

Requesting on WhatsApp: The interplay of interactional competence and deontics in English as an additional language

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Abstract: This exploratory study focuses on changes in the accomplishment of requests by an adult English as an additional language speaker/learner interacting on WhatsApp for nine months. The analysis follows a microanalytic approach to digital interaction informed by recent developments within longitudinal conversation analysis. It unpacks the array of semiotic and interactional resources that the focal learner employs to make class-related requests to the teacher. Longitudinal comparison of four request sequences over time suggests that the differences in how the requesting posts are designed and responded to index both increased interactional competence to accomplish requests in English on WhatsApp as well as evolving socio-interactional ties between the learner and the teacher. Despite the popularity of text chats, only a handful of studies have investigated how the practices employed by additional language learners to engage in text chat interaction change over time and this work has not focused on naturally occurring interactions. The present study thereby contributes new understandings to text chat interaction with additional language speakers and to longitudinal research on interactional competence development in online settings.

Key words: L2 interactional competence; text chats; English as an additional language; requests; deontics; social interaction; conversation analysis; interactional linguistics; text messaging; WhatsApp.

Introduction

Requesting is a ubiquitous social activity. Research conducted within Conversation Analysis (CA) (Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson, 1974) and Interactional Linguistics (IL) (Couper-Kuhlen & Selting, 2018) has shed much light on the sequential and linguistic

properties of how requests are implemented in talk-in-interaction. For one, requests constitute a variety of linguistic and embodied forms, which speakers select according to their rights to make a given request to someone and anticipated contingencies associated with the recipient's ability, availability or willingness to fulfil the request. For example, syntactic realisations using the imperative have been reported to embody high entitlement to make a request and to present it as non-problematic (Craven & Potter, 2010). In comparison to requests syntactically designed as declarative statements, such as requests formulated with the verb *wonder* (Curl & Drew, 2008; Drew & Couper-Kuhlen, 2014; Fox & Heinemann, 2017), modal-auxiliary interrogative formatted requests, such as *can/could you* have been shown to involve little orientation to contingencies, i.e., “displayed awareness of, or orientation to, factors that could compromise the grantability of a request” (Drew & Couper-Kuhlen, 2014, p. 15). Additionally, declarative formatted requests seem to embody only “a minimal claim” to the requester's rights to implement them (Stevanovic, 2011, p. 5). The notions of contingency and entitlement are interrelated as “displaying no awareness of possible contingencies affecting grantability construes the speaker as an entitled requester, whereas displaying awareness of such contingencies construes the requester as lacking such entitlement” (Drew & Couper-Kuhlen, 2014, p. 15). Furthermore, participants in social interaction orient to the overall dispreferred nature of requesting by, for instance, expanding their requesting actions to include reasons for the request (e.g., their lack of access to something). These pre- and post-expansions (Schegloff, 2007)¹ provide context for the actual request, help increase the chances of eliciting an offer, and work towards avoiding rejections (Taleghani-Nikazm, 2006).

The choice from this array of available formats to make requests relies on speakers' interactional competence (IC) (Berger & Pekarek Doehler, 2015; Eskildsen & Theodórsdóttir, 2017; Hall, Hellermann, & Pekarek Doehler, 2011; Pekarek Doehler, 2018; Pekarek Doehler & Berger, 2019; Waring, 2018) and may be challenging for additional language (L2) speakers/learners especially at early learning stages. Not only do they have to

⁽¹⁾ Further research is needed to determine whether the notions of pre- and post-expansions can be applied to text chats. Therefore, they are not used in this paper to refer to accompanying actions in the requests analysed.

produce talk that is recognisable as implementing a request, but they also have to do so in culturally and socially accepted ways, which may differ significantly from how requests are implemented in the other language(s) that they speak (see, for example, Zinken & Ogiermann, 2013 on the use of imperative forms in Polish). Accordingly, a number of studies have documented L2 learners' practices to make requests in interaction (Alcón-Soler, 2017; Al-Gahtani & Roever, 2012; Cunningham, 2016; Taleghani-Nikazm and Huth, 2010; Youn, forthcoming). However, the practices deployed by L2 English speakers to do requesting in text chat interaction, i.e., synchronous or quasi-synchronous exchanges that take place in online platforms or applications, such as WhatsApp², have not yet been investigated from a microanalytic perspective. This paper helps to fill this gap. Its exploratory analysis is meant as a contribution to our understanding of novice L2 English learners' requests over time in WhatsApp group interaction. It contributes to the theorisation and empirical investigation of IC by documenting changes related to: 1) the linguistic and paralinguistic resources used to design the requests as well as how the requests are sequentially organised and responded to; and 2) participants' relationship status and related deontic concerns. The findings showcase possibilities and challenges for IC development research in text-based online spaces and have implications for practice.

