Effects of Metapragmatic Instruction on the Production of Compliments and Compliment Responses: Learner–learner Role-plays in the Foreign Language Classroom

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The compliment-compliment response sequence has a great deal of social utility for building solidarity (Haverkate, 2004) and as a social lubricant (Wolfson, 1983). This chapter reports the effects of metapragmatic instruction of this sequence on intermediate learners of Spanish as a foreign language. Though there is research on both compliments and compliment responses, as well as on instruction of speech acts, this study not only analyzes both acts in the compliment-compliment response sequence together, but also looks at intermediate-level learners rather than advanced learners. The role-play data come from 26 learners of Spanish across three conditions (explicit instruction, implicit instruction, and a control group) and from two groups of native speakers. Instructed learners participated in awareness activities and cross-cultural analysis using authentic language samples, and had an opportunity for controlled and guided practice. Pretest, posttest, and delayed posttest role-plays were transcribed and analyzed for compliment and compliment response strategies. Learner production was compared to both native speaker groups, across testing times, and between learner groups. The results show advantages for learners in both instructional conditions over the control group, indicating that intermediate-level learners can benefit from instruction, and that both types of instruction are advantageous and may be combined for pedagogical success.

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Introduction

Previous research has indicated that pragmatics is both teachable and beneficial to learners (e.g., Bardovi-Harlig, 1999a; Félix-Brasdefer & Cohen, 2012; Ishihara & Cohen, 2010; Kasper & Rose, 2002; Olshtain & Cohen, 1990; Rose, 2005; Tatsuki & Houck, 2010). Much of this research has focused on learners at advanced levels, though mixed results at lower levels of proficiency leave questions about the effectiveness of instruction for beginning and intermediate learners. Based on the findings of these and other studies, researchers have made recommendations for teaching pragmatics in the classroom. They propose that pragmatic instruction should include awareness activities, authentic language samples, input prior to interpretation (Bardovi-Harlig & Mahan-Taylor, 2003; Félix-Brasdefer, 2008; García, 1996), cross-cultural analysis (Cohen, 2005; Félix-Brasdefer, 2008; García, 2001; Takahashi, 2001), form-focused instruction, controlled and guided practice, and communication strategies (Ishihara & Cohen, 2010; Tatsuki & Houck, 2010).

The present study operationalizes the activities suggested above in order to teach compliments and compliment responses to intermediate-level learners of Spanish as a foreign language (FL). These speech acts are important because they frequently occur as openers or continuers in interaction and help to build solidarity. In essence, they function as social lubricants (Wolfson, 1983). Because compliments and compliment responses have such great social utility, they are important for learner pragmatic development and can even lead to enhanced interaction with native speakers (NSs; Billmyer, 1990).

This paper analyzes the effects of pedagogical intervention on compliment and compliment response production. The study also highlights the need to engage more than one method of analysis to better understand learner production. Section 2 addresses relevant theoretical constructs and identifies gaps in the previous research. The method, including participant information, data collection procedures, and pedagogical treatment, is presented in section 3. Results are described in section 4. The discussion in section 5 includes pedagogical implications, as well as limitations and areas for future research. Section 6 consists of concluding remarks.

Theoretical framework

Previous research on L2 pragmatic instruction

Interlanguage pragmatics, or the "pragmatics of language learners" (Bardovi-Harlig, 1999a, p. 678), forms a central component of learners' communicative competence. Unfortunately, this area is frequently neglected in language teaching, as well as in teacher training programs, despite learner-demonstrated need and even desire for this type of metapragmatic instruction (Bardovi-Harlig,

2001; Bardovi-Harlig & Mahan-Taylor, 2003; Pearson, 2006). This need is exacerbated in FL learning environments where authentic input in the target language is minimal or nonexistent. In fact, research has demonstrated that, regardless of the learning context, metapragmatic instruction is more beneficial than input alone (Kasper, 1996; 2001; Kasper & Rose, 2002; Olshtain & Cohen, 1990; Roever, 2009; Rose, 2005), and that explicit metapragmatic instruction is the most effective type of instruction (e.g., Cohen, 1996; 2005; 2009; Koike & Pearson, 2005). The present study contributes to the growing body of research on metapragmatic instruction in languages other than English and adds to our knowledge of developmental pragmatics (Bardovi-Harlig, 2013). The present examination of the effects of instruction on learner–learner role-play data highlights the complexity of acquiring new pragmatic structures and the need for pedagogical intervention to aid in the process.

Current research suggests that metapragmatic instruction should incorporate many components: awareness activities, authentic language samples, input preceding interpretation (Bardovi-Harlig & Mahan-Taylor, 2003; Félix-Brasdefer, 2008; García, 1996), cross-cultural comparison (Cohen, 2005; Félix-Brasdefer, 2008; García, 2001; Takahashi, 2001), form-focused instruction, and controlled and guided practice (Ishihara & Cohen, 2010; Tatsuki & Houck, 2010). These elements are firmly grounded in second language acquisition (SLA) theory, including input (Krashen, 1985), awareness (Schmidt, 1990; 1993a; 1993b), and communicative competence (Canale, 1983; Celce-Murcia, 2008). By providing metapragmatic instruction, FL teachers provide the opportunity to "raise learners' pragmatic awareness and to give them choices about their interactions in the target language" (Bardovi-Harlig & Mahan-Taylor, 2003, p. 5).

Compliment and compliment responses

Compliments and compliment responses are expressive speech acts (Searle, 1976). The two speech acts are inextricably intertwined and must be considered together in order to understand their function in interaction (see Félix-Brasdefer, 2014, for a discussion of speech act sequences). Compliments and compliment responses function primarily to reinforce positive face and emphasize solidarity (Haverkate, 2004). They are social lubricants that can mitigate criticism, extend or open conversation, and smooth apologies (Wolfson, 1983). In both English and Spanish, compliments and compliment responses are strikingly formulaic, comprising only a few syntactic (compliments) or semantic (compliment responses) formulas (see Figures 1 and 2). The crucial interactional features, social utility, and relatively simple formulas of this speech act sequence makes it an ideal target for Spanish FL instruction, particularly at early stages of language acquisition.

American English

85% of all compliments follow three syntactic patterns:

- NP {is/looks} (really) ADJ
  (e.g., *Your hair looks nice*)
- I (really) {like/love} NP
  (e.g., *I really like those shoes*)
- PRO is (really) (a) ADJ NP
  (e.g., *That is a nice jacket*)

Spanish

60-80% of compliments follow seven syntactic patterns

- ¡Qué + Adj + Noun + (VP)!
  (e.g., *¡Qué bonito vestido!*; What a pretty dress!)
- ¡Qué + Adv + Verb {estar/ser/verse/quedar/andar} + (NP)!
  (e.g., *¡Qué padre está tu playera!*; What a cool t-shirt!)
- VP + (Intensifier) Adj + (Noun)
  (e.g., *Tienes bonitos ojos*; You have pretty eyes)
- (Pro) {verse/quedar/andar} Adj/Adv (NP)
  (e.g., *Te queda bien*; It suits you)
- (Tu) + (Noun) + VP + Adj/Adv + (Noun)
  (e.g., *Tu trabajo estuvo muy bien*; your work was really well done)
- PRO + {gustar/encantar/fascinar} + NP
  (e.g., *Me gusta tu casa*; I like your house)
- (Noun) VP + NP
  (e.g., *Eres un ángel*; You're an angel)

Figure 1. Most frequent compliment formulas in English and Spanish (Félix-Brasdefer & Hasler-Barker, 2012; Hernández-Herrero, 1999; Kryston-Morales, 1997; Manes & Wolfson, 1980; Nelson & Hall, 1999; Placencia & Yepez, 1999).

