



2010

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### Recommended Citation

Frank, Victor (2010) "Adult Learners' Perspectives on the Acquisition of L2 Russian Pragmatic Competence," *Russian Language Journal*: Vol. 60: Iss. 1, Article 5.

Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/rlj/vol60/iss1/5>

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## **Adult Learners' Perspectives on the Acquisition of L2 Russian Pragmatic Competence**

*Victor Frank*

### **Introduction**

Decades of research have highlighted the central role that instruction, interaction, and feedback play in the acquisition of a foreign or second language, whether in the classroom or in naturalistic contexts, particularly in the domain of interlanguage grammar. The role that these factors play in the acquisition of interlanguage pragmatics has come under rigorous investigation only in the last decade (Barron 2002). In this article, I will discuss the degree to which adult learners of Russian acquire native-like pragmatic competence, and present their own unique perspectives on its acquisition, both in the domestic classroom and during study abroad.

### **Background**

The present article stems from the American Council of Teachers of Russian/National Foreign Language Center studies of gains in L2 Russian proficiency during study abroad in Russia and the former Soviet Union (Brecht, Davidson, and Ginsberg 1993; Brecht and Robinson 1993). These studies, using L2 proficiency scores, language learning histories and demographic data, time/place maps, and interview data from over 600 study-abroad sojourners, established the key predictors of in-country proficiency gain and the optimal conditions under which such gain occurs. For example, multiple regression analyses highlighted the significant role that the learner's L2 grammar knowledge plays in listening, reading, and speaking proficiency gains (Brecht, Davidson, and Ginsberg 1993). Additionally, Brecht and Robinson (1993) determined through analyses of the time/place data concerning language use that the learners who made the greatest proficiency gains were those who spent the most out-of-class time speaking Russian with close and sympathetic native-speaker interlocutors; for example, caretakers, such as boyfriends, girlfriends, or host family members. This last finding in particular highlighted the need for

future studies of how contextual factors of linguistic interaction (for example, social distance) influence L2 acquisition in naturalistic contexts.

Following the initial studies of listening, reading, and speaking proficiency gain, Frank (2002, 2009), Owen (2002), and Shardakova (2007) focused more narrowly on the acquisition of target language pragmatic competence by L2 Russian learners by investigating their production of target language speech acts.<sup>1</sup> Frank (2002, 2009) analyzed L2 and native Russian requests, using a triangulation of data collection methods: (a) the collection and analysis of speakers' performance of the speech act of request in role-play situations, varying by contextual factors (social distance, relative power, and degree of imposition)<sup>2</sup>; (b) the examination of non-native speakers' individual characteristics potentially related to differences in speech act performance, including personal background and target language proficiency data; and (c) the collection and analysis of retrospective interviews with non-native speaker participants concerning their planning, performing, and assessment of the role-plays.<sup>3</sup> The analyses drew a picture of the non-native speakers' state of second-language pragmatic competence, and shed light on the factors associated with the development of this competence.

Frank (2002, 2009) found a few weak between-group differences by contextual factors on the levels of text size and request move choice. However, large between-group differences were found on the level of sentence-level internal modifications, especially concerning the use of grammatical voice and 2<sup>nd</sup> person (interlocutor) reference. Significant between-group differences were also found in minimal social distance situations where speakers made requests of friends or peers; in these situations, L2 Russian speakers inserted several justifying statements before the request compared to native speakers, who were much more direct. Additionally, a strong within-group correlation was found between the learners' grammatical competence and their use of pragmatically significant sentence-level morphosyntactic features. In other words, a non-native

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<sup>1</sup> Other, related studies of L2 Russian learning during study abroad investigated acquisition of verbal aspect (Boots-Ebenfield 1995) and metalinguistic processes that predict proficiency gain (Golonka 2000, 2006).

<sup>2</sup> For definitions of the contextual factors, derived from Brown and Levinson (1987) and Hudson, Detmer, et al. (1995), see Appendix A.

<sup>3</sup> While the triangulation of data cannot pretend to present an objectively true picture of the situation addressed by the research (due at least in part to the multiple artifacts of the data), the use of multiple sources of data may strengthen the validity of certain interpretations by including the participants' perspectives (Silverman 1993).

speaker's grammar score well-predicted the proportion of that individual's moves marked for interlocutor reference; the higher the grammar score, the greater proportion of moves including an interlocutor reference,  $r_s = .52$  ( $n = 23$ ),  $p < .05$ .

