OFFERS BY GREEK FL LEARNERS: A CROSS-SECTIONAL DEVELOPMENTAL STUDY

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Abstract

This study investigates developmental patterns in the ability of Greek foreign language learners to make offers. Drawing data from role-plays and retrospective verbal reports it attempts to explore the initiative offer strategies, the syntactic modification and the degree of insistence that learners of three different proficiency levels (lower intermediate, intermediate and advanced) employ when performing offers in two symmetrical (-P, -D) and two asymmetrical (+P, +D) situations.

The results suggest that, although there is a great deal of grammatical and pragmalinguistic development regarding both initiative offer strategies and syntactic modification devices, this does not guarantee concomitant levels of sociopragmatic development (cf. Bardovi-Harlig 1999). Specifically, it is shown that learners of increased proficiency tend to overgeneralise complex grammatical structures like interrogative constructions and the conditional in situations in which NSs employ more direct and simple grammatical means in order to achieve a solidarity effect. Furthermore, the learners appear to lag far behind NSs in the appropriate use of insistence.

The findings of the study lend support to both the developmental stages of pragmatic competence acknowledged in the relevant literature (Ellis 1992; Achiba 2003) and to Bialystok's (1993) model regarding the acquisition of pragmatic competence.

Keywords: Pragmatic development; Greek offers; Interlanguage; Insistence.

1. Introduction

The documentation of second and foreign language learners' pragmatic competence has been the major concern of the field of interlanguage pragmatics (ILP) ever since its emergence. Pragmatic competence encompasses both *pragmalinguistic competence*, i.e. knowledge of "…the particular resources which a given language provides for conveying particular illocutions" (Leech 1983: 11) and *sociopragmatic competence*, i.e. knowledge of contextual and social variables that affect the appropriateness of a pragmalinguistic choice (see Leech 1983: 10; Usó -Juan 2010: 237).

The production and appropriate use of speech acts has always been considered the cornerstone of pragmatic competence (Kasper & Dahl 1991; Saville Troike 1996) and, therefore, it has been of focal interest in the field of ILP. As a result, there is a substantial body of research examining the production and comprehension of speech acts by L2 learners from diverse linguistic backgrounds and target languages, i.e. the aspect of interlanguage use.

Yet, the developmental aspect of pragmatics, which involves the ways in which "L2 learners develop the ability to understand and produce action in a target language" (Kasper & Rose 2002: 5) has been markedly neglected in the 80's and the 90's (see Bardovi-Harlig 1999) and it is only in the past decade that it has attracted some interest which has brought with it a noticeable growth of the relevant body of research. It is not surprising, therefore, that researchers of the field systematically call for more investigation into the processes of interlanguage pragmatics' acquisition (see e.g. Bardovi-Harlig 1999; Kasper & Schmidt 1996; Kasper & Rose 2002).

Research on pragmatic development has also focused mainly on speech acts. It has been repeatedly shown that, although learners of lower and higher proficiency levels have access to the same range of strategies in performing speech acts, learners of different proficiency levels tend to select different strategies in comparable contexts and to implement their speech acts by means of qualitatively and quantitatively different conventions of form (Rose & Kasper 2001).

In respect to the development of individual speech acts, requests have unquestionably received the most attention (Achiba 2003; Barron 2003; Bella 2012; Ellis 1992; Félix-Brasdefer 2007; Flores Salgado 2011; Göy et al. 2012; Hassall 2003; Hill 1997; Otcu & Zeyrek 2008; Scarcella 1979; Schauer 2004, 2009; Trosborg 1995; Woodfield 2012). Significantly fewer developmental insights have been provided on a limited few other speech acts, such as suggestions (Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford 1990, 1993), greetings (DuFon 1999; Omar 1991), apologies (Maeshiba et al. 1996; Flores Salgado 2011; Rasouli Khorsidi 2013; Trosborg 1995), complaints (Trosborg 1995) and refusals (Bella 2014).

The present study aims to add to the body of research on the development of individual speech acts focusing on offers and, specifically, on the pragmatic performance of foreign language learners of Greek from various L1 backgrounds when performing offers in different situations. Specifically, a cross-sectional design is adopted here in order to investigate developmental patterns in Greek FL learners' offers across three different proficiency levels: Lower intermediate, intermediate and advanced. Against this backdrop the study aims at adding to the set of speech acts that have been investigated in regard to pragmatic development, as well as, to the set of L2s under examination. Furthermore, it attempts to aid the understanding of interlanguage developmental patterns, which besides helping L2 teachers "establish realistic expectations of students' pragmatic progress [will] also allow them to administer stage-appropriate pedagogical interventions to enhance students' pragmatic competence" (Beebe & Waring 2005: 67).

The study begins by providing the basic facts about the speech act under examination and proceeds to review the relevant research, the method of the study (section 3) and the way the data were analyzed (section 4). The results are presented in section 5.The discussion section reviews the results in light of the relevant literature (section 6). Finally, the main findings are summarized in the conclusions (section 7).

2. Theoretical background

2.1. *Offers*

Searle (1976: 11) classifies offers as commissives, since they commit the speaker to some future action (see also Bach & Harnish 1979; Edmondson & House 1981). Yet, other researchers stress the importance of the involvement of the hearer as well as the speaker in the realisation of offers attributing them a "fuzzy nature" (Aijmer 1996: 1989) and claiming that offers also involve a directive component. Specifically, Hancher (1979: 6) suggests that offers represent "hybrid speech acts that combine directive with commissive illocutionary force". On these grounds, Hancher adds a further category to Searle's taxonomy and proposes that offers should be classified as "Commissive Directives". Furthermore, Barron (2003: 124) maintains that "the linguistic form of realisations of offers reflects their colorful nature" and cites Schneider (1980) who identifies three main strategy types for realising offers: a) preference questions*,* (e.g. *Would you like some wine?*)*,* that point to their conditional nature, i.e. the fact that offers are conditional on the hearer indicating in some way that s/he wishes the speaker to carry out the deed in question[1], b) execution questions pointing to their commissive nature, (e.g. *Can I get you anything?*) and, c) offers of the imperative form, (e.g. *Have a drink*), pointing to their directive nature.

   Offers are often realised not as single-utterance speech acts but as speech act sequences that usually involve initiative offers and reoffers (cf. Barron 2005: 144). Whereas initiative offers can be defined as "the first move in each offer sequence" (Schneider 2000: 295), reoffers constitute "further attempts on the part of the speaker to reiterate a particular initiative offer within one offer sequence" (Barron 2005: 144). Therefore, depending on the number of reoffers emerging in an offer interaction, offers can involve different degrees of insistence in situations where the initiative offer is refused. Insisting on an offer can be a culture-specific phenomenon, in the sense that in some cultures there is an expectation that the initiative offer will be refused and, as a result, the offerer will make attempts to convince the interlocutor to accept the offer.

   Turning to the face-threatening features of offers, Brown & Levinson (1987: 66) consider offers threatening for the addressee's negative face, since they impose to her/his freedom of future action exerting pressure on her/him to react and possibly accept the offer. Sifianou (1992a: 61), on the other hand, views offers mainly as positive politeness devices that indicate or enhance the existence of solidarity relations (cf. Brown & Levinson 1987: 125) and stresses their multifaceted nature in terms of face-work. Specifically, she points out that, besides the hearer's, the speaker's negative face is also threatened, since the speaker restricts her/his own freedom by committing her/himself to some future action. At the same time, the offerer enhances the hearer's positive face by indicating that s/he is positively disposed to her/him, yet risking her/his own positive face which would potentially be damaged if the offer was to be turned down. Thus, as Sifianou puts it, "both participants can be placed in delicate positions and we have to know the conventions of a particular society in order to safeguard the mutual preservation of face and behave appropriately" (1992a: 62). As Barron (2005:

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[1] For the conditional nature of offers, see e.g. Wunderlich (1977); Leech (1983).

143) contends, the different aspects of face involved "have, of course, an effect on the realisation of offers".

That is, while the need for positive face enhancement may bring with it a preference for directness (Kasper 1981: 141), the potential threats to the speaker's and addressee's face needs may lead the speaker to mitigate an offer's illocutionary force by realising it in an indirect manner (cf. Barron 2005: 143; Searle 1975: 80).

In the only study on Greek offers to date, Sifianou (1992a) compares them to English offers and contends that Greeks tend to offer a lot more often than English speakers, since they attach more importance to interdependence than independence. Moreover, she recognises a tendency towards directness (realised mainly through the use of imperatives) on the part of the Greek speakers, since "the Greek assumes that s/he knows the addressee's needs invoked by the situation, and thus, questioning is at best unnecessary" (Sifianou 1992a: 64). She also acknowledges that Greeks tend to insist on offers, yet, she points out that Applegate's (1975) claim that in Greece, politeness requires at least four offers before accepting something, is exaggerated. However, what Sifianou (1992a) mainly highlights, is that the function and effect of offers cannot be assessed without taking the situational context into consideration (1992a: 63).