American English

Compliment responses are semantically formulaic

- Acceptance
- Agreement
- Upgrade
- Self-praise
- Downgrade
- Reassignment of praise
- Returns

Spanish

Compliment responses are semantically formulaic

- Acceptance
- Agreement
- Upgrade
- Downgrade
- Reassignment of praise
- Returns
- Lend/give
- Expansion/Confirmation

Figure 2. Most frequent compliment response formulas in English and Spanish (Lorenzo-Dus, 2001; Pomerantz, 1978; Valdés & Pino, 1981; Wierzbicka, 2003)

For NSs of English learning Spanish, two compliment formulas can be problematic. First, NSs of Spanish tend to produce *¡Qué+ADJ/ADV+Noun/Verb!* more frequently than other types of compliments. The corresponding strategy in English, *How/What+ADJ/ADV+Noun/Verb* occurs very infrequently in Wolfson's (1983) American English data. Furthermore, Spanish FL learners are taught *Me gusta/encanta+(NP)* (I like+NP; NP is pleasing to me) early and often. This compliment type roughly corresponds to the frequent English strategy, *I like+NP*. However, this strategy is infrequent among NSs of Spanish. Together, these two cross-linguistic factors, combined with the one-to-one principle (Andersen, 1984), may contribute to learners rarely, if ever, producing *¡Qué+ADJ/ADV+Noun/Verb!* and heavily overproducing *Me+gusta/encanta+NP*. It is possible that interlocutors

may not recognize compliments as such when producing forms that are cross-culturally different.

In addition to these potentially problematic compliment formulas, learners need to be made aware of semantic differences in compliment responses. In American English, speakers may respond by offering some sort of self-praise (e.g., "I worked really hard on my project"). This strategy is not attested in previous research on Spanish compliment responses (Lorenzo-Dus, 2001; Valdés & Pino, 1981). Meanwhile, NSs of Spanish may seek expansion or confirmation (i.e., fishing for a compliment) of the original compliment. These strategies are not attested in the research on American English compliment responses and, in fact, may be considered rude (Pomerantz, 1978; Wierzbicka, 2003). In particular, the cross-cultural differences between compliment response types have potential for confusion or embarrassment for the interlocutors, which could lead to pragmatic failure (Thomas, 1995).

The present study operationalizes the suggestions made by previous researchers (Bardovi-Harlig & Mahan-Taylor, 2003; Cohen, 2005; Félix-Brasdefer, 2008; Garcia, 1996; 2001; Ishihara & Cohen, 2010; Takahashi, 2001; Tatsuki & Houck, 2010) in order to test the effectiveness of metapragmatic instruction on compliment and compliment response production. It also seeks to understand whether instruction has an effect on learners' ability to engage their pragmatic knowledge to make choices in their interactions (Bardovi-Harlig & Mahan-Taylor, 2003). Role-plays were chosen for this study because they permit researchers to test learners' interaction while still maintaining some control over variables that allow for comparison (Félix-Brasdefer, 2010).

The study was guided by the following research questions:

- Does the frequency of production of compliments and compliment responses in learner–learner role-plays change following metapragmatic instruction?
- Do learners become more variable in their production of compliment and compliment response types following instruction, thus taking advantage of the choices they have in interaction?

Method

Participants

Participants in the present study included three intact classes of fourth-semester Spanish, divided across three learning conditions (explicit instruction, implicit instruction, and control group; see Table 1). The instructors were three NSs of English, all with 4+ years of teaching experience, 10+ years of formal Spanish language study, and 6+ months of residency in a Spanish-speaking country. The initial group of learners included 60 fourth-semester students (38 female; 22 male). A total of 26 learners (17 female; 9 male) completed all components of the study, as described in the following sections, and were included in the analysis.

Table 1. Fourth-semester learners of Spanish, demographic information.

condition	participants	age (*M*)	years studying Spanish (*M*)
explicit	9 (6 F; 3 M)	19.7 (19–21 years)	5.2 (3–10 years)
implicit	10 (6 F; 4 M)	19.9 (19–21 years)	5.6 (1.5–14 years)
control	7 (5 F; 2 M)	20.0 (19–21 years)	4 (2–5 years)
total	26 (17 F; 9 M)	19.9 (19–21 years)	4.9 (1.5–14 years)

In addition to the instructor and learner populations, a NS of English group and a NS of Spanish group served as a baseline. The NS of English group consisted of 33 students aged 18–21 years while the NS of Spanish group consisted of FL instructors. The latter group, which comprised 21 NSs of Spanish, ranging in age from 24–47 years, from several Spanish-speaking countries (Argentina, Colombia, Costa Rica, Mexico, Peru, Puerto Rico, Spain, and US-born bilingual), was selected because they were language instructors in the language department of the learners' university and were the most likely candidates to provide NS input for the learner group.

Data collection procedures

Role-plays were conducted in learner–learner dyads. The learners participated in a pretest three weeks prior to receiving any treatment. They then completed a posttest the class period following open role-play practice (one to two days later). Finally, four weeks following the posttest, participants completed a delayed posttest.

Participants were instructed to interact for as long as they felt comfortable during the role-play, generally between 30 seconds to two minutes. Participants had 20 minutes[1] to complete seven role-play scenarios (one distractor and six compliment-compliment response scenarios). The interactions were audio recorded.

Instructional treatment

Instruction closely followed suggestions made by Bardovi-Harlig and Mahan-Taylor (2003), Ishihara & Cohen (2010), and Tatsuki and Houck (2010), including awareness activities, cross-cultural comparisons, authentic language samples, input preceding interpretation, form-focused instruction, and controlled and guided practice. Instructors had not taken linguistics courses and were not trained in teaching pragmatics; rather they were provided with detailed scripts for the approximately 50 minutes of total instruction time[2] (20 minutes for compliments, 20 minutes for compliment responses, and 10 minutes for role-play practice). Instruction on compliments was presented to the learners first and, due to course scheduling, compliment responses were presented 10 days later. In the next class

period (two days following the compliment response module), learners in all three groups participated in controlled and guided practice through open role-plays.

In both the implicit and explicit instruction groups, learners were introduced to the concept of communicative actions (Félix-Brasdefer, 2015), thus raising their awareness of metapragmatic concepts. Learners in the control group did not receive this introduction.