The present article discusses the findings from the retrospective interviews conducted with in-country learners after performing the request role-plays. The retrospective interview protocol is included in Appendix B. The interviews were partially transcribed and analyzed qualitatively to reveal dominant themes.

### **Findings**

The themes from the interviews identified in the qualitative analyses relate to some of the most basic developmental issues in the interlanguage pragmatics research agenda (Kasper and Schmidt 1996): planning processes and performance; the inter-relationship of interlanguage grammatical and pragmatic competences; the role of personality on developing pragmatic competence; and the influence of motivation and attitudes.

### **Planning**

In the retrospective interviews, many learners were acutely aware that their current inventory of both grammatical and lexical L2 forms was inadequate to encode their intended pragmatic meanings. This awareness had a certain impact on planning for the role-play requests, whether planning in English or Russian. As Participant 016 put it: "I know what words I know, I go with the words I know, but I figure it out, for sure, I figure out what I know in English." Participant 011 faced similar limitations but planned in Russian: "...it's harder to try to plan something in English first, because there are particular words that you don't know in Russian, so it's easier to start in [Russian]." Participant 024 explained further:

I have such a limited base that I can use anyway, that I know what they are. A lot of times, if I'm in a stressed situation, I'll forget words beyond my base vocabulary, and so I pretty much just jump in [without planning]. That way I don't feel bad about having improper grammar or mistakes, or having to use a lot of small words to explain the situation if I just jump in and do it. And so, when I approach someone for directions in the metro or whatever I just do it as quickly as possible, just to get it over with, to save

as much face as possible. Hopefully they'll understand it on the first try, and I'll get a positive response...

The awareness of interlanguage limitations led to simplifications in planning for many learners:

I just tried to think of the simplest possible way [to make the request] and not to add anything that would trip me up... I tried to build on the "у вас есть," "можно," "нужно" kind of, you know, constructions and just add whatever possible words I knew. (Participant 052)

Other learners felt the need for grammatical modifications to their requests, but lacked the linguistic means. Participant 004, for instance, was looking for a way to incorporate a marker of conditionality:

...like "would you mind?" "do you think you could take me home?" I really wanted to put that conditional in there but I just didn't know how, like "[ТЫ] МОГ БЫ",... I do know "я хотела бы"... I don't know how to use it, we didn't study it very much... I can't feel it [on the level of syntax] even down to just word order, I can't feel where it needs to go in the sentence. I can feel that I need it but I just have no idea where to use it.

In other instances, limited knowledge of another pragmatically significant form, the imperative, affected pragmatic performance, as Participant 056 explains:

At this point I do not use any imperatives, because I don't really know strongly how to do them. I know "читай," "представь", I don't use them ever, ever. I don't know how to form them well enough to use them. That's a really good reason not to use them. I always say "можно мне что-то" because it didn't even occur to me to say "дай мне". Maybe that would be like too direct or something, I don't know. But, you will find, maybe it'll be different when you see me in Petersburg at the end of the semester, but you will find no imperatives in anything I just said.

### **Interlanguage and grammatical person**

A frequent topic of the interviews was the learners' use of grammatical person in Russian, especially second-person reference. Problems arose on several levels: fossilized forms incorporating second-person reference; inadequate control over pronominal forms; and inadequate syntactic control. Participant 001 was

particularly stymied by syntax in a role-play situation in which he asked a fellow student for a ride home:

I couldn't think of how to ask for a ride, I was talking about myself, saying "я", but I didn't know how to switch it around, how to get her as the subject, because she was always the object...

Two conventionalized politeness forms, "простите" and "извините," caused many problems for learners trying to act appropriately in minimum social distance situations. Participant 018 explained:

Usually I keep it straight. If I'm speaking with someone I'm on "ты", I "ты" them all the way through, and if it's someone I'm on "вы" with I "вы" them all the way through. But for expressions like "простите" or "извините" I'm used to hearing them in "вы" form so I accidentally do that... If it's something I've heard a lot in the "вы" form, I do that. If I have more time to think, I'll correct myself...