It turns out that offers, in general, and Greek offers, in particular, can be challenging for L2 learners, since their appropriate performance demands a great deal of pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic knowledge, i.e. knowledge on the part of the learners of the linguistic forms necessary to produce the speech act, as well as awareness of the sociocultural values that characterise the speech community and lead speakers to the choice of one particular form versus another.

2.2. *Previous research on offers and pragmatic development*

Besides Sifianou (1992), there are very few studies to date dealing with offers from a cross-cultural and a variational pragmatics perspective (Fukushima & Iwata (1987) comparing American English and Japanese offers and Barron (2005, 2011) comparing British and Irish English offers). Furthermore, there is no research from an interlanguage use perspective and the only developmental study of interlaguage offers is Barron (2003).

Drawing on data from a free discourse completion task (FDCT), Barron (2003) designed a longitudinal study, in order to investigate the Ls2 pragmatic development of 33 Irish learners of German. Besides, offers, she examined the development of requests and refusals in these learners' production. Baseline data were provided by a group of 27 Irish English native speakers and a group of 34 German native speakers. The two native speaker groups' data were sampled on a single occasion, whereas the learners' data were sampled on three different occasions: Prior to, in the middle and at the end of a 10-month stay abroad sojourn in Germany.

With respect to offers, Barron's findings indicated that there was important development in discourse structure, use of pragmatic routines, as well as an increase in the use of syntactic and lexical downgraders in the learners' performance after their study-abroad period.

Specifically, prior to their sojourn, Irish learners employed offer-refusal structures that involved a lot of reoffering, which held potential for pragmatic failure, since reoffering is not a typical feature of offers in German and "may have led German native speakers to feel they were being pressurised into doing something against their will" (Barron 2003: 238). This tendency was found to decline after the stay-abroad period with learners employing the structure of L2 exchanges to a greater extent, and approaching the L2 norm in a number of situations. Yet, the learners continued to reoffer to a larger extent than the German NS informants at the end of the year abroad.

Although most of the increases attested in learners' use of pragmatic routines were L2-like, there were also several instances where this was not the case. The learners' divergence from L2 pragmatic routines was attributed to an increase in creative use and false overgeneralisations. According to Barron (2003: 239), this finding lends support for the non-linear developmental path noted in previous studies to be taken by pragmatic routines. Moreover, increase in the frequency of L2-like routines was not always accompanied by sociopragmatic competence. As Barron contends, "some routines appeared to be employed in situations in which learners *themselves* felt they were useful rather than in situations in which their use was appropriate from an L2 perspective" (2003: 239).

Finally, learners were found to use more complex syntactic means to express their offers after their 10-month period of stay in Germany. Yet, this complexity was not always accompanied by the necessary sociopragmatic knowledge that would lead learners to employ syntactic means in a communicatively effective manner.

Against this limited body of research the present study, as already mentioned, aims at revealing developmental patterns in a sample of Greek FL learners of Greek when performing offers. The main research questions are the following:

1. What are the differences attested between NSs of Greek and learners of different proficiency levels in relation to (a) the choice of initiative offer strategies, (b) the use of syntactic modifiers and (c) the degree of insistence[2] employed?
2. What developmental patterns can be detected and how are they related with the learners' grammatical and sociocultural competence?

3. Method

3.1. *Participants*

A total of 140 subjects participated in the study: 35 native speakers of Greek all coming from Athens and 105 FL learners of Greek from various L1 backgrounds (Serbian, English, French, Dutch, Polish, Spanish, Russian, Slovenian, Bulgarian, Chinese, Japanese).

The native speakers were all students at the University of Athens. The non-native speakers were learners of Greek, who, at the time of the study, had just arrived in Athens in order to attend a six-week language course supplied by the University of Athens' Programme of Summer Scholarships for Greek Studies. These learners were

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[2] Issues related to the exact nature of insistence like reoffer strategies and supportive moves will be beyond the focus of the present study.

undergraduate students whose previous training in Greek had taken place in their countries of origin, i.e. they were learners of Greek as a foreign language. The learner participants of this study were selected from classes of three different proficiency levels: Beginner, intermediate and advanced (35 learners per group). These classes were especially created for the needs of the summer program based on the results of a placement test that all learners of the program (a total of 300) took just before the beginning of the course. This test was designed following the guidelines of the Common European Framework for the Teaching and Assessment of Languages (2001) and included grammar, reading, writing and listening components. Along these lines, the competence of lower intermediate learners (Ls1 from this point onwards) of this study corresponded roughly to the A2 level, of the intermediate (Ls2) to the B1 level and of the advanced learners (Ls3) to B2-C1 level, as described in the CEF.

Before their participation all learners were asked to fill in a questionnaire regarding their age, gender, native language, language instruction and prior experience of spending time in Greece. Their answers revealed that, in their majority, they had received instruction focusing mainly on grammar and reading comprehension. None of them reported any kind of special instruction in pragmatics.

Learners that had spent any amount of time in Greece before the research were excluded from the sample.

3.2. *Instrumentation*

The data for the present study were collected using open role-plays supplemented by retrospective verbal reports.

Although I agree with those who argue that natural data constitute the best source for analysing interactions (see e.g. Wolfson 1981: 9; Kasper 2000: 318), 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).

3.2.1. *Role-plays*

An open role play was selected to collect the production data as the closest possible alternative to natural data (Gass and Houck 1999; Turnbull 2001; Boxer 2001), since it permits the researcher to overcome the aforementioned shortcomings of naturalistic data collection. Besides including interaction in a face-to-face format with another participant (Félix-Brasdefer 2010: 47), role-plays have the following advantages: (1) they enable the researcher to obtain complete conversational interactions and keep under control different variables, such as age and gender, (2) they allow the researcher to exert some degree of control over the conversation, and (3) they reflect the awareness of what is appropriate in language use (Félix-Brasdefer 2006: 2164, based mainly on Scarcella 1979). Furthermore, open role-plays, unlike authentic interactional data "permit us to design contexts and roles that are likely to elicit specific speech events and

communicative acts" (Kasper 2000: 323) and "enable us to observe how context factors influence the selection and organization of communicative acts" (ibid.), (cf. Martínez-Flor & Usó-Juan 2011: 52). Nevertheless, contrary to what holds true for authentic interaction, it is the researcher's rather than the participants' goals that motivate the structure of the role-play (Kasper 2000: 317). In this sense, data elicited by means of role-plays "can never be the same as authentic conversation" (Kasper 2000: 318). Therefore, the findings of this study should be understood in view of the fact that role-play data are brought into being for experimental purposes and, hence, they are subject to certain limitations (see Golato 2003).

The role-play instrument consisted of 16 situations: Four of those involved offers for help, four hospitable offers and another eight elicited the production of other speech acts and were used as distractors. In all situations the NSs and learners had to interact with a NS, a female postgraduate student who was instructed to refuse all offers involved in the situations.

This paper focuses on four of the offer situations, two offers for help and two hospitable offers. In each case, one situation involving familiarity (-P, -D) and one distance and power (+P, +D) are analysed. The remaining four situations of the role-play instrument were two that involved hierarchy but not distance (+P, -D) and two that involved distance but no hierarchy (-P, + D) and their analysis will be beyond the scope of this paper mainly due to space limitations.

The detailed presentation of the four situations that will be examined here was the following[3]:

Situation 1 (-P, -D)
You study engineering at the University of Athens. The end of the term advanced maths exam is next week. Maria, a good friend of yours, mentions that she is worried about it as she finds maths difficult. You have passed this exam last term and you offer to help her.

Situation 2 (+P, +D)
You have just started a traineeship in a large company. During the coffee break on your second day you overhear your boss talking about how weak her son is at computers at school. As you study computers, you offer to help.

Situation 3 (-P, -D)
A friend of yours calls you one evening and tells you that she is just outside your house. She asks you if she can drop by for five minutes to say hello. You tell her to come and when she comes in you offer her dinner.

Situation 4 (+P, +D)
After a guest lecture, you and a friend of yours are talking to one of your professors. It is time to go home. You remember that your professor lives near both of you and you offer her a lift home.

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[3] Situations 1 and 2 are adopted from Barron (2003). Due to space limitations, I provide only the English translations of the situation descriptions, which were originally presented in Greek.

3.2.2. Verbal reports

Besides the role-play data, retrospective verbal reports were elicited in order to corroborate the findings of the production data and help the researcher "to better understand the rationale for the sociocultural choices that are made and for the sociolinguistic forms that are selected in order to realize the given speech act" (Cohen 1996: 256).

The interviews with the participants took place immediately after the completion of the role-plays. Interviews were elicited from a random sample of 15 native speakers and 40 learners, since not all participant were available for an interview after completing the role-plays. The researcher focused on the three situations under examination and mainly posed fixed questions guided by Ericsson & Simon's (1993: 198) four types of statements in the verbalization process: Intentions, cognitions, planning and evaluation (cf. Woodfield 2010: 9). The main questions were:

1. What did you notice about the situation?
2. How difficult did you find it to answer?
3. What were you paying attention to?
4. Are you satisfied with your answer?
5. Are you satisfied with how much you insisted on the offer?