All groups, including the control group, then saw and heard the same input in the form of recorded dialogues in both English in Spanish (Cohen, 2015; Félix-Brasdefer, 2015). Though recorded, planned dialogues are not as authentic as spontaneous natural speech; they were used in the present study because they contained simplified oral language that was accessible to intermediate learners. Prior to interpreting any aspect of the dialogues, learners in all groups listened to or watched the input twice.

The instructed learners' attention was drawn to metapragmatic aspects of the dialogues (e.g., complimented attribute). Learners in the control group focused on the content of the dialogues (e.g., the name of the participants) rather than on metapragmatic aspects.

Participants in the instructional groups did a cross-cultural comparison of Spanish and English compliments and compliment responses. Both instructional groups then did activities to focus their attention on the form of compliments/compliment responses. In the explicit instruction group, they were provided patterns (e.g., compliment-compliment response types) with which to analyze a set of speech acts, while the implicit instruction group derived patterns from the same set of speech acts.

Following the two 20-minute instructional modules, all learners participated in 10 minutes of role-play practice. They were provided with four scenarios in which they could practice giving and responding to compliments in a controlled environment. Ten role-plays were created for the study, four for practice and six for data collection. All were designed with two crucial characteristics in mind. First, learners never had to play a role that they would not normally have held, such as teacher or doctor (Hudson, Detmer, & Brown, 1995). Second, interlocutor characteristics were clearly identified to encourage participants to imagine the same interlocutor (see Figure 3 for an example of a role-play description; Bardovi-Harlig, 1999b). The role-play scenarios were created based on situations described in the previous literature and informal interviews with NSs of Spanish.

PARTNER A

You have been in (*Spanish-speaking country of your choice*) for the entire summer and it is now time to return home. You have been looking for months for the perfect souvenirs to take home to your family. You have been able to find a souvenir for everyone except for your father. He is very difficult to shop for and always tells you that you do not need to bring him anything. However, you want to find something you know he will love. You have shopped in nearly every store in the city you live in and haven't found what you're looking for yet. You enter a store that you have never been to and find exactly what you want in a display case at the front of the store. As the salesperson rings up your purchase, you notice that he/she is wearing lime green sneakers with red soles and shoelaces. Give the salesperson a compliment on his/her shoes.

PARTNER B

You have worked at a tourist shop in (*Spanish-speaking country of your choice*) for the entire summer and only have a few weeks left before returning to the university for the fall. You have enjoyed your job because it has allowed you to meet people from all over the world. You also met several co-workers who have become your friends. One of your co-workers has a good sense of style and has taught you a few things about choosing high quality, interesting clothes. Today you are wearing a new pair of sneakers that you recently purchased. They are unusual because they are lime green with red laces and soles. A customer arrives in the shop at the end of a long day of work. You notice that you are about the same age. After looking around for a few minutes, the customer identifies an item that he/she wants to buy. You have a brief conversation as you ring up the purchase.

Figure 3. Role-play prompt. This type of prompt was used in role-play practice as well as in the pretest, posttest, and delayed posttest.

Data analysis

Role-play data were transcribed using Jefferson's (2004) transcription conventions; the transcriptions were then checked for accuracy by another researcher. All instances of compliments and compliment responses were counted in order to have a complete overview of this speech act sequence in context. Data were coded for compliment and compliment response type and were also checked by another researcher. Interrater reliability for both transcription and coding was 90%. All cases were resolved after a discussion between the two coders/transcribers. In addition to coding for overall compliment frequencies, a type analysis was conducted for each learner in order to tease out individual results. Compliment and compliment response types were tallied for each participant. These counts were also averaged to identify group trends. The results of the study are presented in the following sections.

Results

Results are presented here by each of the research questions that guide this study. The results are supplemented by a sequential analysis presented at the end of this section.

Research question #1: Effects of instruction on frequency of compliments and compliment responses

Research question #1 asked whether metapragmatic instruction had an effect on the frequency of production of compliments and compliment responses in learner–learner role-plays. The results are discussed here in terms of distribution and frequency of compliment and compliment response strategies.

Distribution and frequency of compliment strategies

Table 2 presents overall frequency results for the pretest, posttest, and delayed posttest by treatment condition (i.e., explicit, implicit, and control) alongside the NS baseline data. The results are presented first by percentage of total compliments (%): (320 compliments produced by 26 learners in six roleplay scenarios per testing period; 166 compliments produced by 26 NS in six roleplays), followed by a token count (*n*). Token counts are totaled at the bottom of the table while percentage totals can be assumed to be approximately 100%. Though all results are presented here, three compliment strategies are highlighted: *Me gusta/encanta+(NP)* (I like+NP; NP is pleasing to me), *NP(PRO)+ser/estar* (to be)+*ADJ*, and *Qué+ADJ/ADV* (How/What+ADJ/ADV).

Learners in the explicit condition (*N*=9) produced *Me gusta/encanta+(NP)* (I like+NP; NP is pleasing to me) 44.4% (12 tokens) of the time; learners in the control condition (*N*=7) produced it 31.3% (10 tokens) of the time, and learners in the implicit condition (*N*=10) produced this strategy 26.7% (16 tokens) of the time. They also frequently produced *NP(PRO)+ser/estar* (to be)+*ADJ* ,with learners in the explicit condition producing it 22.2% (6 tokens) of the time, learners in the implicit condition producing it 36.7% (22 tokens) of the time, and learners in the control condition producing it 34.4% (11 tokens) of the time. *Qué+ADJ/ADV* (How/What+ADJ/ADV) was not produced by learners in the explicit condition prior to treatment. In both the implicit and control conditions, learners produced one token of this compliment type accounting for 1.7% and 3.1%, respectively. Immediately following instruction, learners in the explicit condition reduced production of *Me gusta/encanta+(NP)* (I like+NP; NP is pleasing to me) from 44.4% (12 tokens) to 38.5% (10 tokens), which was in the targeted direction. This change was maintained through the delayed posttest (38.2%, 13 tokens). The learners in the explicit condition slightly decreased their production of *NP(PRO)+ser/estar* (to be)+*ADJ*, which was not in the targeted direction, from the pretest (22.2%, 6 tokens) to the posttest (19.2%, 5 tokens), though this increased to 23.5% (8 tokens) by the delayed posttest. These learners did not produce any tokens of *Qué+ADJ/ADV* (How/What+ADJ/ADV) at any testing time.

Learners in the implicit condition reduced production of *Me gusta/encanta+(NP)* (I like+NP; NP is pleasing to me) from the pretest (26.7%, 16 tokens) to the posttest (17.8%, 8 tokens), which was in the targeted direction, increasing again at the delayed posttest (26.7%, 12 tokens). They also slightly decreased their production of *NP(PRO)+ser/estar* (to be)+*ADJ* from 36.7% (22 tokens) on the pretest to 33.3% (15 tokens), a level which was maintained on the delayed posttest (33.3%, 15 tokens). This change was toward the frequency produced by NSs of Spanish in this study. These learners produced only one token of *Qué+ADJ/ADV* (How/What+ADJ/ADV) on the pretest.