Several learners mentioned that their incomplete control over pronominal declension led them to revise their choice of second-person reference, switching between "ты" and "вы" forms. For example, Participant 011 noted about a situation where she switched from "вы" to "ты":

I think I used "тобой" because I couldn't off the top of my head think of "вами". You're going for better grammar a lot of times [more] than even politeness, just to sound more clean.

Participant 052 also switched between "ты" and "вы" when unable to recall the possessive form "ваша":

I was thinking "вой" or "воя" or something. I remembered "твоя" easily, so I just switched back to that... I knew "твоя" was right, whereas I didn't know whether "ваша" was right, so I just switched to ["твоя"].

Participant 053 used "ты" in a role play situation asking a university administrator for expedition of a bureaucratic document, explaining that his utterance was motivated by both phonology and grammatical control:

I get confused, 'cos I use the "ты" more often than the "вы". Also I'm scared of making like "вы" 'cos I'm so conscious of the "ы" [sound]. I know it's the same sound but I'm not as nervous about it... when I say the word "вы" I feel this great obligation to get the "ы" [sound] right and I don't when I say the word "ты"... maybe because ["вы" is] more formal.

Like when I'm talking to someone that I'm using the word "ВЫ" on then I should get it right, whereas when I'm using "ТЫ" it's not such a big deal. I don't like using [the "ВЫ"] conjugation unless I'm going to drop [the pronoun] and just use the conjugation, just be like "можете" ...

### **Transfer and pragmatic performance**

Many learners indicated that transfer of their native language and culture (L1/C1) pragmatic representations (or conversely, the lack of analogous pragmatic representations to transfer) played a large role in how they carried out the request role-plays. Participant 019 explained the transfer process clearly, saying:

Maybe it's more a matter of personality than anything. I'm just transferring my personality at home, what I would say in English and how I would go about it into the situation in Russia. I'm not really taking a lot of cultural things [differences] in mind...

To a great extent, the lack of a difference in English for second-person reference similar to that in Russian caused a great deal of confusion for the learners. Participant 008 noted that "I don't realize how odd it sounds [using "ВЫ" in an ostensibly "ТЫ" situation]... having to distinguish between formal and informal forms of address is not something that comes naturally." Participant 009 said that she and her 17-year-old host sister still used "ВЫ" with each other, but added

Sometimes we say "ТЫ". I don't know why, I guess we don't see each other that often... it's hard really to comprehend why it's "ТЫ" and "ВЫ" here... I don't think I'd feel uncomfortable but I don't want to insult her by using "ТЫ" with her.

Many learners like Participant 023 confirmed this observation, and frequently mentioned that they generally use "ВЫ" with almost all interlocutors in order to avoid unintentionally offending them:

...I figure until I'm used to ["ТЫ" and "ВЫ"] and can make a distinction real easily it doesn't hurt be too polite rather than being insulting. Like saying something to an older person or someone that I don't know very well and them take offense. So, to be on the safe side.

Other learners talked about instances in which they had transferred their L1/C1 concepts about politeness, with varying results. This transfer especially concerned American English conceptions about requests and thanking. Participant 033 cited a situation that arose soon after he arrived in Moscow:

When I first got here, when people would say “пожалуйста” after giving me something, I thought I was being rude. In America, sometimes if you forget to say “thank you,” they’ll say “you’re welcome.” I thought it was the same situation [in Russia], that they were saying “you’re welcome” before I could say “thank you”... and then for a couple weeks when people were walking up to me I would say “thank you” [“спасибо”] before they could say “you’re welcome”, so I could beat them to saying “пожалуйста” because I thought I was saying it at the wrong time. And then someone explained to me that it meant nothing, just like “here, take it”... I thought they were just saying “you’re welcome” because they were upset that I didn’t say “thank you.”

Participant 019 cited a somewhat different example, also concerning requesting and pragmatic force, which revolved around a situation with his host family:

I used “будьте добры” once, ...they said “whaaat???” And I heard somebody else say sometime that was excessively polite, it was like something you don’t normally say unless you want a big favor. I think I read somewhere that Americans tend to use “пожалуйста” and all the “please” type words way more than Russians... Because we say them so much in our standard vocabulary and they’re kind of meaningless sometimes, but I mean they’re just kind of standard. We over-translate, I mean not over-translate but... [Transfer?] Yeah transfer. I mean because I am transferring my English words into Russian.