3.3. *Data analysis*

All role-play interactions were transcribed and the offers were classified according to a modified combination of Barron's (2003) and (2005) taxomonies for offers adopted to fit the Greek data. The taxomony involves three superstrategies for realising offers, i.e. impositives (IMPs), conventionally indirect strategies (CIs) and non-conventionally indirect strategies (NCIs). Each superstrategy can be manifested via different substrategies. Table 1 presents these substrategies on a continuum from maximum imposition to maximum indirectness.

Table 1 : Superstrategies and substrategies for realising offers.

IMPs	Examples
Imperative	*έλα στο σπίτι να σου τα δείξω* ('come at my place, I'll explain everything to you')
State future act of hearer	*θα καθίσεις δυο ώρες να σου τα εξηγήσω* ('you'll spend two hours with me and I'll explain')
State future act of speaker	*θα σας πάμε εμείς στο σπίτι* ('we will take you home')
State permission	*μπορείς να μείνεις για φαγητό* ('you can stay for dinner')
State willingness	*θέλω να σε βοηθήσω* ('I want to help you')
CI	
Question future act of speaker	*να παραγγείλω κάτι να φάμε;* ('shall I order something to eat? [order_{subjunctive} something to eat?])
Question desire	*θέλετε να σας βοηθήσω εγώ;* ('do you want me

	to help you')
Question need	*χρειάζεσαι βοήθεια;*('do you need any help?')
Question ability	*μπορώ να βοηθήσω;* ('can I help?')
State ability	*μπορώ να σε βοηθήσω εγώ* ('I can help')
NCI	
Hint	*εγώ σπουδάζω υπολογιστές* ('I study computers')

Turning to syntactic modification, the main categories of syntactic modifiers found in the data were the following:
-Interrogative (e.g. μπορώ να βοηθήσω; 'can I help?')
-Conditional clause (e.g. θα σε βοηθήσω, *αν θέλεις* 'I will help you, *if you want'*
-Conditional (e.g. *θα ήθελα* να σε βοηθήσω '*I would like* to help you')
-Subjunctive (e.g. *να φτιάξω* κάτι να φάμε; 'shall I prepare something to eat?')

The use of the above syntactic modifiers is subject to a number of restrictions the main of which are the following:

1. Conditional clauses are possible only with execution strategies, since preference strategies already include explicit reference to the conditional nature of offers and so never include explicit conditionals" (Barron 2005: 161).
2. The conditional is possible only with the State permission, State willingness, Question desire, Question ability and State ability strategies.
3. The subjunctive is possible only in the Question future act of speaker strategy.

Finally, for the purposes of the present study insistence was computed as means of the number of attempts to insist each group made in each situation.The statistical analysis of the data was carried out using version 22 of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. Descriptive statistics were used to compute the frequency of initial offer strategies and syntactic modifiers for each group across the three situations. 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 in the study, the alpha level was set at .05. Besides the researcher, the data were coded by a second coder, a colleague from the Department of Linguistics, Faculty of English Studies. The second coder's coding coincided with the researcher's in 97% for offer strategies and 100% for syntactic modifiers. The discrepancies noted were discussed by the two coders and a consensus was reached. The results are analytically presented in the following section.

4. Results

This section presents the results for research question 1 concerning the differences among the four groups as regards initiative offer strategies, syntactic modification and degree of insistence and research question 2 concerning the developmental patterns emerging in the learners' performance of offers. The main findings are presented in regard to strategy frequencies, distribution and use in the role plays (4.1) and in regard to the learners' verbal reports (4.2).

4.1. *Role-plays*

4.1.1. Initiative offer strategies

All groups under examination relied mainly on IMP and CI strategies to make their initial offer. Tables 2 and 3 (see Appendix) present the distribution of superstrategies (IMP, CI and NCI) and substrategies by the four groups in the four situations (Table 2 for situations 1 and 2 and Table 3 for situations 3 and 4).

Table 4 (see Appendix) presents the means and standard deviations for the use of those strategies in the four situations.

Most of the substrategies presented in Table 1 (section 3.3) appeared in all groups' data. However, no instances of the State willingness strategy were attested in the NSs' data, while the Question need strategy appeared only in the NSs' and the Ls3 learners' performance. The State future act of speaker strategy was employed only by NSs and a couple of Ls1 learners, who, however, formed it by means of the present tense and not the future tense like NSs did. Finally, no instances of the Imperative appeared in the Ls1 learners' data.

In what follows, a more detailed analysis of the findings related to the use of superstrategies and substrategies in the four situations is presented.

In both symmetrical situations (S1 and S3) NSs exhibited a strong preference towards IMPs and made limited use of CI strategies. Ls1 learners' performance displayed similar frequencies of IMPs and CI strategies. No statistically significant difference was attested between those early learners and NSs in terms of superstrategy use. Yet, the Ls1 group was the only one which used some NCIs (hints) to perform the offer in this situation. Both Ls2 and Ls3 learners employed very few IMPs and exhibited a marked preference towards CIs. These differences between these groups and the former two groups (NSs and Ls1) were found to be statistically significant for both IMP (S1: ($F(3,136)=21.03$, p<0.05), S3: ($F(3,136)=7.31$, p<0.05)) and CI strategies (S1: ($F(3,136)=24.27$, p<0.05), S3: ($F(3,136)=8.05$, p<0.05)).

In terms of substrategies, NSs were found to make frequent use of those involving the highest degree of imposition, such as Imperative, State future act of speaker and State future act of hearer, whereas their CI strategies were limited to Question future act of speaker and Question desire. Ls1 learners' IMPs, on the other hand, consisted mainly in State future act of speaker and State wilingness, whereas State ability was their most frequently employed CI strategy. This strategy along with the State future act of hearer was, as already mentioned, expressed by means of the present instead of the future tense (e.g. *εσύ μένεις για φαγητό* ('you are staying for supper')*, μαγειρεύω φαγητό* ('I am cooking') etc.). Finally, whereas the Question desire was the most preferred CI strategy for both the Ls2 and Ls3 groups, Ls3 learners employed several instances of the Question need strategy which, as mentioned above, was absent from the lower level learners' data.

In both asymmetrical situations (S2 and S4), NSs as well as Ls2 and Ls3 learners mainly expressed their offers by means of CIs. Ls1, on the other hand, exhibited patterns of behaviour similar to those of the symmetrical situations employing similar frequencies of IMPs and CIs. Therefore, this group was found to employ significantly more IMPs (S2: (($F(3,136)=12.66$, p<0.05), S4: ($F(3,136)=9.3$, p<0.05))

and considerably less CI strategies (S2: (F(3,136)=16.83, p<0.05), S4: (F(3,136)=13.02, p<0.05)) than the other three groups.

Despite the similar frequencies of IMPs in the NSs and the two more advanced level groups' data, it has to be pointed out that the NSs made particularly frequent use of the State ability strategy, whereas Ls2 and Ls3 resorted mainly to strategies realised by interrogative constructions, such as Question desire, especially in Situation 2.

Finally, as in the symmetrical situations, Ls1 learners' main IMP means for expressing their offer were State permission, State future act of speaker and State willingness. Yet, the State future act of speaker and Question future act of speaker strategies were, once more, formed by means of the present tense.

4.1.2. Syntactic modification

The distribution of syntactic modifiers by the four groups across the four situations is presented in the Appendix (Tables 5 (situations 1 and 2) and 6 (situations 3 and 4)).

As shown in Table 5, important differences were attested with respect to the use of the Interrogative and the Conditional in the symmetrical situations (situations 1 and 3).

Specifically, the Ls3 group employed significantly more interrogatives than all the other groups ((M= 0.47, sd= 0.23, (F(3,136)=23.17, p<0.05)). Ls2 learners employed significantly more interrogatives (M=0.46, sd=0.5) than Ls1 (M=0.17, sd=0.38) and significantly less than Ls3 learners. No difference was attested between NSs (M=0.31, sd=0.47) and the Ls1 group in this respect. Along similar lines, Ls3 learners differed significantly employing more interrogatives than the rest of the groups in Situation 3 (NSs, M=0.29, sd=0.45, Ls1, M=0.17, sd=0.38, Ls2, M=0.32, sd=0.5, Ls3M=0.69, sd= 0.47, (F(3,136)=8.4, p<0.05)). Ls2 employed significantly more interrogatives than Ls1 learners and NSs, but no significant difference was found between the latter two groups.

No instances of the Conditional were attested in the NSs' data in any of these situations. All three learner groups, on the other hand, employed the Conditional, although Ls1 learners' frequencies of use of this mitigator were considerably lower than those of the Ls2 and the Ls3 groups.

Finally, whereas NSs made frequent use of the subjunctive in these symmetrical situations, no instances of this modifier emerged in the learner groups' performance.

In the asymmetrical situations (situations 2 and 4), on the other hand, NSs and the two advanced learner groups (Ls2 and Ls3) employed high frequencies of interrogatives and no significant differences were attested among them in the use of this strategy. In contrast, Ls1 employed significantly less interrogatives than the other three groups (S2: (F(3,136)=27.3, p<0.05)), S4: (F(3,136)=6.14, p<0.05)).
Moreover, Ls1 employed significantly lower frequencies of the Conditional than the other three groups in Situation 2 ((F(3,136)=3.66, p<0.05)).