Table 2. Pretest, posttest, delayed posttest compliment type frequency by condition.

	explicit condition (*n*=9)			implicit condition (*n*=10)			control (*n*=7)			Spanish NS (*n*=14)	English NS (*n*=12)
	pretest	posttest	delayed	pretest	posttest	delayed	pretest	posttest	delayed		
compliment form	(N) %										
me gusta/encanta + (NP) (I like + NP; NP is pleasing to me)	(12) 44.4	(10) 38.5	(13) 38.2	(16) 26.7	(8) 17.8	(12) 26.7	(10) 31.3	(11) 34.4	(7) 36.8	(15) 15.8	(9) 12.7
NP (PRO) + ser/estar + ADJ (NP + is + ADJ)	(6) 22.2	(5) 19.2	(8) 23.5	(22) 36.7	(15) 33.3	(15) 33.3	(11) 34.4	(9) 28.1	(5) 26.3	(28) 29.5	(24) 33.8
qué + ADJ/ADV (how/what + ADJ)	(0) 0.0	(0) 0.0	(0) 0.0	(1) 1.7	(0) 0.0	(0) 0.0	(1) 3.1	(1) 3.1	(0) 0.0	(7) 7.4	(1) 1.4
PRO/NP + VP (+NP) + ADJ (+NP)	(3) 11.1	(1) 3.9	(3) 8.8	(3) 5.0	(3) 6.7	(1) 2.2	(4) 12.5	(2) 6.3	(2) 10.5	(5) 5.3	(18) 25.4
PRO/NP (+ADV) + VP +ADV	(1) 3.7	(3) 11.5	(0) 0.0	(0) 0.0	(1) 2.2	(1) 2.2	(1) 3.1	(1) 3.1	(1) 5.3	(4) 4.2	—
PRO + quedarse + ADV/ ADJ (PRO + suits you + ADV/ ADJ)	(0) 0.0	(0) 0.0	(0) 0.0	(0) 0.0	(0) 0.0	(0) 0.0	(0) 0.0	(0) 0.0	(0) 0.0	(3) 3.2	—
PRO + verse/mirarse + ADV/ADJ you/that look(s) + ADV/ADJ)	(1) 3.7	(0) 0.0	(0) 0.0	(0) 0.0	(0) 0.0	(0) 0.0	(0) 0.0	(0) 0.0	(0) 0.0	(7) 7.4	(4) 5.6
(intensifier) + ADJ (+NP)	(1) 3.7	(2) 7.7	(2) 5.9	(7) 11.7	(4) 8.9	(7) 15.6	(4) 12.5	(3) 9.4	(1) 5.3	(8) 8.4	(3) 4.2
question	(2) 7.4	(4) 15.4	(6) 17.6	(8) 13.3	(8) 17.8	(4) 8.9	(0) 0.0	(1) 3.1	(2) 5.3	(7) 7.4	(7) 9.9
other (includes gratitude, sarcasm, speaker-oriented)	(1) 3.7	(1) 3.9	(2) 5.9	(3) 5.0	(6) 13.3	(5) 11.1	(1) 3.1	(4) 12.5	(2) 10.5	(11) 11.6	(5) 7.0
total (100%)	(27)	(26)	(34)	(60)	(45)	(45)	(32)	(32)	(19)	(95)	(71)

Following exposure to input, learners in the control group increased their production of *Me gusta/encanta+(NP)* (I like+NP; NP is pleasing to me) from 31.3% (10 tokens) to 34.4% (11 tokens) on the posttest and to 36.8% (7 tokens) on the delayed posttest. Learners in this condition reduced production of *NP(PRO)+ser/estar* (to be)+*ADJ* from 34.4% (11 tokens) on the pretest to 28.1% (9 tokens) on the posttest and to 26.3% (5 tokens) on the delayed posttest. Though these learners produced a token of *Qué+ADJ/ADV* (How/What+ADJ/ADV) on the pre- and posttests, they produced no tokens of this strategy on the delayed posttest.

Distribution and frequency of compliment response strategies

We turn now to an analysis of compliment response frequency. Table 3 presents overall frequency results for the pretest, posttest, and delayed posttest by treatment condition (i.e., explicit, implicit, and control) alongside the NS baseline data. The results are presented first by percentage of total compliment responses (%) (414 compliment responses produced by 26 learners in six roleplay scenarios per testing period; 236 compliment responses produced by 26 NS in six roleplays), followed by a token count (*N*). Token counts are totaled at the bottom of the table while percentage totals can be assumed to be approximately 100%. Though all results are presented here, the discussion focuses on four strategies: Appreciation, Agreement, Comment/Upgrade, and Self-praise, which were the most frequently produced by all speaker groups, as well as Fishing, which is attested in the literature for NSs of Spanish (Kryston-Morales, 1997; Lorenzo-Dus, 2001; Valdés & Pino, 1981).

At the time of the pretest, learners in all groups favored Comment/Upgrade, with learners in the implicit condition (*n*=10) producing this strategy 46.0% (23 tokens) of the time, learners in the control condition (*n*=7) producing it 40.5% (17 tokens) of the time, and learners in the explicit condition (*n*=9) producing it 40.0% (10 tokens) of the time. They also frequently produced Appreciation, with learners in the explicit condition producing it 36.0% (9 tokens) of the time, learners in the control condition producing it 33.3% (14 tokens) of the time, and learners in the implicit condition producing it 30.0% (15 tokens) of the time. Learners in the explicit condition produced Agreement 16.0% (4 tokens) of the time, with learners in the implicit condition producing it 14.0% (7 tokens) of the time, and those in the control condition producing it 11.9% (5 tokens) of the time. Production of Self-praise was low among the learners at the time of the pretest. Learners in the control condition produced 3 tokens (7.1%), those in the implicit condition produced 2 tokens (4.0%), with learners in the explicit condition producing no tokens of Self-praise. Each of the learner groups had a single token of Fishing at the time of the pretest.

Table 3. Pretest, posttest, delayed posttest compliment response type frequency by condition.