This example clearly illustrates that encoded forms, especially those resulting from L1/C1 transfer, may convey undesirable (or at least unintended) pragmatic meanings in terms of the target culture (in other words, pragmatic failure).<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Two main sources of transfer have been identified: sociopragmatic transfer, or the transfer of the speaker’s native language and culture (L1/C1) sociological values; and pragmalinguistic transfer, or the transfer of forms related to pragmatic force and politeness values from the speaker’s native language (Thomas 1983). Kasper (1992) further notes that pragmatic transfer may be positive or negative. Positive pragmatic transfer, or the performance of native-like pragmatic strategies, typically facilitates communication, and causes miscommunication or pragmatic failure only when such behavior is considered to be inappropriate for non-native speakers, due to their



Two learners, Participant 034 and Participant 056, voiced particularly interesting perspectives on transfer of their L1/C1 competence. Participant 034, a bilingual Polish-English speaker, had a very detailed view of her pragmatic competence and its application to Russian:

I don't think in words, I tend to think in pictures and images. So for instance if I learn a word, there's an image associated with it. And in situations, the situations you're giving me, basically I wanted to say either I wanted something from them, or I want to apologize, and it's all the same thing. I just basically have to say I'm sorry and I didn't mean it... Well I mean it comes from [working in] two languages at the same time. You cannot translate situations or meanings from one language to another, because the nuances don't match. But if you have [a picture], the pictures can overlap with different words. Like if I have a picture of a concept, and then I'm looking for it in English, and I know exactly what I want to expect and it's not in English, a word in Polish will pop out and I know that's exactly what I want to say. And then I have to go around and say well how can I say this in English again. You know, look in my old dictionaries and find some ancient word that means the same thing. *But it's a description that has to fit the picture rather than the picture fitting the description.* [Italics added]

Participant 056, bilingual in English and Spanish, displayed a similarly high level of metalinguistic awareness concerning pragmatic competence, but emphasized L1/C1 transfer more strongly than did Participant 034:

Basically overall my strategy was "what's the emotion, and how can I communicate that emotion." Because even if I don't know the exact words if I can get the emotion across, they know, you're trying to hit the right register with them... I know how to be appropriate in English... like they say about language learning, you take the utterance, you take what's underneath the utterance, you put it in the other language, same register, same energy. That's what I did. I just tried to make it be my emotion, and my expression match the energy that underlies the same interaction that I

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position as foreigners. Negative transfer is the transfer of L1 sociopragmatic knowledge or pragmalinguistic elements related to politeness or pragmatic force, but does not contribute necessarily to pragmatic failure. Pragmatic failure may result from either type of transfer, and is considered to occur when speakers fail to understand each other's intentions (Blum-Kulka and Olshtain 1986).

would have in English. So that's basically my strategy, I took the core and tried to transpose it into Russian. ...On the one hand, I could say the wrong things, like I could say something that's slightly wrong, or say the wrong words, but if I'm being in a certain way, they're gonna get what I'm trying to say, for the most part. There are certain ways to be that are inappropriate, and you have to find those out, but a lot of it is just the being behind the message that you're trying to get across.

Several participants mentioned the role of classroom training on how they planned and carried out the role-play requests, mentioning both instruction on pragmatically significant forms, such as imperatives, and second-person reference. As Participant 011 noted, the lack of formal instruction concerning imperatives affected her pragmatic performance:

I don't use the imperative a lot at all. I don't know why... We were always taught to use [the imperative] for commands, so I can't think of that in situations where I would [use it]. The way they taught it to us, we didn't use it often in class. You know and even in conversation class here [in Russia], we use, very rarely, use an imperative form. So I don't use it much.

The instruction of second-person reference, especially in the American classroom, seemed to generate confusion about appropriate use of the second-person pronoun in target language contexts. Participant 053 noted that he used the "ТЫ" form with everyone in his US classroom, including the native speaker instructor, adding:

I was using "ВЫ" and I kept getting tripped up and I was getting confused and [the instructor] was like "Алёша [his classroom Russian name], в Руссе я «ВЫ», здесь я «ТЫ»." Like, "don't worry about it, we're in America, it's less formal." Here [in America] the way professors are treated it's ok to use "ТЫ".

