have done this! [**self-denigrating**] I didn’t take any money with me! Could you lend me some and I will pay you back very soon. [**imposition minimizer**] I am sorry for this stupid thing, [**apology**] I have no brains. [**self-denigrating**]’

In (6) three different self-denigrating statements (*είμαι πολύ βλάκας* ‘I am so stupid’, *δεν πιστεύω ότι έκανα αυτό* ‘I can’t believe I have done this!’, *δεν έχω μυαλό* ‘I have no brains’) and an apology that also involves self-denigrating (*με συγχωρείς για αυτή τη βλακεία*, ‘I am sorry for this stupid thing’) surround the main head act, which is accompanied by the imposition minimizer *θα σε πληρώσω πολύ γρήγορα* (‘I will pay you back very soon’). It appears then, that Ls2 systematically opted for using strategies that damage their own positive face (see Brown and Levinson 1987: 68) in this speech situation.

Although the other groups also employed more external modification in this situation as compared to the previous one, thus acknowledging the greater imposition that it seems to entail, their contributions appeared to be shorter and more in line with the informality of the situation. Moreover, Ls1 exhibited a more native-like behavior with regard to the external modification in this particular situation, using significantly fewer instances of apologies and imposition minimizers and avoiding self-denigrating statements. Examples (7) and (8) are typical of NS and Ls1 participants’ performance

(7) NSs

Πω, πω ξέχασα το πορτοφόλι μου στο σπίτι! [**grounder**] *Κάνε μου τη χάρη, ρε Γιώργο,* [**preparator**] *να πληρώσεις εσύ για μένα και κερνάω εγώ αύριο.* [**imposition minimizer**]
 ‘Po, po [exclamation], I left my wallet at home! [**grounder**] Do me a favour (re)⁹ Giorgos [**preparator**] and pay for me as well and I will buy you lunch tomorrow.’ [**imposition minimizer**]

(8) Ls1

Κόστα νομίζω δεν έχω καθόλου λεφτά μαζί μου. [**grounder**] *Μπορείς να πληρώσεις εσύ για το φαγητό μας; Αν δεν έχεις πάω στο σπίτι να πάρω.* [**considerator**]
 ‘Kostas, I think I have no money at all with me. [**grounder**] Can you pay for our food? If you don’t have [money] I can go home and get some.’ [**considerator**]

A final interesting difference involves the use of the Preparator by the NSs, on the one hand, and the two learner groups on the other. More specifically, it appears that in this situation, NSs employed this strategy significantly more frequently than the learners. The single most frequent realization of this strategy on the part of the native speakers involved favour-asking, as indicated in example (7) above (*κάνε μου τη χάρη*, ‘do me a favour’), as well as in example (9) (*μου κάνεις μια χάρη*; ‘can you do me a favour?’), which is typical of their performance:

(9) NSs

Μαράκι μου, μου κάνεις μια χάρη; [**preparator**] *Μου φαίνεται ότι ξέχασα το πορτοφόλι μου στο σπίτι και δεν έχω χρήματα πάνω μου.* [**grounder**] *Πληρώνεις τώρα εσύ και να τα βρούμε μετά;* [**imposition minimizer**]
 ‘[My] Maria_[diminutive],¹⁰ can you do me a favour? [**preparator**] It looks as if I left my wallet at home and I have no money with me. [**grounder**] [Can you] pay now [_{present indicative}] and we’ll sort things out later?’

⁹ See footnote 5.

¹⁰ The diminutive in this example functions as a solidarity marker, i.e. as internal (lexical) modification. These markers will be discussed in the following sections.

It appears then, that favour-asking is a particularly important external modification move for NSs in this situation. The repercussions of its high frequency in their data and its relative absence from the learners' performance will be elaborated upon in the discussion section.

4.1.3. Situation 3-extension

As already mentioned, Ls2, once more, used significantly more external modification in comparison to the other two groups in this situation. No statistically significant difference was attested between NSs and Ls1 in terms of the amount of external modifiers. NSs and Ls1 employed similar strategies with similar frequencies. The increase in the frequency of use of external modifiers on the part of Ls2 appeared to be related to the overwhelming use of several strategies that were considerably less frequent in the performance of the other two groups in this situation. The most noticeable differences in this respect involve the overwhelming use of grounders, sweeteners, appreciators and apologies on the part of Ls2. Furthermore, these learners seem to engage in small talk more frequently than the other two groups in this situation. As a result their contributions appear to be much more elaborate and verbose, since all the aforementioned strategies are often combined in the same contribution. These differences are manifested in examples (10), (11), (12), which are typical of the NSs, Ls1 and Ls2 data respectively:

(10) NSs

Καλημέρα σας. Μπορώ να σας απασχολήσω λίγο; [preparator] Θα ήθελα να σας ζητήσω μια μικρή παράταση για την εργασία αυτού του εξαμήνου. Εργάζομαι παράλληλα με τις σπουδές μου και δυστυχώς δεν έχω αρκετό χρόνο να την τελειώσω μέσα στην προθεσμία. [grounder] Ξέρω ότι μπορεί να σας φέρνω σε δύσκολη θέση, [disarmer] αλλά θα ήμουν ευγνώμων αν μου δίνετε λίγες μέρες παραπάνω.

'Good morning. Can I take some of your time? [preparator] I would like to ask you for a small extension for this term's assignment. I work and study at the same time and unfortunately I do not have enough time to finish it within the deadline. [grounder] I know this may put you in a difficult position, [disarmer] but I would be grateful if you allowed me a few more days'

(11) Ls1

Κυρία Κ. θα ήθελα να σας μιλήσω. [preparator] Έχω μεγάλο πρόβλημα με την υγεία της μητέρας μου και περνάω πολύ καιρό στο νοσοκομείο. [grounder] Μήπως θα μπορούσατε να μου δώσετε μια παράταση για την εργασία; Θα με βοηθήσει πάρα πολύ αυτό για να μη χάσω την υποτροφία μου. [grounder]

'Mrs K. I would like to talk to you. [preparator] I have a serious problem with my mother's health and I spend a lot of time in the hospital.[grounder] Could you perhaps give me an extension for the assignment? This will be a great help, so that I will not lose my scholarship.'[grounder]

(12) Ls2

Καλημέρα σας, κυρία Μ. Τι κάνετε; [small talk] Είμαι φοιτητής σας και ξέρω πόσο καλή καθηγήτρια είστε. [sweetener] Γι' αυτό θέλω να ζητήσω να με βοηθήσετε, αν μπορείτε, και να μου δώσετε μια παράταση για την εργασία μου. Χίλια συγγνώμη που σας ζητάω αυτό, [apology] αλλά έχω μεγάλο πρόβλημα με τη δουλειά μου και δεν προλαβαίνω. [grounder] Υπόσχομαι ότι θα είναι καλύτερα με την άλλη εργασία, [promise of reward] αλλά τώρα πρέπει να πηγαίνω πολλές ώρες στη δουλειά και δεν έχω καθόλου χρόνο κι επειδή είμαι ξένος είναι δύσκολα. [grounder] Μπορείτε παρακαλώ να με βοηθήσετε;

'Good morning Mrs M. How are you?[small talk] I am one of your students and I know what a nice teacher you are. [sweetener] That's why I want to ask you to help me, if you can, and give me an extension for my assignment. A thousand apologies for asking, [apology] but I have a big problem with my job and I don't have enough time.[grounder] I promise things will be better with the next assignment,

[**promise of reward**] but right now I have to work long hours and I have no time at all and because I am a foreigner things are difficult. [**grounder**] Can you please help me?’