	explicit condition (*n*=9)			implicit condition (*n*=10)			control (*n*=7)			Spanish NS (*n*=14)	English NS (*n*=12)
	pretest	posttest	delayed	pretest	posttest	delayed	pretest	posttest	delayed		
compliment form	(N) %										
appreciation	(9) 36.0	(16) 51.6	(20) 39.2	(15) 30.0	(19) 28.8	(23) 34.9	(14) 33.3	(15) 37.5	(15) 34.9	(39) 25.8	(22) 25.9
agreement	(4) 16.0	(2) 6.5	(7) 13.7	(7) 14.0	(14) 21.2	(8) 12.1	(5) 11.9	(7) 17.5	(5) 11.6	(17) 11.3	(10) 11.8
comment/upgrade	(10) 40.0	(10) 32.3	(14) 27.5	(23) 46.0	(21) 31.8	(19) 28.8	(17) 40.5	(11) 27.5	(10) 23.3	(47) 31.1	(25) 29.4
fishing for compliment	(1) 4.0	(0) 0.0	(0) 0.0	(1) 2.0	(2) 3.0	(0) 0.0	(1) 2.4	(1) 2.5	(2) 4.7	(8) 5.3	(0) 0.0
self-praise	(0) 0.0	(2) 6.5	(6) 11.8	(2) 4.0	(3) 4.6	(6) 9.1	(3) 7.1	(3) 7.5	(2) 4.7	(14) 9.3	(16) 18.8
disagree	(0) 0.0	(0) 0.0	(0) 0.0	(0) 0.0	(1) 1.5	(0) 0.0	(0) 0.0	(0) 0.0	(0) 0.0	(3) 2.0	(0) 0.0
downgrade	(0) 0.0	(0) 0.0	(0) 0.0	(0) 0.0	(0) 0.0	(0) 0.0	(0) 0.0	(1) 2.5	(0) 0.0	(6) 4.0	(1) 1.2
transfer	(10) 4.0	(0) 0.0	(0) 0.0	(0) 0.0	(3) 4.6	(4) 6.1	(0) 0.0	(0) 0.0	(3) 7.0	(10) 6.6	(6) 7.1
return	(0) 0.0	(0) 0.0	(1) 2.0	(1) 2.0	(0) 0.0	(2) 3.0	(1) 2.4	(0) 0.0	(4) 9.3	(0) 0.0	(1) 1.2
offer	(0) 0.0	(0) 0.0	(0) 0.0	(1) 2.0	(0) 0.0	(0) 0.0	(0) 0.0	(0) 0.0	(0) 0.0	(4) 2.7	(2) 2.4
other	(0) 0.0	(1) 3.2	(3) 5.9	(0) 0.0	(0) 0.0	(4) 6.1	(1) 2.4	(2) 5.0	(2) 4.7	(3) 2.0	(2) 2.4
total (100%)	**(25)**	**(31)**	**(51)**	**(50)**	**(66)**	**(66)**	**(42)**	**(40)**	**(43)**	**(151)**	**(85)**

Immediately following instruction, learners in the explicit condition reduced their overall relative production of Comment/Upgrade from 40.0% (10 tokens) to 32.3% (10 tokens). This downward trend continued through the delayed posttest (27.5%, 14 tokens) toward levels produced by the NSs of Spanish and English. These learners increased their production of Appreciation from 36.0% (9 tokens) to 51.6% (16 tokens) on the posttest. This dropped to 39.2% (20 tokens) by the time of the delayed posttest, which moved away from the NS norm. Production of Agreement dropped from 16.0% (4 tokens) to 6.5% (2 tokens) on the posttest, but increased to 13.7% (7 tokens) by the delayed posttest, which was in the hoped for direction. Production of Self-praise increased from 0.0% to 6.5% (2 tokens) to 11.8% (6 tokens), bringing learners to a frequency level between that of NSs of Spanish and English. After the pretest, these learners produced no cases of Fishing.

Learners in the implicit condition also reduced their production of Comment/Upgrade, from 46.0% (23 tokens) to 31.8% (21 tokens), which continued through the delayed posttest (28.8%, 19 tokens). Like the explicit condition, this group of learners approached the NS norm. They slightly decreased the relative frequency of Appreciation from 30.0% (15 tokens) to 28.8% (19 tokens), though this increased to 34.9% (23 tokens) by the delayed posttest, which was away from the NS norm. Agreement became more frequent in this group, increasing from 14.0% (7 tokens) to 21.2% (14 tokens), though this level fell to 12.1% (8 tokens) on the delayed posttest, which was toward the NS norm. These learners increased their production of Self-praise from 4.0% (2 tokens) to 4.6% (3 tokens) to 9.1% (6 tokens), which was in the hoped for direction. Fishing increased from the pretest (2.0%, 1 token) to the posttest (3.0%, 2 tokens), but did not occur on the delayed posttest.

In the control group, learners decreased production of Comment/Upgrade from the pretest (40.5%, 17 tokens) to the posttest (27.5%, 11 tokens), which continued through the delayed posttest (23.3%, 10 tokens). Their production frequency was below the NS norm. Appreciation increased slightly among these learners from the pretest (33.3%, 14 tokens) to the posttest (37.5%, 15 tokens), with a small drop on the delayed posttest (34.9%, 15 tokens). Agreement became more frequent among these learners, increasing from 11.9% (5 tokens) on the pretest to 17.5% (7 tokens) on the posttest, but dropping back to 11.6% (5 tokens) on the delayed posttest. These learners remained stable in their production of Self-praise from the pretest (7.1%, 3 tokens) to the posttest (7.5%, 3 tokens), decreasing on the delayed posttest (4.7%, 2 tokens). The learners in the control group also remained stable in their production of Fishing from the pretest (2.4%, 1 token) to the posttest (2.5%, 1 token), though they increased frequency by a token on the delayed posttest (4.7%, 2 tokens).

The frequency analysis shows that instructed learners in both conditions moved toward a strategy distribution like that of the NSs of Spanish while

participants in the control group did not. Explicit instruction had a positive effect on increasing overall production of compliment responses, though its effect was not as strong on compliments. Meanwhile, learners in the implicit condition decreased compliment production while also increasing compliment response productions.

In addition to understanding whether instruction had an effect on the distribution and overall frequency of compliments and compliment responses, learner variability in strategy choice was also tested. A type analysis was conducted to do this and is presented in the following section.

Research question #2: Effects of instruction on variability of compliment and compliment response types.

Research question #2 asked whether learners would become more variable in their production of compliment and compliment response types following instruction, thus taking advantage of the choices they have in interaction. The results for compliment and compliment response strategy types are presented together.

Table 4 shows individual type counts from all learning conditions for compliments and compliment responses, as well as averages for each learner group. Learners are identified by a letter corresponding to their instructional group and a number. An increase in number of types indicated that learners were experimenting with different types of compliment or compliment response strategies, while remaining stable or decreasing the number of types produced indicated a lack of experimentation.

Table 4. Individual learner type counts.

	explicit instruction group					
	compliments			compliment responses		
participant	pretest	posttest	delayed	pretest	posttest	delayed
E1	5	3	5	2	2	4
E2	2	3	2	2	1	3
E3	1	2	1	3	2	3
E4	4	0	2	1	3	3
E5	4	3	3	2	2	5
E6	2	2	3	2	4	4
E7	1	5	3	2	0	1
E8	0	2	3	0	1	3
E9	1	1	2	1	3	4
average	**2.2**	**2.3**	**2.7**	**1.7**	**2.0**	**3.3**

Table 4 (continued). Individual learner type counts.

	implicit instruction group					
	compliments			compliment responses		
participant	pretest	posttest	delayed	pretest	posttest	delayed
I1	3	0	4	2	3	0
I2	6	4	3	4	4	1
I3	5	7	3	2	2	2
I4	4	0	3	3	4	4
I5	5	3	5	3	8	1
I6	6	4	4	3	4	2
I7	4	3	1	2	3	3
I8	3	2	3	2	0	2
I9	2	4	2	2	5	1
I10	4	2	4	2	4	1
average	**4.3**	**2.9**	**3.2**	**2.5**	**3.7**	**1.7**

	control group					
	compliments			compliment responses		
participant	pretest	posttest	delayed	pretest	posttest	delayed
C1	3	3	3	2	3	3
C2	5	4	2	1	4	5
C3	3	0	2	4	2	3
C4	1	3	2	4	3	2
C5	3	5	0	2	4	5
C6	4	4	5	4	5	3
C7	3	2	1	2	4	3
average	**3.1**	**3.0**	**2.1**	**2.7**	**3.6**	**3.4**

In the explicit instruction group, the average number of compliment types remained essentially equal between the pretest (2.2 types, range 0–5) and the posttest (2.3 types, range 0–5). However, the average increased slightly by the delayed posttest (2.7 types, range 1–5). From the pretest to the posttest, four learners increased compliment types (E2, E3, E7, and E8) while the remaining learners showed no change or a decrease. From the posttest to the delayed posttest, five of nine participants increased compliment types (E1, E4, E6, E8, E9).