The inherent difficulties in the instruction of native-like pragmatic competence in the domestic classroom setting was not lost on students, who viewed the study abroad experience as an opportunity to acquire this competence in a "rich and real" environment:<sup>5</sup>

I would guess that [native speakers] do [requests] much differently, but that's why I'm going to Russia... I'm really unsure... We've done dialogs

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<sup>5</sup> See Brecht, Walton et al. (1997).

in class similar to all these sorts of things, but applying them to real life situations is much different... It's different because you don't have a teacher that you know is going to correct you... it's less real [in class] than actually having to ask someone or actually having to speak to someone who if you get in a bind, you might not be able to speak English, or have something explained to you... (Participant 054)

### **Pragmatic competence and impression management<sup>6</sup>**

Many learners displayed a high level of metalinguistic knowledge concerning their relative pragmatic performance in English and Russian. For instance, Participant 036 recognized his lack of knowledge about colloquial and formal speech in Russian, but focused his efforts on communication without reference to the social context:

Like in America, obviously I have very different ways of speaking to adults or people I don't know very well than I do to my friends, but here I can't really do that yet. *I can get the idea out, that's still the most important thing.* [Italics added] There's no difference yet.

For many learners, impression management meant displaying to native speakers their control of Russian vocabulary and grammar, and not making mistakes; sounding "clean," in Participant 011's words: "I've found that like with Russians, they appreciate clean speaking more than they do that you use the exact right verb, they like it better that you conjugate it whatever verb [sic] that you did use right." From this perspective, grammatical and lexical accuracy carry more importance, relatively, than appropriateness in interactions with native speakers: "I haven't noticed anybody get really offended by me messing that up ["ВЫ" where "ТЫ" is more appropriate]. I think people just figure that's the smallest mistake I'm going to make, so that's ok" (Participant 029).<sup>7</sup> Oliver, however, attempted to balance both demands (accuracy and appropriateness) when carrying out the requests: "I wanted to be polite about it, but I was also

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<sup>6</sup> Impression management: "the way learners make use of their L2 resources in interaction to create social meanings favourable to themselves" (Ellis 1994, p.161).

<sup>7</sup> In this respect, learners' beliefs closely correspond to native speakers' perspectives on error gravity: "Grammatical accuracy, as opposed to other issues of language production, was considered one of the most important issues in learners' spoken Russian by all the respondents (and all subclasses) in this study" (Rifkin 1995).

trying, which I'm always trying, to be grammatically accurate... so I was trying to balance a few, wear a few hats I guess."

For other learners, the chief goal of impression management entailed displaying their core L1/C1 values, even when they realized that their performance diverged from NS norms. Participant 037 host brother, for example, corrected her several times for saying "спасибо" too often. Nonetheless, she was not inclined to change her speech behavior:

I don't think I've slowed down in my usage of the word because it comes naturally, like habit, to say "thank you" for everything. And I don't want people to think that I don't appreciate everything... here I feel like I have to show that I really appreciate, and so I think I use it appropriately, in appropriate contexts... maybe I do say it too much, but it's habitual. I don't think I'll slow down.

Learners explained that their speech behavior in Russian arose from a deeply ingrained sense of rights and obligations, a core part of their personality. Participant 001, emphasizing that he was raised in New England, whose residents he characterized as very independent and self-reliant, was adamant on this point:

I think a lot of these answers (have to do with) the way you were brought up [taking responsibility for own actions, relying on oneself]... I feel that I'm putting somebody out, so I have to make it worth their while... by asking for a favor, I immediately wanted to offer a favor in return.

The learner's pragmatic competence, when viewed as an intrinsic part of personality, may not be available to change or remediation, as Participant 014 explained: "When in Rome do as the Romans do, but I can't... [it's my] personality, maybe." When questioned whether she might have altered her requests to the native norms if she were more fluent, she answered, "probably not... *it's me!*" (Italics added)

Perhaps also in reaction to their reduced sense of rights and obligations on account of their status as foreigners and limited proficiency Russian speakers, some learners said that they preferred to diverge from native speaker pragmatic norms, even when they knew the norms. This perspective especially concerned situations where speakers felt that they were imposing on someone:

Because to me it's so obvious that I'm not from [here]... I just feel awkward that I'm... I can't do it the way [native speakers] do it because

I'm not from here and there's something about that that I wouldn't want to do it. (Participant 013)

The same student additionally noted the effectiveness of identifying oneself as a foreigner:

Because people feel sorry for you then... Because people expect foreigners to not know what they're doing... they don't expect that you'll know what you're doing, they expect that you'll be confused a lot. They can tell from my accent, anyway.

