

Effects of Intensity of Interaction, Proficiency, and Length of Stay on the Acquisition of
Conventional Expressions in L2 Pragmatics

I. Introduction

Conventional expressions include *No thanks I'm full, Sorry I'm late, and No problem*; one type of pragmalinguistic resource available to realize social demands; tacit agreements, which the members of a community presume to be shared by every reasonable co-member (Coulmas, 1981); community-wide use (Myles, Hooper, & Mitchell, 1998); operationalized as 50% or greater use by NS in speech community on task (Bardovi-Harlig, 2009)

“In terms of pragmatic competence, length of stay is a much more interesting measure than level of linguistic proficiency” (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1986, p. 174)

“Length of residence is not a reliable predictor” (Kasper & Rose, 2002, p. 230)

“Duration of stay is an uninteresting variable. What matters is intensity, not length of interaction.” Klein, Dietrich, and Noyau (1995, p. 277)

Comparison across studies made difficult by different methods, modes, populations, analyses

II. Research question:

What is the role of proficiency, length of stay, and intensity of interaction in the acquisition of conventional expressions

- a. as measured by learners' recognition of conventional expressions?
- b. as measured by learners' production of conventional expressions?

III. Method (Bardovi-Harlig, 2009)

Participants: 123 learners at 4 levels of enrollment in the Intensive English Program (Level 3, 35; Level 4, 31; Level 5, 32, Level 6, 25); 49 NS (35 Peers, 14 ESL Teachers)

Aural Recognition Task: Computer-delivered, 60 items (35 authentic, 25 modified)

Production Task: Computer-delivered oral DCT with turns, 32 scenarios

Background Questionnaire: 4 questionnaire items

1. How long have you been in the U.S.?
2. How much time do you think you spend talking to native speakers of English when you are not in class? (Please circle your answer)
Never 1 hour a week 2-4 hours a week 5 hours or more a week

3. (a) Do you use English with other International students? Yes No
 (b) If 'yes,' How often? (Please circle your answer)
 1 hour a day 2 -3 hours a day 5 or more hours a day
4. Do you watch American TV? (Please circle your answer) Yes No
 If you circled 'yes' What programs and how often do you watch them?
 (A simple table with examples and blank lines was provided)

Program	How often (approximately)
	<i>Once a week, once a day</i>

IV. Analysis

Proficiency: 3.5 hour, four-part institutional placement exam used by the Intensive English Program with reading, writing, grammar, and listening components, plus TOEFL cut-off score Level 4, 400; Level 5, 420; Level 6, 450.

LOR: Measured in months, converted to 3 bands: 1-3 (52 learners), 4-6 (40 learners), and 7-8+ months (28 learners, 24 learners 8-9 months, 1 (9 mos), 2 (12 mos), 1 (18 mos).

Intensity of Interaction: Self-report of weekly English language use outside class with native speakers, daily English language use outside class with other learners, and weekly hours of TV viewing in English. Converted to bands. Scores 0-9. Range 1-9.

Statistical Analysis: Two repeated measure logistic regressions were carried out, one for each of the recognition and production tasks. All decisions are represented as binary.

V. Results

Table 1. Distribution of Mean Length of Residence and Intensity by Proficiency Level (N=120)

	Proficiency Level							
	3 (N=35)		4 (N=30)		5 (N=31)		6 (N=24)	
	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)	Mean	(SD)
LOR (in months)	4.71	(2.16)	4.66	(2.88)	3.85	(2.13)	4.75	(3.88)
Intensity	5.06	(1.94)	4.40	(1.98)	4.74	(1.86)	4.83	(1.46)

Note. SD = standard deviation.