These learners increased in the number of compliment response types from the pretest (1.7 types, range 0–3) to the posttest (2.0 types, range 0–4). This

increase continued through the delayed posttest (3.3 types, range 1–5). Individual results corroborated the group results with four learners increasing types from the pretest to the posttest (E4, E5, E8, E9) and seven increasing types from the posttest to the delayed posttest (E1, E2, E3, E5, E7, E8, E9).

Though learners in the implicit condition started the study with higher production levels of compliment types, they decreased average production from the pretest (4.3; range 3–6) to the posttest (2.9, range 0–7), rebounding somewhat by the delayed posttest (3.2, range 1–5). In fact, only two learners increased the number of compliment types from the pretest to the posttest (I3, I9), while five of the learners in this group (I1, I4, I5, I8, I10) increased the number of types of compliments that they produced on the delayed posttest.

Immediately following instruction, learners in the implicit instruction group increased from 2.5 compliment response types (range 2–4) on the pretest to 3.7 types (range 0–8) on the posttest, decreasing to 1.7 types (range 0–4) on the delayed posttest. From the pretest to the posttest, seven learners (I1, I4, I5, I6, I7, I9, I10) increased compliment response type production. On the delayed posttest, only one learner (I8) increased compliment type production.

The control group remained stable in their production of compliment types from the pretest (3.1 types, range 1–5) to the posttest (3.0 types, range 0–5), decreasing to 2.1 (range 0–5) on the delayed posttest. Two learners (C4, C5) increased production of compliment types from the pretest to the posttest and only one learner increased production (C6) from the posttest to the delayed posttest. This group of learners increased compliment response types from the pretest (2.7, range 1–4) to the posttest (3.6, range 2–5), and remained relatively stable on the delayed posttest (3.4, range 2–5). From the pretest to the posttest, five learners (C1, C2, C5, C6, C7) increased the number of types of compliment responses they produced. On the delayed posttest, three learners (C2, C3, C5) increased the number of types of compliment responses they produced.

These results indicate that learners in the two instructed groups became more variable in the types of strategies that they produced following instruction, though there was still very little variation in comparison to NSs. Explicit instruction had a delayed positive effect on the variety of both compliment and compliment response strategies produced, while implicit instruction had an immediate positive effect only on compliment responses strategies.

Sequential analysis

The changes demonstrated in the quantitative results presented above were also reflected in the qualitative sequential analysis. We focus now on Alicia and Sarah,[3] female learners in the explicit instruction condition.

Example 1 reflects overall patterns identified among learners prior to instruction, including rigid adjacency pairs, overuse of *Me gusta/encanta+(NP)* (I like+NP; NP is pleasing to me), and simple compliment responses such as

Agreement. These strategies highlight the lack of pragmalinguistic resources among learners prior to instruction.

Example 1. Pretest compliment-compliment response sequence, learner–learner role-play

1 Sarah: *Hola* (1.0) *muchacha*
Hi (1.0) girl
2 Alicia: *hola*
hi
3 Sarah: *me gusta su su zapatos*
I like your your shoes
4 Alicia: *sí*
yes
5 Sarah: *me encanta el color de los zapatos*
I love the color of your shoes
6 Alicia: *es verde y rojo*
it is green and red
7 Sarah: *mucho verde y el rojo es el color de mi pelo*
a lot of green and the red is the color of my hair
8 Alicia: (laughter) sí
(laughter) yes

After opening with a greeting sequence (lines 1 and 2), Sarah offers Alicia a *Me gusta/encanta*+NP (I like/love+NP) compliment (lines 3 and 5). Alicia responds with Agreement (line 4) and Comment/Upgrade (line 6), though she only produces one compliment response per turn. It is interesting to note that Sarah intensifies the compliment by using *Me encanta* (I love) in the second compliment that she gives (line 5). Intensification of compliments was a feature present in many of the role-play interactions among NSs and learners. Following Alicia's confirmation of Sarah's comment (line 7), the learners change topic and the remaining turns are omitted for the sake of space.

Though the posttest role-play in Example 2 is short, it still clearly shows overall instructed learner tendencies. Learners continued to use rigid adjacency pairs and to overproduce *Me gusta/encanta*+NP (I like/love+NP), but they were more likely to produce expanded compliment responses.

Example 2. Posttest compliment-compliment response sequence, learner–learner role-play

1 Sarah: *Me gusta la cosa en su* (1.0) *en tu mano es muy*
I like the thing on your (1.0) on your hand it's very
2 Alicia: *gracias um me compro la uh tienda de anti::gas*
thanks um, I buy myself the uh anti::que store

3 Sarah: *lo cuesta mucho dinero?*
it cost a lot of money?

Sarah opens the sequence with a compliment (line 1). Instead of responding with "*sí*" (yes), as she did on the pretest (Example 1, line 4), Alicia's produces an expanded compliment response, incorporating two strategies, Appreciation and Comment (line 2). This combination of strategies was highly frequent among both NS groups. Her expanded compliment response demonstrates an increase in pragmalinguistic competence.

Example 3 demonstrates features of instructed learner compliment-compliment response sequences on the delayed posttest, four weeks following instruction. Learners still overproduced *Me gusta/encanta*+NP (I like/love+NP), though they tended to produce more expanded compliment and compliment response sequences in their interactions.

Example 3. Delayed posttest compliment-compliment response sequence, learner–learner role-play

1 Sarah: *Hola, uh, me suuu me gusta sus zapatos de verde*
Hi, uh, I your I like your green shoes
2 Alicia: *hold on one second*
hold on one second
3 Sarah: *we've done these already*[4]
we've done these already
4 Alicia: *gracias*
thanks
5 Sarah: *uh, ¿dónde comprarlos?*
uh, where did you buy them?
6 Alicia: *uh, uh, pequeño tienda en la ciudad*
uh, uh, small store in the city
7 Sarah: *oh, me gusta la tienda*
oh, I like the store
8 Alicia: *sí, uh tu* (3.0) (unintelligible)
yes, uh tu (3.0) (unintelligible)

Sarah again opens the sequence with a compliment (line 1). After the learners have determined that they have role-played the scenario before (lines 2–3), Alicia picks back up and thanks Sarah for the compliment (line 4), Sarah responds with a follow-up question about where the shoes were purchased (line 5). Questions frequently served as a part of compliments among NSs; their appearance in learner compliment-compliment response sequences reflect enhanced pragmalinguistic competence. Alicia answers Sarah's question (line 6) and Sarah responds with an additional comment about the store (line 7). Alicia agrees with her (line 8) and the interaction ends.