No instances of Conditional clauses emerged in the Ls1 learners' data in these situations. NSs employed the highest frequency of conditional clauses followed by Ls3 and Ls2 learners, but no important differences were attested among those three groups.

Once again, the subjunctive was used exclusively by the NSs.

To sum up, NSs were found to vary their behaviour in regard to syntactic modification according to the social parameters of the situations. Specifically, they were found to employ considerably more syntactic modifiers in formal than in informal situations.

In contrast, the learner groups' performance did not display such variation. These learners employed similar frequencies of syntactic modifiers irrespective of each situation's social parameters. Furthermore, Ls1 learners employed considerably less modification than the other two learner groups in all the situations under examination. The implications of these findings will be analysed in the Discussion section.

4.1.3. Insistence

In all situations under examination NSs insisted more than the learner groups and differed significantly from them in this respect (see Table 7 in the Appendix for means and standard deviations).

Yet, as shown in Table 7, the NSs displayed a considerably larger amount of insistence in the familiarity situations than in the formal ones.

Specifically, in Situations 1 and 3 (-P, -D), these NSs exhibited an impressive amount of insistence making often two or even three contributions in the direction of convincing their interlocutor to accept the offer. Ls1, on the other hand, rarely many any attempt to insist. Ls2 showed some more insistence than Ls1 in both situations, yet they lagged far behind NSs in this respect. Finally, the advanced learner group's participants (Ls3) insisted more than the earlier learners but much less than NSs. Hence, while no significant differences were attested among the learner groups, all groups, as mentioned above, differed significantly from the NSs (($F(3,136)=89.55$, p<0.05 for Situation 1 and ($F(3,136)=99.1$, p<0.05 for Situation 3)).

In Situations 2 and 4 (+P, +D), on the other hand, most of the NSs made no more than one contribution in the direction of insistence. Ls1 learners' attempts to insist were highly infrequent, while Ls2 and Ls3 learners also showed minimal or no insistence in those situations. Therefore, once again, the NSs differed significantly from the rest of the groups (($F(3,136)=37.42$, p<0.05 for Situation 2 and ($F(3,136)=33.04$, p<0.05 for Situation 4)).

Furthermore, besides the quantitative differences concerning the NSs' insistence in the two different types of situations, as well as the learners' performance in comparison to the NSs', some worth noting qualitative difference emerged in the data. Specifically, the NSs were particularly imposing in both symmetrical situations employing many imperatives and other strategies that implied that they took their interlocutors' acceptance for granted and they would not take 'no' for an answer. In contrast, their insistence in the asymmetrical situations was mild and even reluctant on certain occasions. In those situations, their insistence consisted mainly in trying to confirm the interlocutor's certainty about the refusal or to verify their own willingness to offer.

Examples (1-4) and (5-8) coming from the four groups' data in Situations 1 (-P, -D) and 4 (+P, +D) respectively are indicative of the differences in insistence as well as of some differences in the use of initiative offer strategies and syntactic modification that have been reported in the previous sections.

Situation 1
(1) NSs
A: Μην ανησυχείς! Θα σου τα δείξω εγώ. Το έχω περάσει πρόσφατα, τα θυμάμαι.
    Don't worry! I will explain them to you. I have passed it recently, I remember everything.
B: Ναι καλά, λες και δεν έχεις δικό σου διάβασμα. Θα το παλέψω μόνη μου, μη σε απασχολεί.
    Yeah, right, as if you didn't have your own studying to do. I'll manage on my own, don't worry.
A: Γιατί, ρε παιδί μου; Αφού μπορώ! Δεν είναι τίποτα αυτό, δυο τρεις ωρίτσες να σου δείξω μερικά πράγματα.
    But why, pal? I can help! It's nothing, just a couple of hours to show you some things.
B: Δεν είναι μόνο δυο τρεις. Δεν έχω ιδέα. Μπορεί να πάω να κάνω κανένα ιδιαίτερο.
    It's not just a couple of hours. I am clueless. I may take some private lessons.
A: Καλά, βλακείες. Έλα στο σπίτι αύριο το πρωί να τα δούμε μαζί. Θα πιούμε καφέ και θα σε κάνω ξεφτέρι.
    That's rubbish! Come home tomorrow morning and we will look into them together. We will have coffee and I will make you an expert.
B: Δεν χρειάζεται [θα]
    It's not necessary [I will]
A: [Σε] περιμένω αύριο.
    [I'll] be waiting for you tomorrow.

(2) Ls1
A: Μπορώ να βοηθάω εγώ. Είναι εύκολο.
    I can help. It's easy.
B: Όχι μωρέ, δεν χρειάζεται. Θα τα καταφέρω.
    Nah, it's not necessary. I'll manage.
A: Εντάξει.
    All right.

(3) Ls2
A: Θέλεις να σου βοηθήσω; Γιατί πέρασα το μάθημα.
    Do you want me to help you. I have passed it.
B: Δεν χρειάζεται, θα προσπαθήσω να διαβάσω μόνη μου.
    No need, I will try to study on my own.
A: Θα μπορείς όμως;
    Will you be able to, though?
B: Ναι, ναι μην ανησυχείς, θα τα καταφέρω.
    Yes, don't worry, I will manage.

(4) Ls3
A: Θα ήθελα να σε βοηθήσω εγώ, αν χρειάζεσαι.
    I would like to help you, if you need.
B: Όχι μωρέ, εσύ τα πέρασες. Θα τα καταφέρω μόνη μου.

Nah, you have passed all these. I will manage on my own.

A: Δεν είναι πρόβλημα για μένα.
   It's not a problem.

B: Το ξέρω, ευχαριστώ. Θα διαβάσω μόνη μου και βλέπουμε.
   I know, thank you. I'll study on my own and we'll see.

A: Καλή επιτυχία!
   Good luck!

In example (1), the NS states her initial offer by the highly impositive State future act of speaker strategy (*θα σου τα δείξω εγώ* 'I will explain them to you'). She proceeds to make two more attempts to convince her addressee to accept the offer. Although the exact realisation of reoffers is beyond the focus of this study, it is worth noting that she not only resorts to an imperative in her pre-final contribution (*έλα αύριο στο σπίτι* 'come home tomorrow), but she also wraps up the conversation by actually making the decision for the addressee (*σε περιμένω αύριο* 'I'll be waiting for you tomorrow'). The Ls1 learner in (2), on the other hand, states his initiative offer by means of the State ability strategy and makes no effort to insist, whereas the Ls2 learner in (3) after making her offer by means of the typical for this group Question desire strategy, makes one contribution of insistence (*θα μπορείς όμως;* 'will you be able to though'?). Yet, this particular contribution, as well as some others that emerge in this group's data, could be considered rather inappropriate, since they can be perceived as disputing the addressee's ability to cope, on the one hand, and as an attempt on the part of the offerer to get off the hook rather than a genuine reoffer, on the other. The Ls3 learner in (4), finally, states her offer via the State willingness strategy and makes one attempt to convince her interlocutor to accept it (*δεν είναι πρόβλημα για μένα* 'it's not a problem'). It is worth noting that this learner modifies his offer syntactically by means of the Conditional (*θα ήθελα να σε βοηθήσω* 'I would like to help you') as well as a Conditional clause (*αν χρειάζεσαι* 'if you need') exhibiting thus the typical tendency of the more advanced learner groups to employ high a lot of syntactic modifiers even in familiarity situations.

Situation 4

(5) NSs

A: Να σας πάμε εμείς; Έχω αυτοκίνητο και είμαστε κοντά, αν δεν κάνω λάθος.
   Shall we give you a lift? I have a car and, if I am not mistaken, you live close to my house.

B: Ευχαριστώ, παιδιά, αλλά λέω να περπατήσω λίγο. Καλό θα μου κάνει.
   Thank you, but I was thinking of walking a bit. It will be good for me.

A: Σίγουρα; Δεν θέλω να σας πιέσω, αλλά δεν είναι πρόβλημα.
   Are you sure? I don't mean to push, but it's not a problem at all.

B: Σίγουρα, σίγουρα. Είναι πολύ κοντά έτσι κι αλλιώς. Σας ευχαριστώ όμως.
   Yes, yes positive. It is a very short distance after all. But thanks anyway.

A: Τίποτα. Να είστε καλά!
   Not at all! Be well!

(6) Ls1

A: Θα ήθελα να σας πάω με το αυτοκίνητο. Ξέρω δεν έχετε αυτοκίνητο.
   I would like to give you a lift. I know you don't have a car.

B: Όχι, ευχαριστώ, δεν χρειάζεται. Θα πάω με τα πόδια. Μένω πολύ κοντά.
   No, thank you, it is not necessary. I'll walk. I live near here.
A: Εντάξει. Καληνύχτα σας.
   All right. Good night.
B: Καληνύχτα!
   Goodnight!