The NS in (10) begins her contribution by means of a greeting and the preparator *μπορώ να σάς απασχολήσω λίγο;* (‘can I take some of your time?’). The two head acts are supported by a grounder (*εργάζομαι παράλληλα με τις σπουδές μου και δυστυχώς δεν έχω αρκετό χρόνο να την τελειώσω μέσα στην προθεσμία* ‘I work and study at the same time and unfortunately I do not have enough time to finish it within the deadline’) and a disarmer (*ξέρω ότι μπορεί να σας φέρνω σε δύσκολη θέση,* ‘I know that I may put you in a difficult position). Along the same lines, the Ls1 participant in (11) states the main head act after a preparator (*θα ήθελα να σας μιλήσω,* ‘I would like to talk to you’) and a grounder (*έχω μεγάλο πρόβλημα με την υγεία της μητέρας μου και περνάω πολύ καιρό στο νοσοκομείο,* ‘I have a serious problem with my mother’s health and I spend a lot of time in the hospital’). The main request is followed by one more grounder (*θα με βοηθήσει πάρα πολύ αυτό για να μη χάσω την υποτροφία μου* ‘this will be a great help, so that I will not lose my scholarship’).

The Ls2 participant in (12), on the other hand, appears much more verbose using a variety of external modification moves, some of which are quite infrequent in the other two groups’ data (small talk, sweetener, apology, promise of reward).

Both the verbosity exhibited by Ls2 as well as the choice and combinations of particular strategies reflect a kind of behaviour that is observably deviant from that of the native speakers. The possible reasons underlying this behaviour will be elaborated upon in the discussion section.

4.2. Syntactic modification

The categories of my classification scheme for syntactic modifiers are based on Blum-Kulka et al. (1989) and Trosborg (1995), with some modifications to fit the Greek data. The main categories of syntactic modifiers found in the data are the following:

- Interrogative (e.g. *Μπορείς να καθαρίσεις την κουζίνα;* ‘Can you clean up the kitchen?’)
- Negation (e.g. *Δεν θα μπορούσατε να μου δώσετε μια μικρή παράταση;* ‘Couldn’t you give me a short extension?’).
- Subjunctive (e.g. *Μήπως να καθαρίσεις λίγο την κουζίνα;* ‘(Would you) maybe clean_[subjunctive] the kitchen a bit?’)
- Conditional (e.g. *Θα ήθελα μια μικρή παράταση για την εργασία, αν γίνεται.* ‘I would like a small extension for the assignment, if this is possible’)
- Past tense (e.g. *Ηθελα να σας ζητήσω μια παράταση για την εργασία μου.* ‘I wanted to ask you for an extension for my assignment’).
- Present indicative (e.g. *Καθαρίζεις λίγο την κουζίνα;* ‘[Can you] clean up_[present indicative] the kitchen a bit?’).

In my classification interrogatives include not only preparatories questioning the ability or willingness of the hearer to perform the requested act, but also negative-interrogative and present indicative structures, which are also interrogative. However, since the interrogative, the negation and the present indicative (in the case of Greek) are

considered separate syntactic modification devices,¹¹ I opted for three separate categories of syntactic modification to accommodate them. Therefore, a negative-interrogative, such as, *can't you clean up a bit?*, would be considered to be modified by two separate devices, i.e. interrogative and negation.

Table 2 presents the distribution of syntactic modifiers by the three groups in the three situations. As shown in the Table, NSs used more syntactic modifiers than the learner groups in all situations. However, statistically significant differences emerged in Situations 1 and 2. Specifically, in Situation 1 NSs differed significantly from the learner groups using considerably more syntactic modifiers ($M=2.3$, $sd=0.46$), whereas the difference between Ls1 and Ls2 also proved to be statistically significant with Ls1 using more syntactic modifiers ($M=1.82$, $sd=0.38$) than Ls2 ($M=1.04$, $sd=0.72$).¹² The difference in the frequency of use of syntactic modifiers was also statistically significant in Situation 2 ($F(2.147)=6.82$, $p<0.05$) with the NSs using more syntactic modifiers ($M=2.24$, $sd=1.02$) than both the Ls1 ($M=1.82$, $sd=0.52$) and the Ls2 groups ($M=1.76$, $sd=0.43$). No statistically significant difference emerged between the two learner groups in this situation. Furthermore, no statistically significant difference was attested regarding the overall frequency of use of syntactic modifiers by the three groups in Situation 3.

As shown in Table 2, the differences between NSs and Ls2 in the frequency of use of syntactic modifiers in Situation 1 was quite striking and it involves all the individual strategies, with the exception of the Past tense, which emerged with similar frequencies in all groups' data. Although, as already mentioned, the difference in the frequency of use of syntactic modifiers between NSs and Ls1 also proved to be significant, still the latter used considerably more modifiers than Ls2 in the kitchen situation, thus differing significantly from them.

The use of syntactic modifiers by Ls2 in this situation is intrinsically connected with their choices of Head acts. Although the examination of Head acts is beyond the scope of the present study, it has to be mentioned that in the kitchen situation NSs resorted mainly to conventionally indirect requests, which presuppose various forms of interrogative constructions. This led them to the frequent employment of interrogatives, negation as well as present indicative constructions. In fact, these speakers showed a particularly strong preference towards phrasing their request as a suggestion in this situation using negative-interrogative constructions as indicated in example (13), which is typical of the NSs' data:

(13) NSs

Δε συμμαζεύεις λίγο την κουζίνα βρε Μαρία μου, αν μπορείς; [...]
'(Why) don't you clean up the kitchen a bit, if you can [my] Maria?'

With regard to phrasing requests as suggestions, both Trosborg (1995) and Kallia (2005) contend that this kind of phrasing renders requests less threatening, since "by presenting a request by means of a suggestory formula the speaker makes his/her request more tentative and plays down his/her own interest as a beneficiary of the action" (Trosborg 1995: 201). Furthermore, in Kallia's (2005) data it was found that one third of the requests formed by Greek native speakers in familiarity situations were phrased as suggestions by means of negative-interrogative constructions. This result,

¹¹ See Blum-Kulka et al. (1989), Sifianou (1992), Trosborg (1995).

¹² $F(2.147)=67.86$, $p<0.05$.

combined with the findings of the present study, highlights the importance of this particular strategy in expressing solidarity politeness in the Greek society.

Although Ls1 also preferred interrogatives and negative-interrogative constructions, Ls2 used them considerably less frequently, since they often resorted to using (bare) imperatives in this situation. Furthermore, negative-interrogative formulas, like the one in (13) which were impressively frequent in the NSs' data, were completely absent from the Ls2 participants' performance in the kitchen situation.