L2 speakers' requests

The accomplishment of requests by L2 learners has been the focus of a number of second language, developmental pragmatics and language assessment studies (Alcón-Soler, 2017; Al-Gahtani & Roever, 2012; Cunningham, 2016; Youn, forthcoming). Drawing on mixed-method approaches, which often include CA, this body of research shows that learners at low proficiency levels often lack groundwork in terms of the contextualisation of their requests. For instance, comparing the requests of high-level and low-level learners in a role-play assessment situation, Youn (forthcoming) reports that the high-level learners use a broader range of

⁽²⁾ The WhatsApp application is a communication platform that allows users to interact via text or voice chat, to send images and also to make audio and video calls. Participants can type or record an unlimited number of posts (messages) simultaneously in dyadic or group conversations, and have a range of semiotic resources at their disposal, such as emojis and GIFs.

linguistic and interactional resources to indicate their lack of entitlement to make requests to a professor (e.g., bi-clausal formats at different sequential positions, such as *I was wondering if* complemented by the reason for the requested action). In contrast, low-level learners tend to orient to requests as an imposing dispreferred action in less varied syntactically complex ways (e.g., with *I need* constructions) and rely on paralinguistic resources such as prosodic contours and hesitation markers. Regardless of these differences, Youn's (forthcoming) analyses show that both groups of learners orient to matters of preference, entitlement and contingencies in implementing requests. That is, L2 learners do not only design an action that will be recognised as a request, but also work towards avoiding rejections and maintaining social solidarity.

Similarly, in a study about the preference organization of requests in L2 German conversations with advanced learners, Taleghani-Nikazm and Huth (2010) found that all L2 learners in their study oriented to matters of preference organization in implementing requests, despite not having received instruction on the preference structure of requests. The authors claim that this may speak for a universal pragmatic skill which learners bring from their first languages. Importantly, they argue that studies need to go beyond the analysis of lexical and morpho-syntactic aspects of language when describing the sociopragmatic abilities of L2 learners, i.e., L2 learners' requests should not be analysed without close consideration of the larger sequential contexts and specific production contingencies in which they are embedded.

The current study draws on this work, which has traditionally used role-play, elicited spoken data and cross-sectional research designs to investigate a set of requests made by one L2 learner over time in the understudied context of text chats. Despite text chat popularity, only a handful of studies have looked at how L2 learners' methods to engage in *text-in-interaction* change over time (e.g., González-Lloret, 2008; 2011) and these studies have not focused on naturally occurring L2 interactions or on requesting. In investigating the changes related to one single learner in this particular setting, this paper offers a small but novel contribution to the study of L2 learners' methods to implement requests as well as to research within the framework of longitudinal CA and L2 IC development, which is discussed in the next section.

Interactional competence development

In this paper, interactional competence is understood as “the systematic procedures (of turn-taking, repairing, opening or closing a conversation, et cetera) by which members of a social group organise their conduct in a mutually understandable and accountable way” (Berger & Pekarek Doehler, 2015, p. 235). CA research carried out with spoken data suggests that such procedures are not merely adapted from speakers’ first language(s) to their additional language(s), but “recalibrated [and] adapted in the course of L2 development” (Berger & Pekarek Doehler, 2015, p. 235). Moreover, IC develops as people get to know each other and in relation to changes in their status as members of communities of practice, such as classrooms (Hellermann, 2007), work settings (Nguyen, 2012) or home stays (Greer, 2019; Pekarek Doehler, 2018). For example, Greer (2019) shows how an L2 English speaker in dinner interactions with his host family moves from providing brief responses to topic proffers about the news of the day to expanding his responses in a more detailed telling fashion. Pekarek Doehler and Berger (2019) document changes in how an upper intermediate L2 French learner accomplishes word searches in conversations with her host family. The changes include not only diversification of methods to initiate word searches (in addition to the initial *how do you say* format), but also less reliance on the co-participant’s provision of the searched terms, which indicates the learner’s higher epistemic authority, autonomy and confidence with regard to the L2.

Space prevents a detailed review of other studies, but together, this body of work indicates that changes in L2 learners’ methods to engage in social interaction are intrinsically intertwined with changes in how participants understand themselves to be at different points in time. This includes constant recalibration of what they know or are expected to know (the epistemic domain), (Pekarek Doehler & Berger, 2019) and also of what actions they have the rights to implement (the deontic domain), which is an aspect yet to be explored by longitudinal L2 IC research. *Deontic authority*, i.e., one’s power (in relation to another) to determine action (Stevanovic, 2011, 2018), is unavoidably present whenever speakers are engaged in talk about future actions, especially in cases when an utterance’s propositional content relates to non-verbal actions to be performed by the recipient (Stevanovic, 2018). Therefore, the data analysed in the present study – requests for action addressed to a teacher – make deontic concerns

particularly relevant. The framework of deontics distinguishes between participants' *deontic status* and *deontic stance*. Deontic status refers to "the relative position of power that a participant is considered to have or not to have, irrespective of what he or she publicly claims" (Stevanovic, 2018, p. 375). Deontic stance, in turn, relates to how a given deontic status may be encoded in participants' actions (e.g., through different grammatical realizations and lexical choices). The notions of deontic status and deontic stance will be used in the analysis in order to explore how changes over time in the focal learner's methods to implement requests reflect changes in participants' relationships and deontic authority.