(7) Ls2
A: Θα μπορούσαμε να σας πάρουμε με το αυτοκίνητό μου; Ξέρω ότι μένετε κοντά μου.
   Could we give you a lift? I know your place is close to mine.
B: Ευχαριστώ πολύ, αλλά έλεγα να περπατήσω λίγο. Το προτιμώ όταν έχει καλό καιρό.
   Thanks a lot, but I was thinking of walking. I prefer it when the weather is nice.
A: Όπως θέλετε. Ευχαριστώ για τη συζήτηση.
   As you wish. Thanks for talking with me.
B: Εγώ ευχαριστώ. Καλό βράδυ!
   [I] thank you. Have a nice evening!

(8) Ls3
A: Θα θέλατε να σας πάμε στο σπίτι σας; Έχουμε το αυτοκίνητό μου κάτω.
   Would you like use to give you a lift? My car is just outside.
B: Δεν χρειάζεται. Προτιμώ να περπατήσω. Μην σας βάζω και σας σε κόπο.
   It's not necessary. I'd rather walk. And I don't want to trouble you.
A: Δεν είναι καθόλου πρόβλημα, αν θέλετε.
   It's not a problem at all, if you want.
B: Το ξέρω, ευχαριστώ. Θα περπατήσω.
   I know, thank you. I will walk.
A: Εντάξει. Αντίο σας.
   Allright. Goodbye.

As shown in (4), the NS makes his offer for a ride by means of the Question future act of speaker strategy employing the Subjunctive (να σας πάμε εμείς; '[give_subj. you a lift?] shall we give you a lift?'. As already mentioned, this strategy was attested almost exclusively in the NSs' data. After the interlocutor's refusal, this NSs makes one contribution of mild insistence questioning his interlocutor's certainty about the refusal (σίγουρα; 'are you sure?'). Moreover, he proceeds to state explicitly that he does not want to press his interlocutor to accept the offer.

The Ls1 learner in (5), on the other hand, issues his initial offer employing the State willingness strategy, which is in this case modified by a Conditional (θα ήθελα να σας πάω με το αυτοκίνητο 'I would like to give you a lift'). A Conditional is also used in the Ls2 learner's initial offer in (7), who, however, employs the Question ability strategy to make her offer to the Professor. Yet, similarly to the Ls1 learner in (6), no insistence is attested in this learner's data. Finally, the Ls3 learner in (8) having issued her offer by means of the Question desire strategy modified by the Conditional, makes one attempt to insist after the Professor's refusal. Yet, this attempt (δεν είναι καθόλου πρόβλημα, αν θέλετε 'it's not a problem if you want to') is rather weak, especially after the Professor's

statement (*μη σας βάζω κι εσάς σε κόπο* 'and I don't want to trouble you'), which could indicate a degree of willingness on her part to accept the offer after all.

4.2. *Verbal reports*

The retrospective reports of the participants were analysed according to the subjects' responses to the interview questions with respect to the following parameters: a) the learners' focus of attention during the refusal interaction (cognition), b) the goals that the learners' tried to accomplish by means of their performance (intentions), c) the learners' perceptions as to the degree of difficulty they faced and the appropriateness of their own answers (evaluation).

4.2.1. Cognition: Learners' focus of attention

The basic prompt for the elicitation of the cognitive information that learners attended to during the interaction was the question "What were you paying attention to when you offered in this situation?"

The NSs stated that social parameters was their main concern in all situations (94%). They pointed out that they felt that offers towards a friend "could not be the same as offers towards a superior" (NS#11). Therefore, those NSs claimed that their focus of attention was on "using the appropriate language according to their interlocutor" (NS#3).

The majority of Ls1 learners (89%) stated that they focused on grammar and vocabulary, as well as making sure that their interlocutors understood that they tried to offer something to them. The following comments coming from this group's data are characteristic:

(1) Ls1#2 on S2
I had to struggle to find the right words. How do you speak to your boss in Greek?

(2) Ls1#16
I was preoccupied with forming correct sentences and at the same time make the   other person understand I was trying to be helpful.

Although Ls2 learners also stated that they had to pay a lot of attention to grammar and vocabulary, they emphasised that they understood they had to adjust their offering style to the social parameters of the different situations. Yet, they seemed to be more concerned about asymmetrical than symmetrical situations, as indicated by the following comments on situations (2) and (4):

(3) Ls2#6 on situations 2 and 4
I had to choose the proper grammar carefully. But I felt I needed more grammar for those (pointing to situations 2 and 4), because it is different with a person you don't know well. It must be different with your boss and your Professor.

Ls3 learners, finally, did not make any mention of special attention to grammar (79%). Most of them stated that their main focus of attention was on what was offered in each situation, as well as on social roles.

4.2.2. Intentions: Learners' goals

In exploring the learners' intentions the main prompt was the question "What were you trying to achieve by saying what you said?"

All NSs agreed that they mainly tried to convince their interlocutor that their offer was genuine and that they were committed to it. They pointed out that this was of utmost importance in Situations 1 and 3 "because these people are supposed to be my friends and, therefore, I really mean to do these things for them" (NS#14).

For Ls1 learners finding the right language to express their offers and make clear that they were offering appeared to be the major concern (94%). The following comment coming from their interviews is characteristic:

(4) Ls1#9 on all offer situations
I felt I lacked a lot of vocabulary to do this right. I said 'I can do it' in most of them, but I have no idea if my meaning got across. Would a Greek person understand I was trying to help? I have no idea.

In their majority, Ls2 (80%) and Ls3 (89%) learners said that their main intention was to 'be polite', especially in S2 and S4. Examples of their responses are the following:

(5) Ls2#3 on situation 2
I wanted to offer without offending my boss. I didn't want to sound superior or arrogant or anything like that. I tried to be as polite as possible.

(6) Ls3#5 on situations 2 and 4
I tried to show the other person I was trying to help. I opted for asking politely if my help was needed.

Regarding S1 and S3, Ls2 and Ls3 learners also mentioned trying 'to be polite', but a large percentage, especially of Ls3 learners (67%), mentioned that they also tried to sound as 'friendly' as possible. The following comment is indicative of this attitude:

(7) Ls3#14 on situations 1 and 3
 (pointing to situations 2 and 4) I knew I had to sound more friendly in those, more ready to help. I don't know if I succeeded. It was kind of difficult.

4.2.3. Evaluation: Degree of difficulty and appropriateness

The questions employed as prompts to elicit the learners' perceptions on the difficulty of the task at hand and the appropriateness of their responses were: "How difficult did you find it to answer?", "Are you satisfied with your answers?" and "Are you satisfied with

how much you insisted?". The participants' answers to those particular questions were the ones that provided the most valuable insights for the interpretation of the data.

Ls1, in their majority, stated that they had many difficulties in realising their offers. They felt that they did not posses all the language that they could use and also found that their offers might have sounded rude or 'abrupt'. Moreover, they stated that they were not sure if what they said actually 'counted as offering' in Greek.

In contrast, both Ls2 and Ls3 reported that they found it easier to realise offers than other speech acts in the questionnaire. They stated that they were pretty happy with their answers and found that they "probably did not make many mistakes". Yet, a small percentage of Ls3 learners (27%) expressed some concerns about the appropriateness of the language they used in each of the situations. These concerns are reflected in the following comments:

(8) Ls3#10 comparing situations 1 and 2
This one is kind of different from that one. I used the same language in both. I don't know if this was correct. But I didn't know what else to do.

(9) Ls3#3 on situation 3
You see I asked if I could help. Maybe I should tell him (the friend) that I would help without asking. But I am not sure if this is polite in Greek.

With respect to insistence, Ls2 stated that they probably had to insist more in all situations, but they did not know: a) how to do it politely and b) if that would be appropriate in Greek. Yet, they made clear that they were "too busy trying to speak correct Greek" and, therefore, they did not give much thought to insistence in any of the situations. Ls3, on the other hand, pointed out that insistence had been a problem for them in all situations and especially in S2 and S4. They reported that they did not really know what is done under these circumstances in Greek. Many of them admitted to have avoided insisting out of fear that insistence would be inappropriate towards a superior in that context.

Finally, NSs reported that they could not possibly insist more in S2 and S4, since that would sound "too pressing " or even "subservient" to a superior. However, they stated that both S1 and S3 could afford a lot of insistence, since it was important that their friends understood they were really willing to help them.

5. Discussion

This section discusses the results of the study according to the research questions posed in Section 2 and involved the differences observed among the different groups in initiative offer strategy selection, syntactic modification and insistence as well the developmental patterns observed in the learners' data. The discussion involves group-level analyses and takes into consideration the participants' verbal reports.

5.1. *Initiative offer strategies*

As was shown in Section 4, the NSs realised their initial offers mainly by means of IMPs in the two symmetrical situations (S1 and S3), whereas they preferred CI strategies in the two asymmetrical ones (S2 and S4). This behaviour indicates that it is not the nature of the offer (offer for help or hospitable offer), but the social parameters of the situation that mainly influence these NSs' performance as regards initial offer strategy selection. This finding is also reinforced by the NSs' verbal reports.