A similar observation can be made with regard to the use of the present indicative, which also appeared relatively frequently in the NSs' data. This use is displayed in example (14):

(14) NSs

Ρε Μάνο, περιμένω κόσμο το βράδυ. Καθαρίζεις λίγο την κουζίνα για να μπορέσω να μαγειρέψω;
 '[Re] Manos, I am expecting visitors tonight. (Can you) clean up _[present indicative] the kitchen a little?

According to Sifianou (1992: 140) the present indicative in Greek "is one of the conventionalized, most frequent means of request". This is probably due to the fact that, as opposed to the past or future tense and the subjunctive, which distance the speaker from the act, the present indicative expresses closeness and involvement. Therefore, its use conforms to the solidarity politeness usually displayed by Greeks in interactions between familiar or equal status interlocutors (see Sifianou 1992: 137-140).

However the frequency of this strategy was comparatively low not only in the Ls2 but also in the Ls1 participants' performance. It seems then, that both learner groups are not fully aware of the sociopragmatic effects that the present indicative might have in informal situations in the Greek community.

Although the differences in the overall frequency of use of syntactic modifiers in Situation 2 were not as impressive as in Situation 1 (see Table 2), NSs still differed significantly from both learner groups providing more syntactic modification.

The most striking difference between NSs, on the one hand, and the learner groups, on the other, involved, once more, the use of the present indicative which consisted in 13.8% of the NSs' total syntactic modifiers and in only 5.5% and 1.1% of Ls1 and Ls2 participants' modifiers, respectively. This observation reinforces the view that the sociopragmatic functions of the use of the present indicative in requests have not been fully acquired by these learners.

Finally, no significant differences were attested among the three groups in Situation 3. All three groups employed similar syntactic modification devices with similar frequencies in this situation, exhibiting a particularly strong preference for the use of interrogatives, conditional clauses, subjunctive and past tense in the extension situation (see Table 2). This finding will be further discussed in section 5.2.

Table 2: Distribution of syntactic modifiers

	Situation 1-kitchen						Situation 2-money						Situation 3-extension					
	NS		Ls1		Ls2		NS		Ls1		Ls2		NS		Ls1		Ls2	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Syntactic modifiers	42	36.6	35	38.4	23	44.2	42	38.5	34	37.8	35	39.8	41	31.1	36	28.8	38	31.9
Interrogative	15	13	13	14.3	2	3.8	4	3.7	0	0	0	0	9	6.8	7	5.6	5	4.2
Negation	12	10.4	11	12.1	4	7.7	7	6.4	8	8.9	10	11.4	23	17.4	25	20	22	18.5
Conditional clause	19	16.5	17	18.7	8	15.4	29	26.6	27	30	22	25	29	22	31	24.8	27	22.7
Past tense	13	11.3	11	12.1	11	21.2	11	12	16	17.8	20	22.7	30	22.7	26	20.8	27	22.7
Present indicative	14	12.2	4	4.4	4	7.7	15	13.8	5	5.5	1	1.1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total modifiers	115	100	91	100	52	100	109	100	90	100	88	100	132	100	125	100	119	100

4.3. Lexical/phrasal modification

For the classification of lexical/phrasal modifiers this study adopted a slightly modified version of Barron's (2002) classification to fit the Greek data. This classification includes the following categories:

Understaters¹³ (e.g. *λίγο* 'a little', *κάπως* 'a bit')
 Politeness marker (*παρακαλώ* 'please')
 Subjectivizers (e.g. *φοβάμαι* 'I am afraid', *νομίζω* 'I think', *φαντάζομαι* 'I guess')
 Downtoners (*ίσως* 'perhaps', *μήπως* 'maybe', *απλώς* 'just')
 Cajolers (*ξέρεις* 'you know', *καταλαβαίνεις* 'you understand/ you see')
 Appealers (*εντάξει;* 'all right?' *έτσι;* 'okay?')
 Solidarity markers (e.g. diminutives, endearments, first name+ possessive pronoun, *ρε, μωρέ*)

Lexical/phrasal modification turned out to be the type of modification that presented the most marked differences among the three groups. Specifically, NSs were found to employ significantly more lexical/phrasal modifiers in all three situations. Table 3 presents the distribution of lexical/phrasal modifiers, while Table 4 sums up the means and standard deviations of the groups in the three situations under examination.

As shown in Table 3, NSs preferred to modify their requests in Situation 1 using various solidarity markers followed by understaters, cajolers and downtoners. Although understaters were also preferred by Ls1, their frequency was much lower in these learners' data. Both these learners and Ls2 presented distinctly low frequencies of solidarity markers, which were the single most distinctive feature of the NSs' performance in this situation. Furthermore, a statistically significant difference was attested between Ls2 and the other two groups regarding the use of the politeness marker *παρακαλώ* ('please'). Specifically, Ls2 appeared to use this strategy much more often than both NSs and Ls1 in this situation. Taking into consideration the fact that Ls2 used much more direct requests realized by the imperative in this situation, the insertion of *παρακαλώ* could be taken to add further bluntness to their requesting behaviour. Although such a claim cannot be considered to hold for all requests instantiating a combination of *please* with the imperative (see House 1989), Coulmas (1985) claims that it is often the case that *please* added to an imperative structure reinforces its force as an order/command, i.e. it makes it less polite. Moreover, Sifianou (1992: 191) observes that when used without a pronominal object¹⁴ (*σε/σας παρακαλώ*, lit. 'I please you'), the Greek *παρακαλώ* can sound rather abrupt while, when found in emotionally loaded situations, "it is not at all clear that it is an indication of politeness" (Sifianou 1992: 189).

¹³ One of the referees observes that understaters and downtoners are semantically and functionally too close to justify two different classes of lexical modification and asks if their syntactic distribution is different. However, all relevant classifications (e.g. Trosborg 1995; Barron 2002) deal with these as two separate classes of modifiers. Moreover, their syntactic distribution can indeed be different. For instance, *μήπως* (perhaps) is always introductory in requests and constitutes "a kind of wh-word" (Sifianou 1992: 163). Furthermore, *λίγο* (a little) is positionally flexible like *please*, "a kind of informal variant of *please*" (Sifianou 1992: 171). Therefore, I still opt for two different classes of modifiers in this case.

¹⁴ In Greek *παρακαλώ* is a full verb.

Table 3: Distribution of lexical/phrasal modifiers

	Situation 1-kitchen						Situation 2-money						Situation 3-extension					
	NS		Ls1		Ls2		NS		Ls1		Ls2		NS		Ls1		Ls2	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Lexical/phrasal modifiers																		
Understater	39	22.8	16	24.2	14	21.9	8	5.9	7	8.1	5	7	37	23.1	25	24	13	15.7
Subjectivizer	18	10.5	7	10.6	2	3.1	11	8.1	12	14	8	11.1	32	20	20	19.2	15	18
Downtoner	22	12.9	3	4.6	7	10.9	36	26.5	19	22.1	16	22.2	42	26.2	24	23.1	17	20.5
Cajoler	26	15.2	8	12.1	9	14.1	15	11	7	8.1	6	8.3	30	18.8	10	9.6	3	3.6
Appealer	18	10.5	13	19.7	3	4.7	18	13.8	12	14	6	8.3	3	1.9	0	0	2	2.4
Politeness marker	7	4.1	9	13.6	18	28.1	4	2.9	9	10.5	19	26.4	11	6.9	14	13.5	33	39.8
Solidarity marker	41	24	10	15.2	11	17.2	44	32.4	20	23.2	12	16.7	5	3.1	11	10.6	0	0
Total modifiers	171	100	66	100	64	100	136	100	86	100	72	100	160	100	104	100	83	100

While it is very likely that Ls2 used *παρακαλώ* in the kitchen situation in order to soften the directive force of the imperative, I suggest that the co-occurrence of the politeness marker with the imperative in their data results in a strong impression of abruptness or bluntness. This is because of two main factors: first, in these particular learners' data and in this specific situation *παρακαλώ* is mostly used without a pronominal object. Second, as shown in example (3) the combination often co-occurs with aggravating supportive moves like insults and threats, which reflect a certain degree of irritation on the part of the requester¹⁵.

