

Title: Effect of L2 Learners' Proficiency Level on Pragmatic Performance
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This presentation reports on the results of an empirical study that explored the effect of L2 learners' proficiency level on their pragmatic performance. The data was obtained from 30 Russian native speakers and from 37 American L2 learners of Russian at the intermediate and advanced proficiency levels established by OPI testers for the ACTR. Participants in both language groups responded to a discourse completion questionnaire that featured complaints and to an assessment questionnaire.

The study hypothesized that American L2 learners at the advanced proficiency level will use more nativelike structures than learners at the intermediate level. The hypothesis was based on the frequency of downgraders and upgraders, and the number of words and moves in the learners' group for both proficiency levels, as compared to RSs. The investigation was conducted in the framework of politeness, as defined by Brown and Levinson (1987).

The results of the study did not prove the hypothesis. The study showed that overall the learners' complaints were significantly longer in terms of words and strategies than those of RSs ($p < .001$). The findings also indicated important differences among learners by showing that the advanced learners used slightly more words and moves than the intermediate learners, which was ascribed to the learners' involvement in face-saving strategies. The advanced learners were also more likely to use downgraders and upgraders as mitigating and intensifying strategies than the intermediate learners, but the results were not statistically significant. The results of the study open important areas for pedagogical intervention for learners at both proficiency levels regarding strategy selection and linguistic politeness.

Keywords: second language acquisition, proficiency level, study abroad, face-saving strategies, linguistic politeness, Russian

Brown, Penelope, and Stephen C. Levinson. (1987). *Politeness: Some universals in language usage*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.