In terms of the two symmetrical situations, it appears that, when offering either help or hospitality to a friend, the NSs of this sample did not seem to feel that they had to question their addressee's desires. Instead they assumed to know them and, thus, they employed strategies that emphasised this common ground between themselves and the addressee. This finding is, therefore, in accord with Sifianou's (1992a) observations on Greek offers reported in section 2.1. It is characteristic that certain IMPs, like the Imperative and the State future act of hearer strategy, were attested exclusively in the two symmetrical situations in the NSs' data. Belonging to the highest level of the imposition continuum these strategies were considered appropriate for those familiarity situations. Therefore, the behaviour of the NSs in situations 1 and 3 is a typical manifestation of the well-documented Greek positive politeness orientation (see e.g. Sifianou 1992b; Pavlidou 1994; Antonopoulou & Sifianou 2003; Bella 2009) indicating the importance attached to interdependence and solidarity (see Sifianou 1992a: 63). It appears then that negative face considerations are not an issue for Greeks in these situations and that the speakers' main aim is the enhancement of the addressee's positive face by means of stressing the speaker's commitment to the offer.

In the two asymmetrical situations (S2 and S4), on the other hand, the NSs appeared more inclined to emphasise the conditional nature of their offers by employing significantly more CIs than IMPs. This was probably due to the social nature of those situations which involved both distance and hierarchy that made it hard for these speakers to assume any kind of common ground between themselves and a hierarchically superior and unfamiliar addressee. This attitude is reflected in the NSs' verbal reports and highlighted by the finding that the State ability was their most frequent strategy in S2 and the second most frequent in S4. It appears that in these asymmetrical situations the NSs of this study opted for the most indirect of indirect strategies, one that comes closer to a hint than a question.

As regards the Ls1 learners' performance in the symmetrical situations, it could be claimed that they approximated NSs more closely than any other learner group, since they employed higher frequencies of IMPs than the more advanced groups. Yet, this would be a false impression, since Ls1 learners exhibited rather high frequencies of IMPs in the asymmetrical situations as well, i.e. in those situations in which NSs showed a marked preference towards CI strategies. Moreover, if one looks closely into the use of IMP substrategies by Ls1 and compare them to the ones employed by NSs important differences emerge. Specifically, in both symmetrical situations these early learners exhibited considerable frequencies of two IMP strategies that do not appear at all in the NSs' data: State willingness and State ability. Indeed, a construction of the type (*θέλω να σε βοηθήσω* 'I want to help you') would sound rather awkward in the context of an offer in Greek, since it appears to highlight the offerer's rather than the addressee's needs. The State ability strategy, on the other hand, emerges mainly in the

asymmetrical situations in the NSs' data, i.e. in those situations in which NSs opted for conventional indirectness as a rule and, therefore, it is subject to situational variation.

Hence, I suggest that the use of these particular strategies by Ls1 in the symmetrical situations does not aim to strategically highlight commitment and solidarity. Rather, consisting in simple declarative utterances that are not grammatically demanding they reflect the limited syntactic means that these early learners have at their disposal for expressing their offers. This view is reinforced by the fact that these strategies seem to be relinquished by the learners as proficiency increases giving their place to conventional indirectness. Therefore, the findings of this study suggest that the use of such grammatically simple expressions by early learners does not reflect a strategic tendency towards directness, but a developmental stage that poses restrictions to those learners' sociopragmatic competence.[4] Ls1 learners' verbal reports confirmed this conclusion.

A similar claim can be made in relation to the NCI strategies (hints), which, as shown in the Results section, appeared exclusively in the Ls1 data and were found to decline with proficiency. This finding is in line with previous research findings on the development of requests (Bella 2012; Hassall 2003; Trosborg 1995) and suggests that these early NCI offers are not employed strategically to serve indirectness, but probably have a compensatory function aiming at balancing these learners' lack of proper pragmalinguistic means (cf. Trosborg 1995: 228-233).

As already mentioned, the fact that Ls1 learners employed similar strategies in both the symmetrical and the asymmetrical situations reflects limited pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic competence on their part and renders their performance deviant from both NSs and the rest of the learner groups in all the situations under examination.

Unlike NSs and Ls1, Ls2 and Ls3 learners were found to strongly favour CI strategies and employ impressively few IMPs in all situations. Therefore, no situational variation was attested in those groups' data. This preference for CIs can be interpreted as a manifestation of the general tendency of more advanced learners to employ indirectness as proficiency increases and learners manage to acquire linguistic means, like interrogative constructions, which allow them to be conventionally indirect (see e.g. Bella 2012, 2014; Félix-Brasdefer 2007; Hassall 2003). It appears that these speakers are eager to use more complex grammatical forms and at the same time take advantage of those forms' more obvious politeness effect. This type of development can be beneficial in the case of other speech acts, like requests and refusals, since it can bring the learners closer to the NS norm (see Bella 2012, 2014). Yet, in the case of offers and of the particular situations under examination, it renders their performance significantly divergent from the NS norm.

Moreover, although the more advanced learners employed more complex grammatical means that indicate grammatical and pragmalinguistic development, such as the Question need strategy that involves the use of the verb *χρειάζομαι* ('to need'), strategies like Question future act of speaker were completely absent from their data. This finding can be attributed to the use of the Subjunctive by means of which the Question future act of speaker strategy is manifested in the data and will be discussed in the following subsection. Yet, with the possible exception of this strategy it cannot be claimed   that   limited   pragmalinguistic   competence   restricts   these   learners'

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[4] For similar findings in relation to the development of other speech acts, see Takahashi & Beebe 1987; Félix-Brasdefer 2007; Bella 2012, 2014).

sociopragmatic competence as is the case in other speech acts, like requests and refusals (Bella 2012, 2014).

The developmental pattern that the learners of this study exhibit suggests that they indeed have acquired almost all the pragmalinguistic means to perform their initial offers in a native-like manner in these particular situations. What they lack, is the sociopragmatic knowledge that would allow them to make informed pragmalinguistic choices appropriate for each particular situation. Therefore, it is suggested here that it is lack of adequate and appropriate pragmatic input that causes these intermediate and advanced learners' divergence from the NS norm. It appears that lack of such input deprives those learners of the potential to express the solidarity and commitment characterizing the NSs' performance in familiarity situations.

5.2. *Syntactic modification*

As shown in the Results section, the NSs were found to employ considerably more syntactic modifiers in the asymmetrical situations, than in the symmetrical ones. These increased frequencies of syntactic modifiers were mainly due to the extensive use of interrogatives via which the CI strategies they employed in the asymmetrical situations were manifested. Therefore, for these speakers the use of syntactic modifiers was subject to situational variation and was strongly connected with their preferences in initiative offer strategy use. As already mentioned, hierarchy and distance appeared to be factors that led these NSs to more tentativeness in the expression of their offers.

Ls2 and Ls3 learners, on the other hand, did not exhibit such variation. They were found to employ considerably higher frequencies of syntactic modification than the NSs in all situations, irrespective of social parameters. The fact that lower intermediate learners exhibited significantly lower frequencies of syntactic modification means than the other learner groups in all situations indicates that proficiency brings with it significant development of grammatical and pragmalinguistic means.

As already mentioned, the two more advanced learner groups (Ls2 and Ls3) expressed their offers via CI strategies in all situations. This led to increased frequencies of the Interrogative in their data. Moreover, unlike the NSs, these learners exhibited impressively high frequencies of the Conditional in all situations. Specifically, Ls1 and Ls2 learners were found to use the Conditional with various initiative offer strategies, like State willingness (*θα ήθελα να (σας) βοηθήσω* 'I would [lit. want] like to help (you)'), Question desire (*θα θέλατε να (σας) βοηθήσω;* 'would you [lit. want] like me to help (you)?'), Question ability (*θα μπορούσα να (σας) βοηθήσω;* 'could I help (you)') and less frequently with the State ability (*θα μπορούσα να (σας) βοηθήσω* 'I could I help (you)') in both symmetrical and asymmetrical situations.

In contrast, the NSs employed this modifier considerably less frequently and only with the State ability strategy in the asymmetrical situations. For the rest of the strategies they opted for the present indicative (e.g. *θέλετε να σας πάμε;* 'do you want us to give you a lift?', *μπορώ να βοηθήσω;* 'can I help?'). This difference can receive different interpretations which are not mutually exclusive: First, it could be claimed that the learners tend to overgeneralise formulaic request expressions, like *θα ήθελα* ('I would like') and *θα μπορούσα...;* ('could I…?') which are marked for tentativeness and which have been found to be acquired rather early (see Bella 2012). It appears that these

learners employ the Conditional in order to fulfill their primary communicative goal which, according to their verbal reports, is to be polite. Second, the extensive use of the Conditional by intermediate and advanced learners could be attributed to the typical learners' eagerness to employ more complex grammatical means as the level of proficiency increases and learners manage to acquire this type of means (see also Bella 2012, 2014).

NSs, on the other hand, cared to emphasise the certainty of their willingness to commit to the offer. To this end, they opted for the present indicative. Hence, it could be suggested that the NSs' use of the present indicative, especially in the offers expressed by means of interrogatives, has a compensatory function in the sense that it creates some balance between the conditional and the commissive nature of those offers and allows these NSs to sound indirect in the asymmetrical situations and to express the typical for the Greek society positive politeness at the same time.

Yet, although the increased use of interrogatives and conditionals as well as the increased use of conditional clauses as proficiency increased indicates grammatical development, it did not lead to native-like pragmatic effects in the case of offers.