L2 IC in text chats

Given the conversational nature of text chats and their pervasive use in present-day social interactions (Ceci, 2022; König & Bahlo, 2022), a growing body of studies has drawn on conversation analytical methods to explore L2 text chat interaction (Negretti, 1999; Tudini, 2007, 2010, 2014; González-Lloret, 2008, 2011; Abe & Roever 2019, 2020). Specifically drawing on the notion of L2 IC, Abe and Roever (2019, 2020) analyse the openings and closings of online task-based text interactions from dyads at three different levels of L2 proficiency. Abe and Roever (2019) report that more proficient learners tend to engage in longer preliminary sequences and display a broader array of linguistic resources to accomplish first-idea proffers in comparison to beginner- and mid-level learners. Similarly, Abe and Roever (2020) document that proficient learners' closings tend to include extended sequences, orientation to relationship matters (rather explicit orientation to task completion only) as well as smooth transitions from topical talk to the actual closing. In contrast, beginner-level learners' closings are done without topic extensions and in a less subtle stepwise manner. Due to the cross-sectional design of this research, however, changes in same L2 learners' interactional behaviour over time were not addressed.

To date, only a handful of microanalytic studies have focused on changes over time in text chats. For example, González-Lloret (2008, 2011) use CA to investigate L2 Spanish learners engaged in a task-based collaborative project with L1 speakers through Yahoo! Messenger. González-Lloret (2008) documents changes in how the pronouns *tu* (you, informal) and *usted* (you, formal) are used over time as a result of repair. Similarly,

González-Lloret (2011) show how an L2 learner moves from producing minimal or no response to their co-participant's trouble-telling to displaying sympathy and affiliating with the teller. Although both studies analyse instances of text chat interaction within a short timeframe (8 weeks), they showcase that text chats can be studied from an L2 IC development perspective.

In contrast to this previous work, the present study analyses L2 text chats from a decidedly L2 IC developmental perspective (e.g., Wooton, 1997; see Skogmyr Marian & Balaman, 2018 for an extensive review of research on L2 IC). It explores the changes in one learner's methods to implement naturalistic requests to the teacher over nine months on a multi-party WhatsApp group. This study's account of changes in the participant's interactional practices over time considers the import of prior actions for actions taking place later within larger time spans as well as evolving socio-interactional rapport between the focal participants (Deppermann & Pekarek Doehler, 2021). It thus responds to recent calls for more longitudinal L2 IC studies addressing how changes in L2 learners' interactional practices are intertwined with participants' shared interactional histories and evolving social relations with one another (e.g., Deppermann & Pekarek Doehler, 2021; Pekarek Doehler & Berger, 2018, 2019).

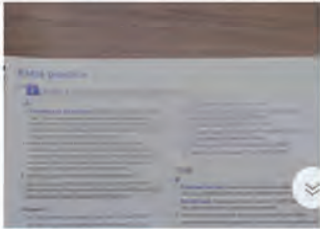
Data and procedures

The data for this study stem from a text chat data base of 8 adult learners/speakers interacting on WhatsApp for nine months. In total, the chat log comprising the entire data contains 819 posts. The extracts selected for this study consist of multi-semiotic text talk comprising linguistic and paralinguistic resources, such as punctuation and emojis.

The students and the teacher are native speakers of Portuguese and used the chat in parallel to weekly face-to-face B1-level classes at an English language programme in Brazil. The WhatsApp group was created by the teacher in order to offer students and the teacher a channel of communication in addition to face-to-face class. The group's entire chat log was shared with the researcher by the teacher with students' consent. All names were replaced by pseudonyms.

To facilitate the analysis and the reading of the posts, the original screenshots have been rendered in a transcript format (Fig. 1).

Figure 1. Transcript sample

Line number	Date	Time	Participant ID	Post (formatted as it appears in the chat, including misspellings, omissions and emojis)
01	22.08.18	15:48	MAR:	Hi teacher, you can send here the exercise of lesson A, unit 7, page 146, corrected, please 🙏🙏🙏🙏
02				
03				
04		17:53	TEA:	<<lines 1-3 quoted>> Most certainly, dear Marta!
05				Let me just get to the campus and I
06				will photograph it 📷
07		17:56	MAR:	👍👍👍👍
08		18:15	TEA:	<<picture of exercise>> There you go.
				
09		18:40	MAR:	Thanks dear teacher

Quote (usage of reply function is indicated by double angle brackets, including quoted lines, immediately followed by accompanying text)

Shared content (shared content, e.g. pictures, appears inside double angle brackets, it is followed by accompanying text)

The present study follows a microanalytic approach to digital interaction (Giles et al., 2017; Meredith et al., 2021), which draw on the CA analytical principles of sequential organisation and participant orientation (i.e., how participants themselves understand a prior action, which is observed in how they respond to it). The use of CA methods to the study of text-chat interaction mediated by smartphone applications is considered appropriate due to the fact that users' posts, i.e., "individual contribution[s] appearing as a single time-stamped unit on the interactants' screen" (Abe & Roever, 2019, p. 4, see also Tudini, 2014), are exchanged and not produced in isolation. They are sequentially organized and build on each other to form largely coherent courses of action (Meredith & Stokoe, 2014; Marmorstein & König, 2021; Rendle-Short, 2015; Sampietro, 2019).