Table 4: Means and standard deviations in the use of lexical/phrasal modifiers

	NSs		Ls1		Ls2		F(2.147)	p
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD		
Situation 1	3.38	0.85	1.32	0.74	1.28	0.64	128.14	p<0.05
Situation 2	2.72	0.97	1.48	0.95	1.44	0.78	32.2	p<0.05
Situation 3	3.22	1.09	2.08	1.04	1.66	0.89	31.61	p<0.05

In Situation 2, once more, NSs preferred solidarity markers over any other lexical modification device. Downtoners and appealers also exhibited high frequencies in the NSs' performance. Ls1 opted for similar strategies in this situation and presented higher frequencies of use of these strategies than Ls2. However, their overall frequency of use of lexical modifiers still differed significantly from NSs. For Ls2, on the other hand, the politeness marker was once more the most frequent strategy in this situation and their difference from both the other groups in this respect was statistically significant.

Finally, in Situation 3, NSs preferred to mitigate their requests using mainly downtoners and understaters followed by cajolers and subjectivizers. Once again, Ls1 favoured similar strategies but with much lower frequencies. An exception involved the use of the cajoler which was rather infrequent in their data. Ls2, on the other hand, resorted once more to the politeness marker, which they used excessively in this situation, thus differing significantly from both the other groups in this respect. Examples (15), (16) and (17) that come from NSs, Ls1 and Ls2, respectively are indicative of these differences:

(15) NSs

[...] *φοβάμαι* ότι δεν θα προλάβω να τελειώσω την εργασία μου, αν δεν μου δώσετε μια **μικρή** παράταση και ήθελα να σας ρωτήσω **μήπως** θα ήταν εύκολο να έχω μία εβδομάδα παραπάνω; [...]

[...] **I am afraid** I will not have time to finish my assignment if you don't give me a small extension and I would like to ask you if I could **perhaps** have one more week'

(16) Ls1

[...] *με όλη αυτή τη δουλειά είναι αδύνατον να τελειώσω, οι εργασίες είναι πολλές. **Μήπως** μπορείτε να μου δώσετε μια παράταση;*

[...] with all this work it is impossible for me to finish, the assignments are far too many. Can you **perhaps** give me an extension?'

¹⁵ However, since the DCT does not provide us with information regarding the requestee's uptake, we cannot be absolutely certain that the combination of *παρακαλώ* with the imperative in this situation is definitely perceived as bluntness. Further research that will take the listener's uptake into consideration will probably provide us with more conclusive evidence in this respect.

(17) Ls2

[...] *Θα ήθελα σας παρακαλώ μια παράταση για την έργασία μου. Ζητάω συγγνώμη, αλλά είναι πολύ σημαντικό επειδή δουλεύω πολλές ώρες. Μπορώ παρακαλώ να έχω μερικές μέρες ακόμα;*
 [...] I would like an extension for my assignment **please**. I apologize but it is very important because I work long hours. Can I **please** have some more days?

In (15) the NS employs three different lexical mitigators in order to modify the main request: the subjectivizer *φοβάμαι* ('I am afraid'), the downtoner *μήπως* ('perhaps') and the understater *μικρή* ('short'). In (16), on the other hand, only one lexical modification device appears and specifically the downtoner *μήπως* ('perhaps'). Finally, (17) is typical of the Ls2 participants' performance in this situation, since the politeness marker *παρακαλώ* 'please' is employed twice in the same contribution. Although NSs and Ls1 used this politeness marker more frequently in this than the other situations, probably due to the formal nature of the situation and the high degree of imposition, they still dispreferred it comparatively to other lexical mitigation devices.

5. Discussion

5.1. External modification

As was shown in the results section, Ls2 displayed important deviations in using external modification devices in all three situations and differed significantly from the other groups. Since no statistically significant difference was attested between NS and Ls1, it appears that, unlike Ls1, Ls2 experienced considerable difficulty in handling external modifiers in a native-like fashion in all three situations.

In regard to Situations 2 and 3 the findings of this study on the Ls2 use of external modification confirm results of previous research that have consistently pointed out, that second language learners tend to over-rely on external mitigators and exhibit much higher frequencies of their use than NSs (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain 1986; Economidou-Kogetsidis 2008, 2009; Faerch & Kasper 1989; Hassal 2001). Several reasons for this over-suppliance in external modifiers have been identified in the relevant literature. The most frequently cited reason is related to the nature of external modifiers, in the sense that these particular devices "derive their politeness value precisely from their propositional meaning and illocutionary force (to justify, praise, minimize, etc.)" (Faerch & Kasper 1989: 239). Due to this fact, external mitigators appear as ideal means and satisfy the observed learners' concern for clarity and propositional explicitness (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain 1986: 177; Economidou-Kogetsidis 2009:103; Kasper 1989: 54).

A second reason for the overwhelming use of external modifiers by learners can be found in the fact that "external modifiers do not require knowledge of native-like use and they simply involve the construction of a new, often syntactically simple clause. As such, external modifiers tend to be syntactically less demanding and pragmalinguistically less complex" (Economidou-Kogetsidis 2009: 102).¹⁶ It appears then, that the use of these modifiers demands neither particularly high linguistic competence nor too much processing effort. Furthermore, such use can function as a

¹⁶ See also Hassall (2001: 274) for a similar observation.

form of compensation for the lack of internal modification in speech acts by learners (Economidou-Kogetsidis 2009; Hassall 2001).

A third reason (and one I suggest is particularly valid for the Ls2 of the present study) is put forward by House and Kasper (1987: 1285) who claim that “the insecurity status associated with the foreigner role” may be the reason why learners make use of excessive external modification. Taking this argument one step further, I suggest that for the Ls2 of this study this insecurity is related not only to the learners’ role as foreigners but also as rather secluded economic migrants and, therefore, as outsiders to the target community. In Bella (2011) it was shown that learners who are economic migrants and are not exposed to adequate native-speaker input, not only tend to make overwhelming use of external modification devices, but they also make a special effort to be overtly polite. The strong preference for excessive use of external modifiers on the part of the Ls2 could, therefore, be interpreted as an instance of a “playing safe strategy” (see Faerch & Kasper 1989: 239). In other words, these learners seem to invest in pragmatic routines whose formulaic nature can guarantee a politeness effect. However, this effort often seems to result in rather deviant sociopragmatic choices with non-native pragmatic effects.