Other learners also noted goal-oriented reasons for divergence from native speaker norms: "I would be like "МОЖЕТ БЫТЬ, I don't want to be any trouble"... [that approach] tends to get results more instead of angering the other person." (Participant 008)

### **Impression management, gatekeepers, and caretakers**

For language learners in country, interacting every day with a wide range of native speakers in a multitude of public and private contexts, much of the language-learning task (at least outside of the classroom) boils down to developing appropriate target language verbal behavior for two main purposes. First, the learners must develop effective verbal behavior to obtain necessary or desired resources, such as food, accommodations, and travel arrangements, in interactions with not infrequently unsympathetic or impatient native speakers (gatekeepers). Second, the learners must develop appropriate target language verbal behavior to develop a social network of sympathetic native speakers on whom they can rely on for support, guidance, and friendship (caretakers). The caretakers further assist the learners in improving their target language proficiency.

It is essential to note that the language-learning task described above is vastly different from the task inherent in the classroom of the learner's home institution, where the focus is generally on academic accomplishment; specifically, attaining a good grade. As discussed earlier, the domestic classroom learning experience does not prepare learners to interact with a wide range of native speaker interlocutors. As one learner noted early on during her study abroad sojourn, "There seems to be this dichotomy between public and private life here [in Russia], the way people act, and I can't quite figure it out." (Participant 042)

For learners (especially those with limited proficiency), the difficulties of interacting with gatekeeper native speakers should not be underestimated. In these situations the challenge for the learners is to develop strategies to achieve their goals when communication problems arise, as Participant 019 described partway through his semester-long study abroad experience:

...it's when they lose their patience, and there's that "что? что? что?" and it starts to fluster you, and it's hard to really come across, and already you're self-conscious enough talking, so it's difficult when someone just gets impatient with that process.

The same student noted a typical interaction with a gatekeeper native speaker in a ticket booth, when attempting to buy theater tickets:

...we got all the way to the end [of the transaction] and then she said something at me kind of quickly and I didn't understand it and I asked her to repeat it, and she was impatient and said it again like 3 or 4 times. She was just asking me which tickets I wanted... and it really wasn't very complicated what she said but after 4 repeats and it getting louder and louder and faster instead of slower and more helpful, it had the absolute opposite effect. She could have repeated it a hundred times, and it would've just [not helped], cause my mind starting shutting down a little bit. There's more anxiety where there's less contact [physical separation by glass of the касса, in addition to social distance]. There's kind of this wall, even if it's transparent, there's kind of this wall between the two people.

In these situations, the learner must control the impression of himself as an effective and full-fledged agent that he wants to make on the interlocutor, by remaining calm and mustering the linguistic resources (both forms and pragmatic formulae) at his disposal, however limited.

Using the target language in country to build social networks also differs vastly from the language-learning task of the domestic classroom, as noted earlier. The distinction between the two tasks is far from lost on study abroad sojourners. They realize that building social networks and forming friendships with native speakers is perhaps the *sine qua non* of the study abroad experience. Half-way through her semester in Moscow, one student put it more succinctly than any other:

[Making Russian friends] brings your hopes up and your confidence up and it makes you want to learn... [with friends] you want to be able to communicate and get your point across. In class you want to do the same thing... [but with friends] you want to be able to show your personality, whereas in class you want to be able to show your intelligence and stuff. Here [in Russia] it's like, I want to make some friends, *I want them to know who I am.* (Participant 037; italics added)

### Discussion

As noted in Brecht and Robinson (1993), those study-abroad sojourners who made the greatest proficiency gains spent a large proportion of their free time with a close native speaker friend. However, building such relationships requires that learners possess sufficient target language competence to show their friends "who they are," in the words of the learner above. Yet the quantitative analyses of their speech act performances (Frank 2002, 2009) showed that they lacked sufficient L2 grammatical competence to interact effectively with a broad range of native speaker interlocutors, who may be unused to interacting with non-native speakers.