The analysis is also informed by recent developments within longitudinal CA and L2 IC development (Deppermann & Pekarek Doehler, 2021; Hellermann, 2007; Nguyen, 2012; Pekarek Doehler et al., 2018; Pekarek Doehler & Berger, 2018, 2019). At the core of this research is the tracing of how learners diversify their interactional practices in order to accomplish a given action or activity in ways that display "increased ability for context-sensitive

conduct” (Pekarek Doehler et al., 2018, p. 17). Within this framework, in order to trace changes over time, the analytical procedures involve comparing multiple instances of the same participant accomplishing the same action (e.g., a request) under a recurrent speech exchange system with the same co-participants or participants of the same category. The isolation of one specific interactional environment and one participant assured comparability and sequential post-by-post iterative analysis was carried out with each instance in order to track the changes in request practices over time.

Due to differences in how texts are organized compared to face-to-face conversation and in the semiotic resources that texters mobilise to accomplish actions in text-chat interaction, a direct transfer of research findings and methods from L2 IC research of spoken data is problematic. Acknowledging this constraint, the analysis proposed in this paper is exploratory. It is based on the micro (grammar, lexicon, and para-linguistic features) and macro (sequential position, deontic status, date and time) features of the WhatsApp exchanges. As participants themselves resort to these as contextual features in understanding and producing action, considering this constellation of elements is key to understanding L2 text-chat interaction from an emic perspective (ten Have 2007).

The analysis focuses on chronologically organised requests to the teacher. The requests relate to an answer key for extra non-mandatory practice exercises that were not reviewed in class and for which an answer key was not available to the students. Consequently, in order to obtain the answer key for these exercises, students had to request it from the teacher. Whether or not the WhatsApp group was explicitly established a priori as a means to obtain the answer key is unclear. What is known is that the students were instructed to raise questions about the exercises in class and that this was often enacted at the beginning of the lesson. As the teacher was commonly present in the classroom before the start of the lesson, students often also used this slot to ask questions about the execution of the exercises.

The specific questions that guide the analysis are:

- a. How does Marta, the focal learner, design each request?
How are these requests treated by the teacher?
and
- b. How does the design of Marta’s requests change over time? What changes in how Marta’s requests are responded to over time?

Analysis

The analysis accounts for how the four instances of the same-type same-participant requests were accomplished throughout the data collection. The four cases are compared in relation to differences in the design of the requesting posts and how they are treated by the teacher.

The first two requests sent by Marta (indicated by MAR in the transcripts) took place in the first month of interaction in the WhatsApp group. Prior to them, activity in the chat consisted of brief exchanges initiated by the teacher about topics related to the lessons (e.g., the sharing of links to instructional videos on specific grammar points) and some exchanges among fellow students about organisational matters related to the course.

Excerpt 1 shows the first request made by Marta, which was sent in the afternoon a few hours prior to the face-to-face lesson.


Excerpt 1 “Most certainly” (22.08.18, 15:48-18:40)

01 22.08.18 15:48 MAR: Hi teacher, you can send here the
 02 exercise of lesson A, unit 7, page 146,
 03 corrected, please 🙏🙏🙏🙏

04 17:53 TEA: <<lines 1-3 quoted>> Most certainly, dear Marta!
 05 Let me just get to the campus and I
 06 will photograph it 📷

07 17:56 MAR: 🙏🙏🙏🙏🙏

08 18:15 TEA: <<picture of exercise>> There you go.



09 18:40 MAR: Thanks dear teacher

The requesting utterance (lines 1-3) is designed with the modal *can* auxiliary in a declarative format *you can send here* (line 1), with *here* referring to the WhatsApp group. The requested object is phrased as *exercise corrected* with the specification of its location in the textbook appearing between these two lexical items, which results in *the exercise of lesson A, unit 7, page 146, corrected* (lines 2-3). Two additional components are added at the

end of Marta's requesting post: *please* and a series of 'face throwing a heart-shaped kiss' emojis (line 3).

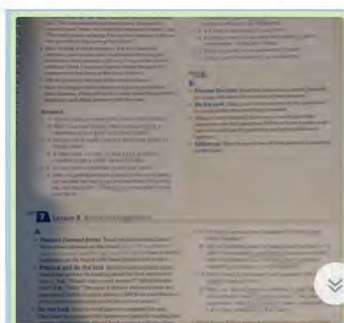
The teacher's response, sent two hours later, displays that Marta's actions are recognised as doing requesting despite the unconventional format of Marta's requesting utterance³. It starts with the phrase *most certainly*, accompanied by the endearment term *dear*, the student's name and an exclamation mark (line 4). What follows is a promise to grant the request (which will happen twenty minutes later, line 8) and an account (Antaki, 1994) for the non-immediate compliance with the requested action, i.e., the need to get to campus first to be able to take a picture of the answer key and share it in the WhatsApp group (lines 5-6). In accounting for not granting the request immediately, the teacher orients to the request as one that is urgent. This potentially relates to their pre-arrangement of discussing doubts related to the exercises in class. As the lesson was scheduled to start at 19:30 on that day, the sooner the teacher responded, the more time Marta would have to go through the exercise key and compile her questions to the teacher. The teacher's emphatic response not only confirms that requesting the answer key through the WhatsApp group is in line with Marta's deontic status as a student, but also upgrades the deontic stance encoded in the requesting post. The use of the endearment term *dear* preceding Marta's name gives the interaction a more sincere intimate and personal quality (see Clayman, 2010 on address terms). Accordingly, after the answer key is shared by the teacher (line 8), Marta recycles this term in the last post, containing a sequence-closing third (Schegloff, 2007) *Thanks dear teacher* (line 9).