Specifically, in the money situation Ls2 were found to employ too many apologies and self-denigrating statements as well as a considerable number of imposition minimizers. The overwhelming use of these strategies may be taken to indicate that these learners perceive the request for money among intimates, as much more imposing than Ls1 and NSs do. However, it is also possible that these learners construe the addressee as a Greek native speaker in this situation.¹⁷ Considering their underprivileged migrant status, this may render the situation asymmetrical.¹⁸ In other words, it is possible that these learners experience a sense of inferiority towards the imagined native speaker and, therefore, they make special efforts to be overtly polite. To this end, they consistently resort to damaging their own positive face by means of overuse of apologies and self-denigrating devices and protecting the addressee’s negative face by means of imposition minimizers. The notably lower frequencies of these strategies that are displayed in the Ls1’ and the NSs’ data are much more consistent with the positive politeness orientation of Greek society. The comparatively low frequency of imposition minimizers in the NSs’ data in this situation possibly indicates that these speakers do not perceive asking a friend to pay for their meal as a great imposition. At the same time the low frequency of apologies in their contributions confirms claims according to which in Greek society members of the same in-group “find no obvious reason for [...] apologizing, unless for something they conceive of as very serious” (Sifianou 1992: 42, cf. Symeon 2001).

Instead of resorting to apologies and imposition minimizers the NSs were found to make extensive use of preparators and, in particular, favour-asking constructions in this situation. I suggest that the mitigating function of these constructions is of key importance in terms of the NSs’ requests in this situation. According to Goldschmidt (1998: 151), favor asking has two recurring features that are relevant for the present

¹⁷ As suggested by one of the referees, this explanation may be further supported by the use of the Greek first name in example (5). Although there are no indications in the data that this is the case for the whole Ls2 sample, it is fair to say that issues of covert prestige may indeed come into play in this situation.

¹⁸ This possibility reflects certain limitations of the DCT used in the present study. These limitations will be discussed in section (6).

purposes: first, it entails no-role related obligation on the part of the addressee to fulfill the task, and second, it implies the notion of reciprocity in terms of a return favour. Therefore, I suggest that in this context the function of this preparator is twofold: first, it indicates acknowledgement of the non-standard nature of the situation, and second, it implies reciprocity in the sense that the requester shows that he/she perceives his/her request as a favour that he/she intends to return in due course. This double politeness effect renders the use of repeated apologies and imposition minimizers redundant and achieves similar effects without contravening the familiarity nature of the situation.¹⁹ It has to be mentioned at this point that, although Ls1 approximate the NSs more closely than Ls2 in terms of amount and type of external modification, the low frequency of use of the Preparator in their data points towards the fact that they have not mastered the pairing of this strategy with this kind of non-standard status-equal situations.

Along similar lines, in the extension situation, Ls2 were found to use more external modifiers than any other group in any other situation. Grounders, sweeteners and appreciators were the individual strategies whose frequency in their performance presented significant differences when compared to the other groups'. It seems that the formality of the situation made these learners feel highly compelled to justify their requests. In addition, they resorted to complimenting the professor and expressing their appreciation towards him/her more often than both the NSs and the Ls1 group. However, this overwhelming use of the latter strategies (especially when combined in the same contribution) often ends up giving the impression of an attempt to flatter the professor, which is generally frowned upon in the academic community. Moreover, these learners displayed a strong tendency to engage in small talk with the professor. This tendency combined with the excessive use of grounders turns their contributions particularly long often giving an impression of verbosity, which could be perceived as a waste of the professor's time under those circumstances.

Native speakers, on the other hand, besides grounders, showed a preference towards considerators and disarmers in this situation. As already mentioned, these strategies reflect the native speakers' awareness of the asymmetrical nature of the situation, thus expressing deference. However, any strategies that could be considered as flattery, as well as overwhelming apologies, were altogether avoided by NSs and Ls1 participants.

A different picture emerged with regard to the frequency of use of external modifiers in the case of Situation 1. In this familiarity, non-standard situation, Ls2 were once again found to differ significantly from the other two groups. Surprisingly enough, however, this time they appeared to use considerably fewer external modification devices than both NSs and Ls1. As was shown in the result section, not only did they produce quite a few bare requests, but they also employed aggravators such as insults and threats. As a result, these learners' performance appeared in certain cases to be blunt or even insulting. NSs, on the other hand, were found to be anything but blunt in

¹⁹ As suggested by one of the reviewers, an alternative explanation for the preference of NSs for favour-asking structures could be that these structures' semantic meaning of reciprocity has been bleached from repeated use and, therefore, these structures' function can be formulaic. Although this is a valid explanation and it cannot be ruled out, it has to be mentioned that the occurrence of structures as *μου κάνεις μια χάρη*: ([can you] do_[present indicative] me a favour?) in the NSs' data is basically restricted in this particular situation. In situations 1 and 3 NSs opt for other kinds of preparators. I suggest then that the reciprocity meaning still comes into play in these speakers' performance in this particular situation.

this case. Although they employed fewer external modifiers in this situation as compared to Situations 2 and 3, they consistently mitigated their contributions with external (and internal) modifiers. Ls1 appeared to be completely in line with NSs in this respect. The former were found to use external modifiers in a similar fashion, investing especially on grounders and avoiding at the same time any instances of threatening or insulting behaviour.

I suggest that the behaviour of Ls2 in this situation is related to its ‘standard’ character and its familiarity status. It appears that Ls2 possess a somewhat blurred picture regarding the boundaries between familiarity and bluntness in the Greek community. This can be attributed to these learners’ lack of exposure to intimate relationships with Greeks, which was reflected in the limited amount of contact they reported. Furthermore, the common stereotype of Greek politeness as ‘directness’, ‘bluntness’ or even ‘impoliteness’, may also be responsible for these learners’ behaviour in this particular situation. Therefore, their performance can be a product of the combination of lack of relevant input with their misled perceptions of Greek politeness or rather impoliteness. Furthermore, the instruction practices to which these learners have been exposed can provide additional clues for their behaviour in this situation. It is common knowledge that folk notions of politeness often equate it with formality. Instruction materials and teaching practices often confirm this misconception by associating politeness mainly with texts that are representative of formal situations. Therefore, it is possible that these learners, who are obviously not involved in particularly intimate relationships with NSs, have arrived at the conclusion that lack of formality and/or imposition implies lack of effort to mitigate the negative effects of speech acts in general and requests in particular.

It appears then, that for this particular sample of learners and for these particular situations, length of residence in the target community alone cannot guarantee native-like use of external modification for requests. On the contrary, the similarities in the behaviour of NSs and Ls1 point to the fact that intensity of interaction can enhance the learners’ ability to employ external modifiers appropriately in different situations. It is important to note that intensity of interaction should be understood here not only in terms of amount of contact, but also of quality of contact with native speakers. The University student status of these learners (Ls1) is likely to have provided them with opportunities of interaction with native speakers in a larger range of contexts and social roles. In addition, it has possibly eliminated the “foreigner role effect” from their performance, since their active participation in the Greek University community is likely to have strengthened their sense of belonging to the Greek in-group.