These compliment-compliment response sequences reflect the increased pragmalinguistic competence among instructed learners. They were better able to perform expanded sequences, bringing them closer to NS norms following instruction. These positive gains were maintained or continued even after instruction was ceased.

Discussion

Unlike the findings of previous research on compliments and compliment responses, which focused primarily on only one of the two speech acts (e.g., Hernández-Herrero, 1999; Lorenzo-Dus, 2001; Nelson & Hall, 1999; Placencia & Yépez, 1999), the present study elicited multi-turn speech act sequences (e.g., Félix-Brasdefer, 2014). Role-play interactions were a minimum of three turns long (a greeting followed by a compliment-compliment response sequence), though some were much longer, up to 35 turns. Speakers consistently produced multiple instances of either compliments or compliment responses in a single turn (e.g., I like your sweater; it looks really nice on you). The following sections consist of a discussion of the results of the present study, guided by the research questions.

Research question #1: Effects of instruction on frequency of compliments and compliment responses

Me gusta/encanta+(NP) (I like+NP; NP is pleasing to me) was frequently overproduced by all learner groups at the time of the pretest. Instruction was designed to reduce the frequency of this strategy in the learners' repertoire by downplaying it while highlighting other strategies. For example, because *Qué+ADJ/ADV* (How/What+ADJ/ADV) is the most frequent strategy attested in previous literature, instruction heavily favored it in an attempt to increase its relative production among learners.

Despite efforts to curtail production of *Me gusta/encanta+(NP)* (I like+NP; NP is pleasing to me), the posttest showed that learners in all groups still produced it well above the levels produced by the NSs of Spanish in this study and far above the levels attested in the previous literature (Félix-Brasdefer & Hasler-Barker, 2015; Hernández-Herrero, 1999; Kryston-Morales, 1997; Nelson & Hall, 1999; Placencia & Yépez, 1999). NSs of Spanish produced *me gusta/encanta+(NP)* (I like+NP; NP is pleasing to me) at a level not attested in any of the previous literature. Because this compliment strategy distribution is unusual, two potential factors should be taken into account. First *Me gusta/encanta+(NP)* (I like+NP; NP is pleasing to me) frequently occurred in conjunction with another compliment (e.g., *Qué bonito suéter, me gusta* (What a pretty sweater, I like it), which increased its frequency. Second, the NSs of Spanish had lived in the United States as graduate students and had taught Spanish courses to NSs of English learning Spanish. It is possible that English-language exposure had an effect on this group of NSs. Nevertheless, learners in the explicit instruction group reduced

production of this strategy and maintained that reduction through the delayed posttest. Learners in the implicit instruction group also reduced production of this strategy, though this was not maintained through the delayed posttest. These changes indicate a positive effect for the instructional modules.

Learners also produced a high level of *NP(PRO)+ser/estar* (to be)+*ADJ* throughout the study. Given that this is a highly frequent strategy in the literature (Wolfson, 1983) and was also frequent among the NSs of English in the baseline group for this study, this result is not surprising. In fact, learners in the implicit condition favored this strategy even above *Me gusta/encanta+(NP)* (I like+NP; NP is pleasing to me), reducing production slightly between the pretest and the posttest. Though the NSs of Spanish also produced this strategy quite frequently, this is not true of the findings of previous literature (Félix-Brasdefer & Hasler-Barker, 2015; Hernández-Herrero, 1999; Kryston-Morales, 1997; Nelson & Hall, 1999; Placencia & Yépez, 1999).

The 26 participants in the study produced only three tokens of *Qué+ADJ/ADV* (How/What+ADJ/ADV) across all testing times. Because this strategy was heavily favored in the instruction, this was not the hoped for result. It is likely that, while 20 minutes of instruction may have helped learners to reduce overproduction of *Me gusta/encanta+(NP)* (I like+NP; NP is pleasing to me), it simply was not enough time to help learners to produce *Qué+ADJ/ADV* (How/What+ADJ/ADV) during role-play testing.

NSs of Spanish and English were remarkably similar in the distribution of compliment response strategies. In theory, learners would have had to reduce production of Self-praise and increase production of Fishing to become more like NSs of Spanish. The reality was that, at the time of the pretest, all of the learners overproduced Comment/Upgrade and Appreciation when compared to the NSs of Spanish and English, indicating a phase of interlanguage pragmatic development unrelated to their L1 or to the L2. They also produced Agreement frequently, though more in line with NS levels. They produced very few tokens of Self-praise or Fishing on the pretest.

Appreciation (*Gracias* [Thank you]) is a very simple, transparent, single word response strategy (Koike, 1989). Thus, it is not surprising that learners produced this strategy frequently across all three testing times. Comment/Upgrade is a syntactically and pragmatically more complicated strategy, requiring learners to add additional commentary to the initial compliment. Their overproduction of this complex strategy is somewhat surprising. However, that learners at the intermediate level were already prepared to do this speaks to their preparedness for this type of instruction.

Learners in all conditions adjusted their production toward that of the NSs of Spanish on the posttest by reducing their production of Comment/Upgrade, though learners in the control group fell below NS levels of production on the posttest. By the delayed posttest, all learner groups produced Comment/Upgrade

less than NSs of English or Spanish, although the instructed learners were closer to the NS norm giving them a slight advantage over uninstructed learners for this strategy.

In the explicit instruction group, learners increased their production of Self-praise from the pretest to the posttest, which continued through the delayed posttest. The learners in the implicit instruction group shared the same movement toward the NS norm, producing this strategy at a level that approached that of the NSs of Spanish by the delayed posttest. Learners in the control group, meanwhile, reduced their overall production of this strategy by the time of the delayed posttest. Learners in the instructed groups had an advantage over the control group participants.

Only the learners in the implicit condition reduced production of Appreciation toward NS levels, though they then increased to a level above their pretest levels by the delayed posttest. Both the learners in the explicit instruction and control groups produced this strategy above the nearly identical NS Spanish and English levels, though learners in the control group were more stable in their production levels. Learners in the implicit condition had a clear advantage in becoming more like NSs for this strategy; regrettably the change did not maintain through the delayed posttest.

Unfortunately, the target strategy of Fishing did not approach NS levels for any of the learner groups. It is possible that this strategy was underproduced because it is not attested to in the previous literature on American English compliments (Pomerantz, 1978; Wierzbicka, 2003) and is generally considered rude by NSs. It is clear that this strategy needed additional instruction for learners to feel comfortable in producing it.

In sum, there are some obvious advantages for instructed learners in terms of compliment and compliment response distribution and frequency. However, it is difficult to determine which type of instruction was the most advantageous. In fact, it appears that both types of instruction, explicit and implicit, have advantages for bringing learners of Spanish toward the NS norm for this speech act sequence and that the two modes of instruction should be combined for best results. This will be discussed in detail in the pedagogical implications (section 5.3) below.