A similarly designed request (with a modal-*can* declarative, equivalent lexical choices and emojis), is sent by Marta a week later (Excerpt 2). The requested object is the answer key for the exercises of the subsequent textbook lesson. This second request further shows the interplay between the low deontic stance encoded in Marta's requesting action, which will now be accompanied by an apology, and the deontic upgrading work that is done by the teacher.

⁽³⁾ Modal-*can* declaratives are not conventionally used to make requests in English. Rather, the modal *can* auxiliary is used to make requests with an interrogative format, i.e., through *can you-* or *can I-* constructions comprising *aux + subject + main/lexical verb* (for an overview of request formats, see Couper-Kuhlen, 2014).

Excerpt 2 (27.08.18, 21:18 - 28.08.18, 08:20)

01 27/08/18 21:18 MAR: Hello teacher, you can send
 02 the exercise of lesson B, unit 7, page 146,
 03 corrected, please 🙏🙏🙏🙏
 04 Sorry for the inconvenience
 05 21:18 MAR: 🙏🙏
 06 21:22 VAN: Only to pag 146
 07 28/08/18 07:58 TEA: Good morning, everyone!
 08 How's it going?
 09 There is NO inconvenience at ALL
 10 😊.
 11 I am sending here the key answer for
 12 page 146/ Extra Practice: Lesson A
 13 and Lesson B 👍
 14 Besides that some workbook
 15 exercises.
 16 Have a great day, dear ones!
 17 07:58 TEA: <<picture of answer key>>



18 07:58 TEA: <<picture of workbook exercises>>
 19 07:59 TEA: 📄 workbook exercises
 20 08:00 TEA: 🙏
 21 08:20 MAR: 🌸🙏

The requesting utterance (lines 1-3) is again phrased as a declarative with the modal *can* auxiliary and the answer key formulated with reference to its location in the textbook through the use of the terms *exercise* and *corrected*. The adverb *here* used to refer to the WhatsApp group in Excerpt 1 is not used this time. The term *please* is also employed again as a separate component (see the use of the comma after *corrected*) along with the same series of emojis as in Excerpt 1 (line 3). This time, Marta's requesting post contains an apology *Sorry for the inconvenience* (line 4). It is complemented by the use of the 'see-no-evil and hear-

no-evil monkey' emojis (line 5) in a subsequent post. Through the apology and the categorization of her requesting action as an inconvenience, Marta treats the action of requesting the answer key from the teacher as problematic. The fact that Marta's post was sent after nine o'clock in the evening could account for this additional action (absent in the Excerpt 1), as Marta might be orienting to the synchronicity of the medium and the possibility that the teacher may have seen her message when it was already night time.

The teacher's response the next day is designed as a dense single post made of several components including the statement *There is no inconvenience at all* with *no* and *all* in capital letters, and a smile emoji (lines 9-10). By downgrading Marta's claim of inconvenience with graphically-marked emphasis on *no* and *all* and a smiley emoji, the teacher upgrades the deontic stance encoded in Marta's requesting post. She confirms that Marta's request is in line with the rights and obligations of their relationship (as teacher and student) at this point. A description of the content that is about to be shared follows (lines 11-15). It specifies that besides the answer key, the teacher is going to share workbook exercises. This is done through separate posts containing pictures (lines 17-18). The fact that the teacher then shares not only the requested answer key, but also extra exercises, indexes the teacher's own deontic status. By complying with the request and granting something that is beyond what is requested, the teacher acts according to what could be normatively expected of her, e.g., providing students with the instructional resources and materials. Two additional posts are sent next, one referring back to the second picture (line 19) and one containing a closing affiliative move with the 'face throwing a heart-shaped kiss' emoji (line 20). The sequence ends with Marta's emoji-based post (line 21).


As outlined in the introduction, CA/IL research shows that request designs reflect participants' orientations to their rights to make a given request as well as the contingencies involved in granting it (Curl & Drew, 2008; Drew & Couper-Kuhlen, 2014; Taleghani-Nikazm & Huth, 2010). The analysis of Excerpts 1 and 2 (and later requests) suggest that Marta orients to potential contingencies and deontic concerns in initiating the specific action of requesting the answer key from the teacher. Arguably, she does so in unconventional ways, namely by adding the adverb *please* and a series of emojis (which will be dropped in later requests), resources that are available to her at that particular