On the contrary, it caused intermediate and advanced learners to diverge from the NS norm as regards the use of syntactic modifiers, especially in the symmetrical situations, and created distancing effects that bring them close to pragmatic failure.

Finally, the Subjunctive by means of which the Question future act of speaker strategy was realised in the data was found to be the only type of syntactic modifiers which was used considerably more frequently by the NSs than by the learners. The use of the subjunctive in interrogative constructions like the one realising the Question future act of speaker strategy is rather idiosyncratic in Greek. Although the subjunctive usually complements modal verbs like *θέλω* 'can' and *μπορώ* 'want', in interrogative constructions realising requests or offers the subjunctive can also be used without a modal. Both Pavlidou (1986) and Sifianou (1992b) acknowledge that there is an affinity between the use of the imperative and the use of the subjunctive in such constructions. Yet, according to Sifianou (1992b: 143), there is "an element of doubt and uncertainty sometimes implicit in subjunctives which is absent from imperatives". Furthermore, in her discussion on the use of the subjunctive in requests, Sifianou agrees with Pavlidou (1986) that "requests utilizing subjunctive constructions sound a little more formal than those with imperatives, but appear less formal than other constructions" (1992b: 143). I suggest that a similar claim can be made for the use of the subjunctive in offers. Yet, although the subjunctive is rather complex morphologically, it cannot be claimed that its absence from the more advanced learner groups' (Ls2 and Ls3) data is due to inadequate grammatical competence. On the contrary, these learners seem perfectly capable to use the subjunctive in constructions in which it complements modal verbs. Therefore, this finding can only be attributed to these learners' lack of adequate and appropriate sociopragmatic input which comes as a consequence of their foreign learner status. Being rather formulaic and employed in everyday conversations the Question future act of speaker (via the subjunctive) strategy is not the kind of construction that foreign language learners are likely to come across.

Therefore, it can be suggested, that in the case of syntactic modifiers, like in the case of initiative offer strategies, these learners' divergent performance should mainly be attributed to lack of adequate sociopragmatic knowledge.

5.3. *Insistence*

As was shown in section 4, the NSs varied their behaviour in relation to insistence according to the social parameters of the situations. Although they showed some insistence in all situations, their insistence was markedly increased in the symmetrical ones. Specifically, these speakers made at least one, but rarely more than one, contribution in the direction of insistence in situations 2 and 4, whereas they displayed multiple contributions of insistence in situations 1 and 3. Moreover, their insistence was qualitatively stronger and more imposing in the two symmetrical situations, whereas it was mild and often reluctant in the asymmetrical ones. The participants' verbal reports were found to be particularly enlightening in regard to their behaviour concerning insistence. It turned out that Greek NSs consider it necessary to insist on offers, yet the degree of insistence they employ appears to be subject to the particular social parameters of each situation. They considered insisting more than they did inappropriate in situations 2 and 4, but deemed heavy insistence to be the optimal behaviour in situations 1 and 3, since they felt that they had to convince their friend for their commitment to the offer.

All learner groups, on the other hand, differed significantly than the NSs showing considerably less insistence in all the situations under examination.

Lower intermediate learners (Ls1) were found to demonstrate a marked lack of insistence in all situations. As suggested by their verbal reports, this finding can be attributed to insufficient grammatical and pragmalinguistic means and lack of adequate sociopragmatic knowledge.

In spite of the fact that Ls2 and Ls3 learners displayed more insistence than the Ls1 learners, the fact that the degree of their insistence was equally low in both symmetrical and asymmetrical situations indicates that, although their grammatical and pragmalinguistic means have developed allowing them to have more extensive interaction, there is no sociopragmatic awareness on their part as to the degree of insistence that would be appropriate for each particular situation.

Therefore, irrespective of their level of proficiency, the learners of this study were found to lag far behind NSs in respect to the degree of insistence they displayed in all situations, but especially in the symmetrical ones. Yet, this hardly comes as a surprise considering that insistence in the realisation of certain speech acts like invitations and offers is a culture-specific phenomenon. Being FL learners, the learners of this study do not have the opportunities to be exposed to adequate relevant input that would allow them to observe and notice patterns of insistence in different offer situations. Moreover, the input that they are mainly exposed to, i.e. teaching materials is characterised by a marked lack of concern for the adequate presentation of several speech acts including offers. A systematic study of 15 textbooks for teaching Greek as an L2 to beginner and intermediate learners produced between 2000 and 2015 showed that only a couple of offers emerge in the dialogues of the total of these textbooks. Moreover, the fact that none of those offers was refused in the context of those particular dialogues eliminated the learners' opportunities to study patterns of insistence to zero.

5.4. *Developmental patterns and interplay of grammatical and sociopragmatic competence.*

Although no definite claims can be made with respect to concrete developmental stages, the findings of this study point to certain developmental patterns in the learners' performance of offers that approximate to some extent the stages proposed for the development of requests (Ellis 1992; Achiba 2003) and refusals (Bella 2014). Specifically, the performance of lower intermediate learners was characterised by a tendency towards direct and rather simple declarative utterances as well as limited syntactic modification. Moreover, their performance did not appear to attend to specific relational goals since they employed similar strategies irrespective of the situations' social parameters. As confirmed by their verbal reports, those strategies mainly aimed at grammatical "correctness" and clarity. Therefore, these learners' performance invoked a "basic stage" of development (see Ellis 1992; Achiba 2003) characterised by rather simple grammar and a marked tendency towards clarity. Intermediate (Ls2) and advanced (Ls3) learners' performance, on the other hand, was found to display the main characteristics of the "unpacking" and the "pragmatic expansion" stages: A shift towards conventional indirectness, emergence of new pragmalinguistic forms, more complex syntax and increased use of mitigation (see Ellis 1992; Achiba 2003; Bella 2014).

Moreover, the findings of this study provide support to Kasper and Rose's (2002: 174) contention that early learners tend to rely on the pragmatic mode when performing action in the L2, since they have not yet acquired the grammatical resources available to more expert speakers. That is, early language learners make do with the means they have at their disposal forming at the same time their own rules concerning form-function mappings, until new linguistic elements allowing them to restructure such mappings enter their interlanguage system. However, as proficiency increases and more complex and sophisticated grammatical and pragmalinguistic means are acquired, the learners tend to rely more on the grammatical mode and attempt to serve relational goals such as politeness. The increased use of conventional indirectness and syntactic modification by the intermediate and advanced levels of this study reinforce this claim.

Furthermore, although the developmental differences attested between the more advanced learner groups (intermediate and advanced), were not significant in regard to all the strategies examined here, the increase in syntactic modifiers displayed from the intermediate to the advanced level point towards grammatical and pragmalinguistic development.

One of the most interesting findings of the study, is that at from the intermediate level onwards the learners seem to have access to similar strategies with NSs to perform their offers. Therefore, unlike what appears to hold true for the development of requests and refusals in Greek (see Bella 2012, 2014 respectively), it cannot be claimed that grammatical development poses important restrictions to pragmatic development in the performance of offers. That is, the divergence observed in this study between NSs' and learners' performance cannot be attributed to the latter's lack of adequate grammatical means. It seems, however, that in the case of offers grammatical development has a different effect. That is, the overuse of complex grammatical means that increased proficiency brings with it seems to take learners further from the native speaker norm, especially in familiarity situations. Therefore, it can be suggested that, in the case of offers, grammatical development hinders sociopragmatic development to some extent.

Moreover, even the advanced learners of this study were found to lag far behind NSs with respect to the purely sociopragmatic mechanism of insistence. As mentioned before, this does not come as a surprise, since these FL learners are not exposed to the type of input that will allow them to notice the different degrees of insistence different social situations can afford in Greek.

Therefore, it can be suggested that the findings of this study lend support to Bialystok's (1993) two-dimensional model of language use and proficiency, according to which, in the adult acquisition of pragmatic competence the major task is to achieve control over pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic knowledge, whereas the acquisition of new pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic representations is considered "a relatively small problem" (Bialystok 1993: 54). Although, for these learners, some pragmalinguistic means like the use of the Subjunctive to perform offers are still to be acquired, it appears that what is mainly needed is the sociopragmatic input that will aid them make socioculturally appropriate form-function mappings. Yet, this can only be considered a preliminary conclusion, since this study was subject to certain limitations, the most important of which involved the limited number of participants and the situations under examination, as well as the "semi-authentic nature" of role play data. Moreover, the interviews conducted were small-scale, elicited from a limited number of participants.   Therefore, the evidence drawn from the present study needs to be further confirmed and reinforced by more cross-sectional and longitudinal studies.

6. Conclusions

This study attempted to investigate developmental patterns in the performance of Greek FL learners when making offers in different situations.

Overall, some effects of development were observed with increasing proficiency both in terms of initiative offer strategies and to the use of syntactic modifiers. Specifically, in accordance with previous studies on individual speech acts development, it was found that increasing proficiency brings with it a movement from directness to conventional indirectness and a more extended repertoire of syntactic modification devices.