5.2. Syntactic modification

With regard to the frequency of use of syntactic modifiers, statistically significant differences were attested between NSs, on the one hand, and the two learner groups on the other in Situations 1 and 2. The comparison among the groups revealed no statistically significant difference in the case of Situation 3.

Specifically, Ls2 participants were found to use impressively few syntactic modifiers in Situation 1. Although Ls1 participants differed significantly from Ls2, using more modifiers and approximating NSs more closely in this respect, they still displayed significantly lower frequency of use of syntactic modifiers than NSs in this

situation. The considerably low number of modifiers employed by Ls2 could be easily attributed, once again, to the inexperience of these learners as far as such familiarity situations are concerned.

However, the fact that Ls1 also differed significantly from NSs implies that further explanations are called for. It seems that, although greater opportunities for interaction with native speakers have helped Ls1 to extend their repertoire of syntactic modifiers in informal situations and use them in a more native-like fashion, the syntactic modification development still lags behind that of NSs. This kind of development has been generally found to be slower and more difficult to achieve, since the mitigating function of syntactic devices is a pragmatic “acquired meaning that requires an extra inference capacity on the part of the addressers” (Faerch & Kasper 1989: 237), and it is not inherent in the grammatical meaning of syntactic structures (cf. Al-Ali & Alawneh 2010: 322). Once again then, I will suggest that, in addition to insufficient input, a possible explanation for the learners’ behaviour with regard to syntactic modifiers in this situation may be found in the inadequacies of teaching materials. As already mentioned here and emphasized elsewhere (see Bella 2011), textbooks for teaching Greek as a second/foreign language tend to relate politeness with more formal situations and focus on the teaching of grammatical structures appropriate for such situations. Positive or solidarity politeness is hardly ever mentioned as such in teaching materials. Therefore, structures that are prototypically related to this type of politeness in Greek are usually taught as sort of ‘grammatical idiosyncrasy’ of the language without being explicitly paired with their possible sociopragmatic functions. Negative-interrogative constructions and, more importantly, the present indicative, which displayed low frequencies in the learners’ data, are typical examples of such structures.²⁰

The results regarding the distribution of syntactic modifiers in Situations 2 and 3 can provide further support for this argument. In Situation 2, both learner groups were found to use fewer syntactic modifiers than NSs, but considerably more than they used in the previous situation. It appears that the greater they perceive the imposition involved in the request to be, the more compelled they feel to modify their requests syntactically. However, given that this is also a familiarity situation, they once more appear to be in lack of sufficient syntactic means for its modification. Finally, in Situation 3, which involved formality, power and distance, no statistically significant difference emerged in the frequency and type of syntactic modifiers between NSs and the two learner groups. I suggest that this finding provides further justification for the claim that, stereotypical equations of formality with politeness combined with the emphasis of the teaching practices on syntactic structures associated with formal politeness influence

²⁰ It is noteworthy that these structures are hardly present even in recent textbooks. For instance, in *Μαθαίνουμε Ελληνικά: Ακόμα καλύτερα!* [We learn Greek: Even Better!] (Antoniou et al. 2010), *Ορίστε!* [There you go!] (Valsamaki & Manavi 2004), *Ελληνικά Α'* [Greek A'] (Simopoulos et al. 2010) etc., there are no instances of these structures in relation to requests. In *Τα Ελληνικά ως Δεύτερη/Ξένη Γλώσσα: Επίπεδο Αρχαρίων* [Greek as a Second/Foreign Language: Beginners' level] (Charalambopoulou & Charalambopoulos 1996) an instance of the present indicative forming a request appears in a dialogue intended to present different request structures in p. 23, but it is not commented upon. Finally, in *Επικοινωνήστε Ελληνικά 2* [Communicate in Greek 2] (Arvanitakis & Arvanitaki 2002: 118), the present indicative structure *μου δίνεις το αλάτι (σε παρακαλώ)*; ‘[can you] give _[present indicative] me the salt (please)?’ appears under the heading ‘I ask for something politely’ without any mention to its solidarity implications (see Bella 2009: 265).

these learners' performance. In the case of Situation 3, they seem to have helped learners employ syntactic modifiers appropriately, irrespective of their amount of interaction with native speakers.

It turns out then, that with respect to syntactic modification, length of residence in the target-community is an insufficient condition for pragmatic development, whereas intensity of interaction is definitely helpful but not sufficient, at least for familiarity situations.

5.3. *Lexical/phrasal modification*

The results regarding lexical/phrasal modification showed that both groups of learners underused lexical/phrasal modifiers as compared to NSs in all three situations.

This result corroborates previous research findings according to which, language learners are lacking in the use of lexical/phrasal mitigators (Barron 2002; Bella 2011; Economidou-Kogetsidis 2009; Faerch & Kasper 1989; Trosborg 1995). As Trosborg (1995: 429) explains, the "optional" nature of these mitigators makes them more difficult to acquire. Furthermore, researchers postulate that the internal modification of speech acts by means of lexical/phrasal mitigators presents inherent difficulties for learners, since it is likely to increase the complexity of the pragmalinguistic structure (Trosborg 1995: 428-429), as well as the processing effort required for its production (Hassall 2001: 271). This, however, is not the case with external modifiers that, although equally optional, are, as already mentioned, less demanding syntactically and less complex pragmalinguistically, since they usually involve the construction of a new syntactically simple clause (see Economidou-Kogetsidis 2009: 102; Hassall 2001: 274). On the contrary the mitigation of a request by means of internal modifiers, such as downtoners or solidarity markers, seems to require a higher degree of ability for native-like use and significantly more processing effort on the part of the speaker (cf. Economidou-Kogetsidis 2009: 10; Trosborg 1995: 429). A possible objection to the above claims could be that, although the politeness marker (*please/παρακαλώ*) is also considered an internal modifier, it tends to be overused by language learners in general and by the learners of this study in particular. However, the politeness marker appears to share one important feature with external modifiers, i.e. its extra-sentential status; that is, the learners can simply add it to the beginning or the end of an utterance with the intention to sound polite. Moreover, it is highly conventionalized and, thus, earlier acquired by learners as compared to other lexical modifiers (see Trosborg 1995: 429).

An additional reason for the learners' observed difficulty to use lexical/phrasal modifiers is that, although the need for these modifiers to enter pedagogic grammars and for teachers to be aware of their important sociopragmatic functions has long been emphasized (see Faerch and Kasper 1989: 234), syllabi and textbooks for teaching Greek as a second/foreign language hardly pay any attention to them.

Besides the general shortage in lexical/phrasal mitigators exhibited by the learners of the present study, several other points regarding this kind of mitigators are worth commenting on.

First, in both familiarity situations (kitchen and money) NSs strongly highlighted the positive politeness orientation of Greek society using an impressive amount of solidarity markers. It seems that for these speakers the optimal means of mitigating their requests in these symmetrical situations is to indicate common ground

through extensive use of diminutives, nicknames and endearment terms as well as solidarity particles (*ρε, μωρέ* etc.). The striking, statistically significant differences between NSs and the learner groups with respect to the use of solidarity markers points to the fact that learners have not managed to master the appropriate use of these markers. A similar observation can be made in relation to the use of each and every other category of lexical/phrasal modifiers by the learners in this situation.