stage of her language learning trajectory and in the medium being used. The adverb *please* is pervasively present in requests in English (Wootton, 2007). However, speakers of Portuguese tend to limit the use of the *please*-equivalent “por favor” to accomplish actions that carry implications of higher imposition on the interlocutor (Dias & Godoi, 2011). In later requests when Marta and the teacher’s relationship has evolved, Marta’s linguistic and interactional resources to accomplish requests follow a more conventionalized design and do not include *please*. This suggests that *please* is used in the first requests to minimize the imposition on the teacher. Furthermore, the throwing-a-kiss emoji has been reported to be used to foster affiliation in text chat closings (Sampietro, 2019). Arguably therefore, the combination of *please* + emojis projects an affiliative yet low deontic stance that shows Marta’s orientation to the dispreferred nature of the action she is implementing in relation to the teacher and their relationship up until that point. The fact that they are added to the requesting post as final components separated by a comma lend them an incremental tone (on ‘increments’ in face-to-face interaction, see Ford et al., 2002), as if they were retrospectively acting on remedying or fine-tuning the prior action of the requesting utterance.

Excerpt 3 shows Marta’s third request, which was sent two months later. One striking distinction between Excerpts 1 and 2 and Excerpt 3 is the inclusion of prefaces and accounts. In Excerpt 3, the intra-post request preface is phrased with the construction *I want* followed by the statement *I deleted all messages from my cell phone, without wanting to* (lines 1-4).

Excerpt 3 (30.10.18, 06:21-11:43)

01	30/10/18	06:21	MAR:	Hi friends! Dear teacher, I want to
02				correct the exercises on pages 148
03				and 149, I deleted all messages from
04				my cell phone, without wanting to.
05				Can you send the page photos again?
06		06:22	MAR:	I got up early 😊😊
07		06:36	LUC:	Good morning!!
08				Me too!! 4:38 😊
09		06:37	GIS:	Good Morning friends
10				I got up at now 😊
11		07:15	MAR:	I , 4:10 🙏
12		07:52	TEA:	OMG 😊!!! Early birds, huh?!

- 13 Well, but the saying goes:
- 14 "Early birds catch the worms" 🐛
- 15 07:53 TEA: <<picture of the answer key>> Page 148
- 
- 16 07:53 TEA: <<picture of the answer key>> Page 149
- 17 07:55 MAR: Thanks teacher 🙏🌸

The request itself appears next in the same post (line 5), and the declarative *you can* construction used in the first two requests is replaced by the more conventional interrogative *can you* construction followed by a question mark. The answer key is now formulated as *the page photos* (line 5) with reference to the *I want* preface containing the specification of the pages for which Marta needs the key (lines 2-3). The previously used *please* and 'face throwing a heart-shaped kiss' emojis are no longer used. The fact that these final components are not used when the prefaces are included provides further support for the claim that their appearance in Excerpts 1 and 2 indexes matters of contingency, preference and deontics. By prefacing the request statement with an explanation in Excerpt 3, Marta thus displays continued orientation to the requested action as dispreferred and imposing, thus requiring some prefatory work (Drew & Couper-Kuhlen 2014). Comparatively, in Excerpts 1 and 2, Marta seemingly resorts to *please* and the emojis in order to reduce the imposition of her action on the teacher and display sensitiveness to potential contingencies involving the grantability of the requests.

Differences in request design over time also index participants' interactional histories and evolving relationship status. For one, Marta needs to account for the fact that she is requesting the same item for the second time. Second, while the teacher complies with the proposed action, her responses differ from those in Excerpts 1 and 2 in that they do not display interactional work designed to upgrade the deontic stance encoded in Marta's requests. In Excerpt 3, the teacher simply

provides the requested pages. All in all, the changes concerning Marta’s post design to make requests, and how the teacher treats them, indicate that it has been established that Marta holds rights to request answer keys in the WhatsApp chat. This is further showcased by Marta’s fourth request, a month later.

Excerpt 4 (01.12.18, 14:58-17:34)

01 01/12/18 14:58 MAR: Hi teacher
 02 I would like to confirm the answers
 03 of the exercises. Can you send me
 04 again? 🙏
 05 14:59 MAR: <<picture of filled out exercises>>

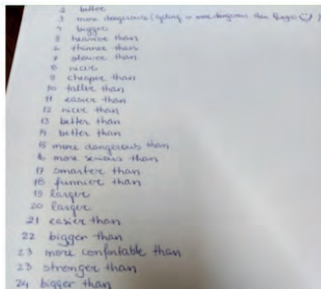


06 02/12/18 17:17 TEA: <<collage containing a picture of a treadmill
 07 and a swimming pool with a balloon speech saying
 08 "KEEPING FIT">> After our "Show and Tell" things
 09 had to change 😞



10 17:18 TEA: Lucia and Fabricia, you are hard
 11 to beat... But I have started 🏃
 12 🏊

13 17:34 TEA: <<lines 1-4 quoted>> <<picture of answer key>>
 14 Dear Marta, here goes the key.



Similar to Excerpt 3, Excerpt 4 begins with an intra-post preface, this time a *would like*-declarative, which vaguely refers to the requested object through the phrase *the answers of the exercises* (lines 2-3). After a modal-*can* interrogative construction and a question mark *Can you send me again?*, Marta uses a downward pointing finger emoji (line 4) which projects that specification on what is being requested will follow. What appears next is a picture of the filled-out exercises that precisely informs the teacher about the exercises for which Marta is requesting the answers (line 5).