The retrospective interviews provide evidence that L2 speakers focused much of their attention on L2 grammatical forms, where their performance was far from native-like. Conversely, they devoted much less attention on pragmatic appropriateness and choice of request or speech act move type (for example, stating the justification for the request, versus a more conventionally direct query of the speaker's ability or possibility of performing the request).<sup>8,9</sup> This relative difference in focus during request speech act planning and performance lends support to the hypothesis that L2 processing related to pragmatic appropriateness was automatic (and largely accurate, perhaps due to serendipitous L1/C1 transfer). L2 morphosyntactic processing, in contrast, was effortful and deliberate. This hypothesis is further supported by the inter-relationship of L2 grammatical and pragmatic competences reflected on level of pragmatically important sentence-level modifications, such as grammatical person, especially 2<sup>nd</sup> person reference.

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<sup>8</sup> For a full taxonomy of request speech act move types, see Frank (2002, 2009).

<sup>9</sup> As noted earlier, the L2 speakers' selection of speech act move type did not significantly differ from the native speaker baseline. On the level of speech act move, L2 performance diverged from native speakers only by delaying the request in minimum social distance situations.

These findings lead to further questions regarding classroom-based instruction in L2 pragmatics, and learners' threshold level of L2 competences and the timing of study abroad. Instruction in L2 pragmatics has been found to be effective for features typically missing from classroom discourse, although "consciousness-raising" activities may be more effective than explicit instruction (Kasper 1997; Kasper and Rose 1999). As the learners indicated in the interviews that they had received little classroom L2 pragmatic instruction, L2 Russian pedagogues and curriculum designers have an opportunity to prepare their students for in-country language use by incorporating pragmatically significant features into existing activities. Specifically, the key finding from Brecht, Davidson, et al. (1993) that grammatical competence predicts in-country proficiency gains, and the finding from Frank (2002, 2009) regarding the inter-relationship of grammatical and pragmatic competences, point to the importance of integrating pragmatic features into grammatically-oriented activities. However, despite this interrelationship, it remains unclear whether accuracy increases and processing speed decreases with similarly developing trajectories in the two domains or not, and whether this occurs similarly in both the domestic classroom and overseas L2 immersion environments.

Additionally, given the evidence for a threshold level of grammatical competence for optimal in-country proficiency gains, an analogous threshold may exist for pragmatic competence. Identifying specific criteria that overlap both competences, such as near automatic control of grammatical person (especially 2<sup>nd</sup> person reference), will help both learners and pedagogues to plan for effective overseas language learning experiences.

### **Appendix A: Definitions of Contextual Factors**

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Factor	Definition
Social distance	The distance between the speaker and the hearer. In effect, the degree of familiarity and solidarity they share as represented through in-group or out-group membership. (Hudson, Detmer, and Brown 1995, p. 5)
Relative power	The power of the speaker with respect to the hearer. In effect, this is the degree to which the speaker can impose his or her will on the hearer due to a higher rank within an organization, professional status, or the hearer's need to have a particular duty or job performed. (p. 4)
Degree of imposition	The imposition in the culture, in terms of the expenditure of good and/or services by the hearer, or the obligation of the speaker to perform the act. This will vary depending upon whether the speech act is a request, a refusal, or an apology. (p. 4)

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## **Appendix B: Retrospective interview protocol**

We will play back the role play situations and then I will ask you a few questions about how you performed each situation. When we listen to each situation, try to remember how you planned to perform it, and why you chose to perform it the way you did.

What language did you plan to perform the situation in?

Did you consider any other ways of performing this situation? What were your other options? Why did you discard those options? E.g., didn't know word, didn't know how to say it in Russian, didn't know if it was appropriate to say in the given situation?

Was this a realistic situation? Have you ever been in a similar situation in Russia? What happened? Were you able to appropriately negotiate the situation?

Would you have performed the situation any differently if the other person were not (your friend, sister, boss, stranger)? How?

Do you think a native speaker of Russian would have performed differently? How?

Is this how you would have done it in real life?

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