Another point that is worth highlighting involves the overuse of the politeness marker *παρακαλώ* ('please') on the part of Ls2, which was dispreferred by both NSs and Ls2 in the three situations. In this respect, the behaviour of Ls2 confirms previous research findings according to which language learners tend to overuse this politeness marker in their requests irrespective of context (Barron 2003; Blum-Kulka & Levenston 1987; Faerch & Kasper 1989; House 1987; House & Kasper 1987). Besides the reasons stated earlier in this section for the overuse of this marker, the tendency of learners to overuse *please* has been attributed to the politeness marker's double function as illocutionary force indicator and transparent mitigator. According to Faerch and Kasper, language learners "tend to adhere to the conversational principle of clarity, choosing explicit, transparent, unambiguous means of expression [...]. These qualities are explicitly fulfilled by the politeness marker in comparison with alternative lexical/phrasal downgraders" (1989: 233).

In the case of the present study's Ls2 participants, this overuse of the marker *παρακαλώ* ('please') often appeared to have certain non-targetlike effects. In the kitchen situation, for instance, the frequent combination of the marker with the imperative (see e.g., example 3), could be taken, as already mentioned, to attribute to the marker an aggravating rather than a mitigating effect, especially because in this situation Ls2 participants not only underused both external and syntactic modification but also they employed aggravating moves like insults and threats. Along similar lines, the overuse of this politeness marker often renders Ls2 participants' requests rather blunt, despite the frequent phrasing of their requests by means of interrogative constructions in this situation. House (1989: 116) explains that, since this politeness marker is primarily a transparent requestive marker, its co-presence with interrogative constructions dispenses with the indirect mitigating effects of the latter.²¹ Furthermore, in terms of Situation 2 the co-occurrence of this politeness marker with negative face protection devices like apologies and imposition minimizers increases the formality effect of Ls2 requests, creating a sense of distance, quite inappropriate for this familiarity situation.

Finally, in the extension situation, Ls2, once more, overused the marker in comparison to the other two groups. Although the use of this politeness marker is quite justified by the formal, non-standard nature of the situation, its overuse by Ls2 along with the excessive use of external modifiers on their part, often gives the impression of 'begging', thus making these learners seem subservient.

In the case of the NSs, on the other hand the use of this politeness marker is markedly avoided in all situations. With regard to Situations 1 and 2 this finding comes as no surprise, since it is in line with previous research results that have indicated that the politeness marker *παρακαλώ* ('please') is perceived as more a formality than a

²¹ Although House (1989) refers mainly to the combination of the marker with query preparatories, I find that in Greek, at least, its co-occurrence with other interrogative constructions that function towards syntactic modification can have similar pragmatic effects.

politeness marker in the Greek culture (Economidou-Kogetsidis 2008; Sifianou 1992).²² However, it is worth mentioning that the findings of the present study suggest that the marker is also dispreferred by the NSs in the extension situation, which is by nature formal. It seems that these NSs consider other types of lexical/phrasal modifiers (mainly downtoners, understaters and subjectivizers) as more appropriate for the internal modification in this particular situation.

Although Ls1 were also found to lag far behind NSs in relation to the appropriate use of lexical/phrasal modifiers in all situations, no oversuppliance of the politeness marker was observed in their performance. It could be argued that, in their case, although intensity of interaction has not achieved any dramatic effects regarding the development of lexical/phrasal modification competence, it has aided them in noticing NSs' moderate use of the politeness marker and conform to the target-language norm in this respect.

5.4. *The impact of intensity of interaction and length of residence in the target community*

The overall picture emerging from this study, with regard to the impact of length of residence in the target community as opposed to frequent as well as more diverse opportunities for interaction with NSs, is that the latter provides learners with some advantage. Specifically, the learners of this study with more limited length of residence but more substantial opportunities for social contact with native speakers (Ls1) were found to exhibit a more native-like behaviour with regard to the use of external modifications in all situations under examination. It seems that Ls1 participants' extended exposure and conversational practice with native speakers has reinforced their sociopragmatic awareness regarding external modification devices in terms of what Schmidt (1995: 29-30) refers to as *noticing*, i.e., the conscious registration of the relevant linguistic forms and *understanding*, i.e., the ability to deploy these forms strategically in the service of politeness and to recognize their co-occurrence with elements of context, such as social distance, power and degree of imposition.

It was also found that, although Ls1 differed significantly from NSs in regard to the use of syntactic modifiers in both familiarity situations, their performance approximated more closely to the native norm, when compared to the performance of learners with more extended length of residence but fewer opportunities for interaction with NSs. Finally, although both learner groups differed significantly from NSs as far as the number of lexical/phrasal modifiers used in the three situations was concerned, it appears that Ls1 have managed to avoid typical learner pitfalls, such as the excessive use of the politeness marker *παρακαλώ* 'please'. In this sense, the findings of this study largely confirm views according to which sociopragmatic development depends greatly on both the quality and the quantity of the input available to learners (Bella 2011; Hoffman-Hicks 1999; Kim 2000; Klein, Dietrich and Noyau 1995).

²² This observation is reinforced by Economidou-Kogetsidis' (2008, 2009) finding that Greek learners of English tend to underuse the politeness marker *please*, when performing requests in English. Quite rightly, I believe, Economidou-Kogetsidis attributes this phenomenon to transfer from the learners' native language (Greek), since the Greek *παρακαλώ* ('please') is less extensively used than its English equivalent (*please*) (see Economidou-Kogetsidis 2008, 2009; Sifianou 1992).

The results regarding the use of all types of modifiers by Ls2, on the other hand, provide further support to the claim that “length of residence alone is not a sufficient condition for the development of sociopragmatic competence” (Bella 2011: 1736). In other words, Ls2 were found to lag far behind both NSs and Ls1 with regard to appropriate amount and type of external modifiers, exhibiting a strong concern for clarity and overt politeness. This concern could be seen as reflecting lack of knowledge of appropriate sociocultural norms as well as insecurity resulting from their economic migrant status that often eliminates their opportunities for social contact with native speakers. Their observable (although not statistically significant) difference from Ls1 with regard to the frequency of use of syntactic modifiers and certain types of lexical modifiers, such as the politeness marker (*παρακαλώ* ‘please’), could also be attributed partly to insufficient opportunities of exposure to appropriate sociopragmatic input.

Therefore, although it has been frequently claimed that length of residence can correlate positively with pragmatic development (see e.g. Kasper & Rose 2002: 196), the results of the present study seem to corroborate the view that the helpfulness in acquisitional terms of length of residence depends on both the quality and the quantity of the input available to learners (Hoffman-Hicks 1999; Kim 2000; Klein, Dietrich & Noyau 1995; Matsumura 2001), rather than simply the quantitative measure of length of residence (cf. Kasper & Rose 2002: 196). Furthermore, as Shively and Cohen (2008: 47) argue, the types of experiences that learners have during their stay in an L2 speaking setting may present great variation depending on factors like host countries, opportunities for social interaction with native speakers, as well as their own special characteristics (identities, motivation, goals, circumstances, etc.). Taking this into consideration, claims about the positive effects of residence in the L2 setting should indeed be put forward with caution (cf. Félix-Brasdefer 2004: 598), since the nature of this setting can be affected by various parameters.