Although the limitations of the data prevent discussion beyond speculation, it is possible that Marta's use of the interrogative format occurs as appropriation (Pallotti, 2002) of the teacher's design in a request addressed to Marta just prior to the change observed in Marta's requesting practices. The teacher's request was designed as *Could you please send us the cake recipe here? I would like to bake it this weekend.* However, as Marta uses *can* and not the modal auxiliary *could*, it is difficult to assert that this instance triggered the change. Another possibility is that the teacher might have explicitly corrected Marta's way of requesting the answer key outside of the chat format (e.g., in one of the face-to-face encounters). However, ethnographic information about the context (i.e., extensive conversations with the teacher) suggests that this is a remote possibility.

The teacher's response (lines 13-14) complies with the proposed action, but does not include interactional work designed to upgrade or explicitly confirm that Marta's requests are within the scope of Marta's deontic status. Similar to Excerpt 3, the teacher simply provides the requested key, although this is done in a rather affiliative manner, through the use of the accompanying statement *Dear Marta, here goes the key* (line 14). Importantly, Marta's request in Excerpt 4 was sent at 14:58 on a Friday and the teacher's response was sent the next day at 17:34. However, in her response, the teacher does not include any accounts or apologies to indicate that her non-immediate fulfillment of the request (in comparison to Excerpts 1 and 2) is treated as problematic. Between Marta's request and the teacher's compliance, a new course of action is initiated by the teacher with a post containing a collage of a swimming pool and a tread mill (lines 6-9). The post refers to a previous face-to-face lesson, when participants engaged in a show and tell activity. During that activity, two students (Lucia, Fabricia) talked about their sports routine and the teacher

specifically addresses them in the posts preceding her response to Marta⁴. By prioritizing unrelated posts addressed to Lucia and Fabricia before granting Marta's request without explanations or accounts, the teacher does not treat Marta's request (Excerpt 4) as one that requires immediate action (cf. Excerpt 1). This lack of prioritization of Marta's post might be explained by the fact that Marta's request was sent on Friday, just prior to the weekend. The next session was still five days away thus, unlike Excerpt 1, there was sufficient time before the session for Marta to check the exercise key and prepare her questions. Further, the overall social understanding that weekends are work-free days potentially lessens the obligations attached to the teacher's deontic status. Most importantly, the fact that the teacher shares pictures of her whereabouts and current leisure activities indicates that participants' relationship has changed over time and has become less institutionalized, with the deontic status of teacher and student being less foregrounded in participants' exchanges. As such, the teacher's pictures support the claim that the absence of *please* and emojis in Excerpts 3 and 4 are in line with Marta's higher deontic authority in relation to the implementation of class related requests in the WhatsApp group.

As summarized below (see also Table 1 in the Appendix), the analysis of Excerpts 1-4 point to changes in the focal learner's interactional practices and linguistic resources to implement request sequences as well as a concomitant change in learner-teacher relationship:

- (1) substitution of the idiosyncratic declarative format *you can* with the more usual interrogative format *can you* in the requesting statement;
- (2) reduction of phrases to refer to the requested object. Initially referred to through long phrases and qualified with the adjective *corrected* (Excerpts 1 and 2), the requested object was later referred to through a short phrase, e.g., *the page photos* (Excerpt 3) or with reference to medium-specific affordances (Hutchby, 2014), such as a photo of the sought-after answer key (Excerpt 4).

⁽⁴⁾ The pictures that form the collage were taken by the teacher as she exercised at a fitness club. The teacher's post has a friendly tone and suggests that she felt motivated by Lucia's and Fabricia's exercise routines and (re)started exercising herself.

- (3) abandonment of the intra-post final components *please* + a series of the ‘face throwing a heart-shaped kiss’ emoji;
- (4) addition of intra-post request prefaces that contextualise and account for the requests., i.e., *I want* and *I would like* constructions positioned before the requesting statement;
- (5) reduction of negotiation of deontic rights between the participants.

These modifications indicate that, although Marta orients to potential contingencies involved in granting the requests as well as to her rights to implement them throughout the data collection, in the later requests, she does so in more conventional ways, thus displaying increased awareness of “recurrent and sedimented ways of accomplishing specific social actions” (Couper-Kuhlen, 2014, p. 624). Arguably, the changes in Marta’s requests are accompanied by higher deontic authority, indexed by the exclusion of the modalising components *please* and emojis and by the teacher’s responses to her requesting actions, i.e., a reduced need to overtly legitimise or upgrade the deontic stance encoded in Marta’s requests.

Discussion and conclusion

Beyond the use of learning applications (e.g., Duolingo), smartphones afford L2 learners/users a broader array of options to participate in social interaction, which is key for the development of L2 IC. This study has analysed data coming from WhatsApp, a popular app for social interactions. The analysis showed how resources used in the initial requests (i.e., the adverb *please* and the emojis) were later abandoned as a result of changes in the linguistic and interactional practices mobilized by the learner, the reoccurrence of the same action, and changes in participants’ relationship status. The fact that participants had known each other for only a few weeks, seems to have contributed to the low deontic stance encoded in Marta’s earlier requests. Over time, the teacher and the learner became more familiar with each other and requesting the answer key in the chat became a non-problematic activity for both interlocutors. This was evidenced not only by the absence of initial components, but also by changes over time in the answers provided by the teacher in response to Marta’s requests.