Research question #2: Effects of instruction on variability of compliment and compliment response types.

As previous researchers have discussed (Bardovi-Harlig & Mahan-Taylor, 2003), the goal of metapragmatic instruction is to give learners choices about the language they choose to use in interaction. Because learners come to the table with previous knowledge about L1 pragmatics (Kasper, 1996; 2001), they need help to use those preconceived notions in conjunction with metapragmatic instruction in order to have the resources to make choices in their interactions in the target language. By assessing changes in the number types of compliments and

compliment responses produced by learners, we can gain a better understanding of the effects of instruction.

Learners in the explicit instruction condition did not immediately show positive effects for instruction on compliment types, though they did on compliment response types. There were delayed instructional effects for this group as they continued to increase variability in the types of compliment and compliment response strategies that they produced. Implicit instruction had an immediate negative effect on production of compliment types, though this was somewhat rectified by the delayed posttest. These learners increased compliment response type variability from the pretest to the posttest, though they did not maintain this effect. In fact, they decreased variability from the posttest to the delayed posttest. Control group learners were stable in compliment type production from the pretest to the posttest; they then decreased type variability from the posttest to the delayed posttest. Compliment responses were more variable on the posttest than the pretest for the control group, though they showed no change from the posttest to the delayed posttest.

In short, learners who received metapragmatic instruction became more variable in their production of compliments and compliment responses. Learners in the explicit instruction condition were the most successful at increasing type variability, though there were some positive effects for learners in the implicit condition. As with the frequency and distribution results, there is evidence that the two types of instruction might be more effective when presented together. This is discussed in the following section.

Pedagogical implications

The present study operationalized research-based suggestions for metapragmatic instruction (Bardovi-Harlig & Mahan-Taylor, 2003; Garcia, 1996, 2001; Ishihara & Cohen, 2010; Tatsuki & Houck, 2010). Like previous work (e.g., Félix-Brasdefer, 2008; Garcia 2001), learners were presented with complete interactions in the target language in the form of role-plays. FL textbooks that do include metapragmatic information typically offer decontextualized phrases to the learners instead of the rich context of complete interactions. Exposing learners to the full conversational context of the speech act sequence is crucial to their ability to understand how and when compliments and compliment responses are deployed in interaction.

Previous researchers have emphasized the importance of cross-cultural comparisons in metapragmatic instruction, whether between target cultures (e.g., Garcia, 2001) or between the target culture and the native culture (e.g., Félix-Brasdefer, 2008; Takahashi, 2001). The present study adds weight to the argument that learners must have the opportunity to formally examine their own pragmatic competence (Kasper, 1996, 2001) in order to take advantage of both L1 and L2 interactional resources, as the instructed learners who did this moved

toward the NS of Spanish norm and increased the variety of strategies that they produced.

An additional consideration is the reaction of both instructors and learners, who made unsolicited comments about how much they enjoyed participating in the instructional modules and testing for this experiment. Students commented that they felt like they were learning something practical and that they were able to practice interacting without feeling foolish. Instructors indicated that they appreciated the opportunity to expose their students to practical intercultural information.

Finally, by conducting both a frequency/distribution analysis as well as a type analysis, it is clear that a combination of implicit and explicit metapragmatic instruction would likely be the most effective instructional approach for enhancing learner production of compliments and compliment responses. It is possible that learners could approach NS frequency/distribution, while also increasing variability in the types of strategies that they produced. This is certainly a fruitful area for future research, which will be discussed along with limitations of the study in the following section.

Limitations and areas for future research

The present study has its limitations. Its principal limitation is the small data set, limiting analysis to descriptive statistical comparisons between groups, which was a result of multiple factors. First, attrition played a major role in limiting the number of participants. If a learner did not participate in all instructional modules and all three testing periods, that learner was excluded from the data set. Second, role-plays are not as tightly controlled as other methods of data collection. Learners did not always produce the desired speech act sequence, further reducing the number of tokens that were counted in the present study. Third, the time constraint set by the research institution limited how many role-plays could be completed. A 20-minute testing session was not always adequate to ensure that all learners were able to produce the desired speech act sequence. Finally, learners at the intermediate level may not have been advanced enough to produce the structures required for complex compliment-compliment response sequences, thus relying on transparent structures (Koike, 1989) such as Appreciation (*Gracias* [Thank you]). This may have been compounded by the tendency to associate one form, such as *Me gusta/encanta+(NP)* (I like+NP; NP is pleasing to me), with one function (Andersen, 1984).

A further limitation of the study was the restricted timeframe for metapragmatic instruction. Only 40 minutes were allotted for the instructors to present the materials to their classes. Despite this, instructed learners still demonstrated advantages over the control group participants, reflected in both the quantitative data analysis and in the qualitative sequential analysis. It is possible that additional focus on this speech act sequence would further enhance the effects seen here.

In spite of these limitations, the present study offers important information about the effects of pragmatic instruction on learner production of the compliment-compliment response sequence. Furthermore, learners were given the opportunity to learn about and practice interaction in a safe context, free from real world consequences (Bardovi-Harlig & Mahan-Taylor, 2003).

In the future, a more in-depth sequential analysis of the role-plays produced by learners would prove beneficial for understanding the effects of instruction and the passage of time on co-construction of interaction. It is also crucially important to more fully understand what monolingual NSs of Spanish do in producing compliments and compliment responses. The NS Spanish group in this study is unique precisely because they are not monolingual. However, a significant portion of the previous research on compliments and compliment responses in monolingual Spanish (e.g., Hernández-Herrero, 1999; Lorenzo-Dus, 2001; Nelson & Hall, 1999; Placencia & Yepez, 1999; Valdés & Pino, 1981) has relied on participants' recall or written questionnaires rather than more reliable oral data (Félix-Brasdefer, 2010; see Félix-Brasdefer & Hasler-Barker, 2015, and García, 2012 for exceptions). Gathering authentic oral compliment and compliment response data from monolingual Spanish speakers will provide researchers and instructors with crucial information for developing appropriate pedagogical materials.

Conclusion

The conclusions afforded by this research are multifaceted. They add to the growing body of FL pedagogical research indicating that explicit metapragmatic instruction is not only effective, but gives learners an advantage over input alone. They provide evidence that implicit metapragmatic instruction also has positive effects and should be explored as a companion to explicit instruction. This study adds to our ever increasing knowledge about the effects of metapragmatic instruction on FL learners of languages other than English. Furthermore, while much previous research in FL metapragmatic instruction has focused on advanced learners, the results of this study indicate that learners in even intermediate-level FL classrooms are able to learn to produce a variety of compliment and compliment response strategies with appropriate instruction.

Notes

1 This 20-minute time limit was set by the research institution.

2 The 50-minute limit for teaching was set by the research institution.

3 Learner names are pseudonyms.

4 Learners completed the same role-play scenarios on the pretest, posttest, and delayed posttest for the sake of comparison. The order was randomized, but some learners still noticed that the prompts were the same

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