However, the fact that both groups of learners exhibited divergence from the native speakers’ performance, with regard to lexical/ phrasal as well as syntactic mitigation (at least in the two familiarity situations) indicates that simple exposure to input either in the form of extended exposure or in the form of intensity of interaction is not a sufficient condition for internal modifiers to be fully acquired and incorporated into the learners’ interlanguage. This fact highlights the need for pedagogical intervention focused on the development of second language learners’ sociopragmatic competence, which will be discussed in the next section.

6. Limitations and future research

This study was subject to certain limitations. The most important one concerns the use of the DCT, the disadvantages of which were discussed in section 3.2. Besides the general drawbacks that characterize this method of data collection in general, the analysis and discussion of the findings presented here have indicated that the study could have benefited from a more detailed specification of the identity of the imaginary interlocutors. Specifically, the establishment of the ethnicity of the intended addressee as a native or non-native “close friend” (see Appendix) in the two informal situations might have led us to more conclusive explanations of some of the findings, since it could have shed further light to the implications of the “foreigner role” effect on the learners’ performance. For instance, it is possible that the learners could have perceived

the interlocutor in situation 2 as a native speaker and, therefore, have felt that this situation called for more overt politeness. Future research should definitely take this parameter into consideration. Furthermore, despite the benefits of DCTs for the researcher, ethnographic research on requests in natural settings is needed for a more complete understanding of the relevant phenomena.

Finally, it should be pointed out that length of residence in the target community and opportunities for interaction co-varied to a certain extent in the data collection of this study. Future research would benefit from studying the two variables independently, in order for safer conclusions to be reached in regard to their impact on language learners' performance.

7. Conclusions and implications for language teaching

This study attempted to investigate the performance of L2 learners of Greek when making requests including both internal and external modification in three different situations. Furthermore, it considered the impact of length of residence in the target community and intensity of interaction with native speakers on the learners' requesting behaviour. To this end, the performance of Greek native speakers was compared with two different groups of learners: one group of economic migrants with increased length of residence but restricted opportunities for social contact with native speakers (Ls2) and one with less extended length of residence but more opportunities for social contact with native speakers (Ls1).

The main findings of the study could be summarized as follows:

1. Learners with more frequent and diverse opportunities for interaction with native speakers (Ls1) were found to overperform learners with more extended length of residence but fewer opportunities for interaction, with regard to the use of external modifiers for requests in all three situations under examination.
2. Both learner groups' results indicated that these learners face difficulties in relation to the appropriate choice and use of syntactic modifiers in the two symmetrical (familiarity) situations. However, the learners with more opportunities for interaction (Ls1) approximated the native norm more closely than the ones with more extended length of residence but fewer interaction opportunities. None of the learner groups appeared to face problems in employing syntactic modification appropriately in terms of the formal situation under examination (situation 3-request for extension).
3. Both learner groups were found to lag far behind native speakers in terms of amount and type of lexical/phrasal modifiers in all three situations. Yet, Ls1 appeared to be able to avoid certain non-target like choices, like the excessive use of the politeness marker *παρακαλώ* ('please'), which turned out to be the main characteristic of Ls2 participants' behaviour with respect to lexical modification.
4. The overall results of this study do not seem to support the claim that formal (power-asymmetrical) situations "are more pragmatically demanding [...] and require greater pragmatic skills" (Economidou-Kogetsidis 2009: 81). The learners of this sample appeared to have similar (if not greater) difficulties in modifying externally and internally requests in informal situations.

It was shown here that, in general, learners with more diverse opportunities for interaction with native speakers are in some advantage in terms of request modification development. However, the results highlight the fact that the acquisition of certain pragmatic elements (like request internal modifiers) by language learners remains problematic, regardless of the learning setting and opportunities for interaction. Furthermore, these learners appear to face particular difficulties in establishing connections between pragmalinguistic patterns and sociopragmatic information. These results bring once again to the fore Thomas's (1983) claim that we cannot expect learners "to 'absorb' pragmatic norms without explicit formalization" (1983: 109), regardless of the learning setting. Recent research on interlanguage pragmatics in general (Bardovi-Harlig 2001; Coperias Aguilar 2008; House 1996; Rose & Ng 2001; Takahashi 2001), and on interlanguage requests in particular (Alcón 2005; Codina 2008; Safont 2003; Salazar 2003), highlights the importance of explicit sociopragmatic instruction suggesting that the performance of the learners who do not receive it diverges significantly from that of the learners who do, as well as that of the native speakers.

As it was pointed out throughout the discussion section, the neglect of teaching practices for sociopragmatic linguistic aspects, as well as the disproportionate focus on some of these aspects, such as formal politeness structures, may be held responsible for some of the learners' sociopragmatic inefficiencies. The main reason for this is that these teaching practices are centered on textbooks, which are not considered, in general, "as a reliable source of pragmatic input for [...] language learners" (Bardovi-Harlig 2001: 25). Indeed, it has been shown elsewhere (Bella 2009, forthcoming) that textbooks of Greek as a second/foreign language often present isolated and decontextualized examples of speech acts and communicative situations. Furthermore, they provide a blurred picture of Greek politeness and the appropriate mitigation strategies that can be put at its service depending on the situation and the participants' relationship. Against this backdrop, I argue for an explicit approach to the teaching of pragmatics that will reinforce *noticing* and *understanding of* those linguistic features that underlie the successful performance of speech acts. This approach presupposes the inclusion of a strong sociocultural component in the syllabi for teaching Greek as a second/foreign language and the design of materials that emphasize the sociopragmatic aspects of language. Furthermore, such an approach should fulfill two basic L2 teaching requirements: first, that "linguistic models must be contextualized and related to the situations of use in order to adapt them to the sociological frame of relations among the interlocutors of the target language" (Garcés-Conejos et al. 1992: 247) and second, that teaching materials on L2 pragmatics should be research based (Kasper 1997: 7).

With respect to the teaching of L2 requests in particular, such teaching models have been analytically put forward recently (Usó-Juan & Martínez-Flor 2008; Usó-Juan 2010). These models encourage learners' exploration and production of appropriate mitigating devices of requests, as well metapragmatic discussions on the sociopragmatic factors that influence relevant mitigation choices. I suggest that they are definitely worth further exploring, since they fulfill the L2 teaching requirements stated above by helping learners build their communicative competence on the basis of rich and sound input and by allowing them to "make connections between linguistic forms, pragmatic functions, their occurrence in different social contexts, and their cultural meanings" (Kasper 1997: 9).

Appendix-Situations under examination

Situation 1

Your flat mate, who is also a very close friend of yours, threw a party last night. She/he has left the kitchen very untidy after the party. You expect visitors tonight and you ask her/him to clean it.

You say:

Situation 2

You are out to lunch with a close friend of yours. You have already ordered when you discover that you have left your wallet at home. You ask your friend to pay for your meal.

You say:

Situation 3

You are a University student. You must complete an assignment for the current semester, but you realize that you do not have enough time. You decide to go to your professor's office and ask her for an extension.

You say:

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