Yet, it was shown that the grammatical and pragmalinguistic complexity exhibited in the learners' performance as proficiency increased was not subject to the situational variation attested in the NSs' data. Whereas the NSs' of this study use of conventional indirectness and syntactic modification was attested mainly in asymmetrical situations, the intermediate and advanced learners employed high frequencies of both in all situations irrespective of social parameters. Therefore, these learners were not able to handle the familiarity situations under examination in a native-like manner. Hence, it appears that in the case of offers grammatical development posed certain obstacles to sociopragmatic development. Yet, unlike in the case of other speech acts, it was not the lack of adequate grammatical development that posed this obstacles, but the overgeneralisation of complex grammatical means in situations where NSs opted for simpler and more direct structures.

Moreover, the significant differences attested between learners and NSs in relation to insisting on offers, indicates that the lack of adequate and appropriate

sociopragmatic input typical in FL contexts poses further restrictions to FL learners sociopragmatic development.

Against this backdrop, it was suggested that the findings of this study lend a great deal of support to Bialystok's (1993) model of pragmatic acquisition as well as to the claim that "high levels of grammatical competence do not guarantee concomitant levels of pragmatic competence" (Bardovi-Harlig 1999: 686).

Finally, an obvious implication of this study concerns the systematic and explicit teaching of sociopragmatic phenomena the effectiveness of which has already been documented in the case of various speech acts (see e.g. Bacelar da Silva 2003; Fernández Guerra & Martínez Flor 2006; Kondo 2008; Langer 2013). It is suggested here that the learners of the present study would benefit by a teaching approach involving authentic and/ or research-based input and activities aiming at raising learners' sociopragmatic awareness, would facilitate FL learners' ability to make informed pragmatic choices that would allow them to express their offers in an appropriate and successful manner.

APPENDIX

Table 2: Overall distribution of strategies by the four groups in Situations 1 and 2.

	Situation 1 (-P, -D)								Situation 2 (+P, +D)							
	NSs		Ls1		Ls2		Ls3		NSs		Ls1		Ls2		Ls3	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Imperative	3	8,6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
State future act of hearer	8	22,9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
State permission	1	2,9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
State future act of speaker	12	34,3	7	20	3	8,6	2	5,7	2	5,7	7	20	0	0	2	5,7
State willingness	0	0	9	25,7	0	0	0	0	0	0	9	25,7	0	0	3	8,6
Total IMPs	**24**	**68,6**	**16**	**45,7**	**3**	**8,6**	**2**	**5,7**	**2**	**5,7**	**16**	**45,7**	**0**	**0**	**5**	**14,3**
Question future act of speaker	9	25,7	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	11,4	0	0	0	0	0	0
Question desire	2	5,7	5	14,3	15	42,9	15	42,9	5	14,3	4	11,4	15	42,9	12	34,3
Question need	0	0	0	0	1	2,9	9	25,7	4	11,4	0	0	3	8,6	4	11,4
Question ability	0	0	1	2,9	10	28,6	9	25,7	3	8,6	1	2,9	8	22,9	10	28,6
State ability	0	0	9	25,7	6	17,1	0	0	17	48,6	9	25,7	6	17,1	4	11,4
Total CI	**11**	**31,4**	**15**	**42,9**	**32**	**91,4**	**33**	**94,3**	**33**	**94,3**	**14**	**40**	**32**	**91,4**	**30**	**85,7**
Hint	0	0	4	11,4	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	14,3	3	8,6	0	0
Total NCI	**0**	**0**	**4**	**11,4**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**5**	**14,3**	**3**	**8,6**	**0**	**0**

Total strategies	35	100	35	100	35	100	35	100	35	100	35	100	35	100	35	100

Table 3: Overall distribution of strategies by the four groups in Situations 3 and 4.

	Situation 3 (-P, -D)								Situation 4 (+P, +D)							
	NSs		Ls1		Ls2		Ls3		NSs		Ls1		Ls2		Ls3	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Imperative	10	28,6	0	0,0	4	11,4	6	17,1	1	2,9	0	0	0	0	1	2,9
State future act of hearer	7	20	2	5,7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
State permission	0	0	0	0	5	14,3	3	8,6	0	0	4	11,4	1	2,9	3	8,6
State future act of speaker	8	22,9	11	31,4	2	5,7	1	2,9	2	5,7	9	25,7	5	14,3	2	5,7
State willingness	0	0	6	17,1	0	0	0	0	0	0	6	17,1	3	8,6	0	0
Total IMPs	**25**	**71,4**	**19**	**54,3**	**11**	**31,4**	**10**	**28,6**	**3**	8,6	**19**	54,3	**9**	25,7	**6**	17,1
Question future act of speaker	5	14,3	0	0	0	0	2	5,7	9	25,7	3	8,6	0	0	2	5,7
Question desire	5	14,3	8	22,9	16	45,7	21	60	12	34,3	2	5.7	14	40	16	45,7
Question need	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	2,9	0	0
Question ability	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	8,6	4	11,4	6	17,1
State ability	0	0	7	20,0	8	22,9	2	5,7	11	31,4	4	11,4	5	14,3	5	14,3
Total CI	**10**	**28,6**	**15**	**42,9**	**24**	**68,6**	**25**	**71,4**	**32**	91,4	**12**	34,3	**24**	68,6	**29**	82,9
Hint	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	11,4	2	5,7	0	0
Total NCI	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**4**	**11,4**	**2**	**5,7**	**0**	**0**
Total strategies	35	100	35	100	35	100	35	100	35	100	35	100	35	100	35	100

Table 4: Means and standard deviations for the use of IMP and CI strategies by the four groups in the four situations.

	Situation 1 (-P, -D)				Situation 2 (+P, +D)				Situation 3 (-P, -D)				Situation 4 (+P, +D)			
	IMPs		CI		IMPs		CI		IMPs		CI		IMPs		CI	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
NSs	0.69	0.47	0.31	0.47	0.06	0.23	0.94	0.23	0.69	0.47	0.20	0.45	0.09	0.28	0.91	0.28
Ls1	0.46	0.5	0.43	0.5	0.46	0.5	0.4	0.49	0.66	0.48	0.34	0.48	0.57	0.5	0.34	0.48
Ls2	0.09	0.28	0.91	0.28	0	0	0.91	0.28	0.31	0.47	0.69	0.47	0.26	0.44	0.69	0.47
Ls3	0.06	0.23	0.94	0.23	0.17	0.38	0.83	0.38	0.29	0.45	0.71	0.45	0.17	0.38	0.83	0.38

Table 5: Distribution of syntactic modifiers by the four groups in situations 1 and 2

	Situation 1 (-P, -D)								Situation 2 (+P, +D)							
	NSs		Ls1		Ls2		Ls3		NSs		Ls1		Ls2		Ls3	
	n	*%*	*n*	*%*	*n*	*%*	*n*	*%*	*n*	*%*	*n*	*%*	*n*	*%*	*n*	*%*
Interrogative	11	47,8	6	50	16	53,3	33	76,7	33	55	5	55,6	24	57,1	26	59,1
Conditional clause	3	13,0	1	8,3	5	16,7	2	4,7	10	16,7	0	0	4	9,5	6	13,6
Conditional	0	0	5	41,7	9	30	8	18,6	13	21,7	4	44.4	14	33,3	12	27,3
Subjunctive	9	39,1	0	0	0	0	0	0	4	6,7	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total syntactic modifiers	**23**	**100**	**12**	**100**	**30**	**100**	**43**	**100**	**60**	**100**	**9**	**100**	**42**	**100**	**44**	**100**

Table 6: Distribution of syntactic modifiers by the four groups in situations 3 and 4

	Situation 3 (-P, -D)								Situation 4 (+P, +D)							
	NSs		Ls1		Ls2		Ls3		NSs		Ls1		Ls2		Ls3	
	n	*%*	*n*	*%*	*n*	*%*	*n*	*%*	*n*	*%*	*n*	*%*	*n*	*%*	*n*	*%*
Interrogative	10	66,7	6	60	16	48,5	23	62,2	21	53,8	8	61,5	19	54,3	24	55,8
Conditional clause	0	0	0	0	9	27,3	2	5,4	6	15,4	1	7,7	7	20	8	18,6
Conditional	0	0	4	40	8	24,2	10	27,0	3	7,7	4	30,8	9	25,7	9	20,9
Subjunctive	5	33,3	0	0	0	0	2	5,4	9	23,1	0	0	0	0	2	4,7
Total syntactic modifiers	**15**	**100**	**10**	**100**	**33**	**100**	**37**	**100**	**39**	**100**	**13**	**100**	**35**	**100**	**43**	**100**

Table 7: Means and standard deviations of degree of insistence employed by the four groups across the four situations.

	Situation 1 (-P, -D)		Situation 2 (+P, +D)		Situation 3 (-P, -D)		Situation 4 (+P, +D)	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
NSs	2.2	0.71	0.94	0.41	2.31	0.61	1	0.42
Ls1	0.17	0.45	0.06	0.23	0.2	0.47	0.11	0.32
Ls2	0.43	0.55	0.11	0.32	0.37	0.54	0.14	0.35
Ls3	0.49	0.56	0.23	0.54	0.51	0.56	0.29	0.57

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