Table 2. Self-Reported Recognition of Expressions in Descending Order (by NS peer rating)

Expression	% Lrnrs N=120		Lrnrs Recog Score	NS P Recog Score N=35	NS T Recog Score N=14
	%	(N)			
No, thanks*	98	(117)	1.84	2.00	2.00
Thank you*	100	(119)	2.00	2.00	2.00
You're welcome*	99	(118)	1.96	2.00	2.00
No problem	100	(120)	1.97	1.97	2.00
Excuse me	100	(120)	1.99	1.97	2.00
I'm sorry	100	(120)	1.99	1.94	2.00
That'd be great	90	(108)	1.60	1.91	1.93
Nice to meet you	100	(120)	2.00	1.91	1.93
Watch out!	68	(82)	1.16	1.91	1.93
I gotta go	93	(111)	1.64	1.89	1.93
Be careful!*	100	(119)	1.87	1.89	1.86
You too*	98	(118)	1.90	1.88	2.00
I'm late	99	(119)	1.83	1.86	1.86
Shut up*	94	(112)	1.43	1.86	1.54
I'm just looking	99	(119)	1.84	1.80	2.00
I'd love to*	82	(97)	1.40	1.80	2.00
Be quiet!	97	(116)	1.68	1.80	1.71
I was wondering	77	(92)	1.21	1.80	1.71
Want a ride?	68	(82)	0.87	1.77	1.93
Can I get a ride?	91	(109)	1.34	1.77	1.64
Would you like to?	98	(118)	1.84	1.74	1.64
I'm looking for	99	(119)	1.90	1.74	1.57
Do you have a minute?	79	(95)	1.33	1.71	2.00
Thank you for having me	33	(40)	0.43	1.71	2.00
Would you mind?	96	(115)	1.72	1.71	1.93
Can I leave a message?	98	(118)	1.69	1.66	2.00
Other plans	84	(101)	1.33	1.65	1.07
Thanks for your time*	95	(113)	1.63	1.60	1.93
Nice to see you	95	(114)	1.72	1.54	2.00
That works for me*	82	(99)	1.33	1.43	1.77
Sure thing*	35	(41)	0.49	1.37	1.62
Keep it down	83	(99)	1.24	1.31	1.50
My place	61	(73)	0.88	1.29	1.64
The place is messy	62	(74)	0.89	1.11	1.36
Excuse the mess	23	(28)	0.32	1.03	1.71

Note. %=Percent of learners who reported recognizing an expression. * indicates that one response was missing; number of respondents for those items was 119. Maximum score = 2. NS P = Native-speaker peers; NS T= Native-speaker teachers. Ordered by the recognition scores of native speaker peers.

Table 3. Tests of Model Effects from Logistic Regression for Recognition

Source	Type III		
	Wald Chi-Square	df	Sig.
Item	781.318	28	.000
Proficiency	4.757	3	.190
LOR	4.961	2	.084
Intensity	9.753	2	.008

Table 4. Estimated Marginal Means from Logistic Regression for Recognition

Proficiency				
Proficiency (Level)	Mean	Std. Error	95% Wald Confidence Interval	
			Lower	Upper
3	.89	.019	.85	.92
4	.92	.014	.89	.95
5	.92	.014	.89	.95
6	.92	.015	.89	.95
LOR				
LOR (grouped)	Mean	Std. Error	95% Wald Confidence Interval	
			Lower	Upper
1-3 mos	.93	.010	.91	.95
4-6 mos	.91	.015	.88	.94
7-8+ mos	.90	.017	.86	.93
Intensity				
Intensity (grouped)	Mean	Std. Error	95% Wald Confidence Interval	
			Lower	Upper
1-3	.88	.015	.85	.91
4-6	.92	.011	.90	.94
7-9	.93	.017	.90	.97

Table 5. The Use of Expressions on the Production Task

ID	Context	Expression	Learners n=120		NS P n=35		NS T n=14	
			%	(N)	%	(N)	%	(N)
R15	Introduction	Nice to meet you	90	(108)	89	(31)	86	(12)
R6	<i>Have a nice day!</i>	You too	89	(106)	94	(33)	100	(14)
R19a	More food	No, {thanks/thank you}	61	(73)	74	(26)	71	(10)
R19b		I'm full/stuffed	61	(72)	77	(27)	79	(11)
		I'm full	61	(72)	40	(14)	29	(4)
		I'm stuffed	0	(0)	37	(13)	50	(7)
R1	Dog hit by car	{I am/I'm} (intensifier) sorry	58	(69)	71	(25)	64	(9)
R12a	Shopping no help	No, {thanks/thank you}	46	(55)	69	(24)	79	(11)
R17	Make-up test	Thank you	40	(48)	94	(33)	71	(10)
I9	Movies	Be quiet	39	(46)	60	(21)	21	(3)
I10	Busy teacher	{Thanks / Thank you} for	37	(44)	94	(33)	71	(10)
I1	Broken chair	Be careful	36	(43)	60	(21)	64	(9)
R16	Father died	{I'm/am} + intensifier + sorry	34	(41)	77	(27)	93	(13)
R12b	Shopping no help	{I'm/am} just looking	33	(40)	71	(25)	64	(9)
R7	Late (5 mins)	Sorry {I'm / I am} late	32	(38)	69	(24)	71	(10)
R4	Shopping	I'm looking for	28	(34)	54	(19)	43	(6)
I8	Late (25 min)	Sorry {I am / I'm} late	23	(27)	60	(21)	64	(9)
I12	Bus	Watch out	22	(26)	71	(25)	71	(10)
R9	Gave ride	No problem	20	(24)	80	(28)	64	(9)
I3	Puddle	Watch out	16	(19)	86	(30)	50	(7)
I4	Closing	Adj {to see/seeing} you	12	(14)	71	(25)	64	(9)
R3	Closing, party	{Thanks / thank you} for {having/inviting} me	4	(5)	74	(26)	50	(7)
I11	Cell phone	Gotta go	4	(5)	57	(20)	50	(7)
R2	Offer of help	That {'d/would} be + adj	3	(3)	66	(23)	57	(8)

Note. I= initiating utterance; R=responding utterance; NS P = Native-speaker peers; NS T= Native-speaker teachers; {} show alternation; () indicates an optional element

Table 6. Tests of Model Effects from Logistic Regression for Production

Source	Type III		
	Wald Chi-Square	df	Sig.
Item	409.319	21	.000
Proficiency	53.655	3	.000
LOR	1.450	2	.484
Intensity	6.551	2	.038

Table 7. Estimated Marginal Means from Logistic Regression for Production

Proficiency				
Proficiency (Level)	Mean	Std. Error	95% Wald Confidence Interval	
			Lower	Upper
3	.21	.023	.16	.25
4	.29	.024	.25	.34
5	.31	.023	.27	.36
6	.46	.027	.40	.51
LOR				
LOR (grouped)	Mean	Std. Error	95% Wald Confidence Interval	
			Lower	Upper
0-3 mos	.33	.023	.29	.38
3-6 mos	.30	.021	.26	.34
7-8+ mos	.30	.023	.25	.35
Intensity				
Intensity (grouped)	Mean	Std. Error	95% Wald Confidence Interval	
			Lower	Upper
1-3	.27	.020	.23	.31
4-6	.34	.019	.30	.38
7-9	.32	.031	.26	.38

Table 8. Speakers with whom learners interact by intensity score (self-report)

Intensity	NS Friends		IEP Teacher		Conversation Partner		Service People		Main-tenance Landlord		Fitness Employ		NS Sports	NS Worship	Other					
	%	(N)	%	(N)	%	(N)	%	(N)	%	(N)	%	(N)	%	(N)	%	(N)				
1-3 (N=37)	27	(10)	57	(21)	19	(7)	68	(25)	14	(5)	0	(0)	14	(5)	8	(3)	14	(5)	5	(2)
4-6 (N=66)	58	(38)	46	(30)	11	(7)	58	(38)	6	(4)	3	(2)	6	(4)	20	(13)	11	(7)	6	(1)
7-9 (N=17)	65	(11)	59	(10)	6	(1)	77	(13)	12	(2)	12	(2)	12	(2)	24	(4)	24	(4)	6	(1)

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