This study contributes to the theorizing of IC by further illustrating how learners' participation in previous text-chat interactions may equip them cumulatively with the methods for going about their current and future text-based exchanges. It particularly highlights the potential of the framework of deontics to open new lines of enquiry within IC research, especially in understanding intertwined relationships between L2 learners' methods to accomplish social actions over time and changes in how participants negotiate, maintain and resist power within the larger structures of the interactions in which they engage. Finally, the study highlights the value of a CA/IL approach to study L2 IC in the online space, especially for text-chat interaction.

One limitation of the study relates to its adhering to CA's principle of participant orientation to determine the uses of some action designs. This becomes especially evident in the analysis of Marta's use of a declarative format without a question mark to make requests (Excerpts 1 and 2). As previous research has shown, by prefacing a request with a modal verb (e.g., *Can you ...?*), requesters treat the requested action as one that they have a certain degree of rights to initiate and that has low imposition on the addressee. In contrast, by choosing alternative indirect request formats, commonly through declarative formats, speakers display an orientation to known or anticipated contingencies associated with their request and to lower deontic status in relation to their co-participants (Curl & Drew 2008; Stevanovic 2011). Since Marta's initiating action imposes on the teacher by asking her to engage in the work of sharing the answer key (which the teacher could do, for instance, by scanning the book pages or typing the answers and sending them via email), the modal-*can* declarative might have been an attempt to present the initiating action both as a request and as a solution to the teacher's decision-making of how to send Marta the answer key. Arguably therefore, by using the modal verb *can* in a declarative format, Marta could be suggesting or proposing a way for the teacher to give her access to the answer key, i.e., through the use of WhatsApp instead of, for instance, sending it via email. Two pieces of evidence contribute to this interpretation. First, the absence of question marks (which are used by Marta and other students to make other types of questions in the chat despite sometimes deviating from conventional word order). Second, when sharing a cake recipe in month 2 of the WhatsApp group, Marta uses the modal *can* with a clear suggestion function (after the list of ingredients) through the phrase *can put together* followed by a series of optional

ingredients (e.g., *bananas*). This suggests that Marta, in designing her first two requests, may have purposefully avoided a straightforward modal-*can* interrogative as it would have encoded a higher deontic stance in making this type of request to the teacher. Whether this was actually the case remains unclear, as further evidence for this claim would be necessary. Importantly, this question touches upon the issue of the extent to which the grammatical and sequential structures, practices and functions identified within CA/IL research – largely based on L1 speakers' interactions – can inform the analysis of IC in additional languages in a way that avoids the pitfall of researcher's explaining what goes on in data based on a perceived lack of competence of L2 speakers (Wong & Olsher, 2000 in an interview with Emmanuel Schegloff). In other words, how can longitudinal IC research draw on the descriptive categories and findings of CA/IL research to investigate language change in additional language interaction without overlooking the potentially different, yet equally complex uses of an additional language as a shared resource mobilized by multilingual speakers in their interactions? How can we apply the same level of scrutiny to grasp the complexity of interactional phenomena in additional language interaction without reducing such phenomena to a '(not-yet)-good-enough' version of what has been described by L1 CA/IL research? How to tackle this issue is a matter for further research.

This study has practical implications for L2 learning and teaching. For one, having an unlimited register of their own posts as well as of the posts produced by their peers and instructors may afford learners the opportunity to reassess their own and other's language use and draw on these practices in future exchanges. Likewise, teachers may have access not only to learners' needs and L2 IC current developmental stages, but also to their personal worlds, which can serve as rich pedagogical resources for lesson design and implementation. The analysis of the selected data also supports claims that digital spaces (e.g., text chats) may extend L2 learners' opportunities for meaningful language use (Jenks, 2009). Unlike classroom conversational tasks, which are limited because they do not have real-life consequences, interaction in parallel chats without any pre-set instructional agendas can offer an authentic locus for participation in the language being learned. Therefore, the use of text chats for L2 instruction seems to be in line with the understanding that L2 instruction should “expand

opportunities for learners to adopt new resources” that allow them “to bring their social worlds into existence, maintain them, and and transform them for their own purposes” (Hall, 2018, p. 55).

Finally, the study provides further evidence for claims that participation and learning are intrinsically connected, i.e., “interaction itself affords learning” (Nguyen, 2019, p. 62). The data clearly indicate that, despite the absence of correction in the chat, linguistic and interactional changes took place. This impacts on how we understand the role of L2 instruction. It suggests that L2 instruction may be less about identifying and helping learners overcome their language inaccuracies and more about building environments where learners are positioned as competent conversationalists with increasing rights to pursue desired courses of action, such as making genuine requests to the teacher. The findings of this paper can serve as an example for practitioners of how L2 learning encounters in the online space can be a locus for L2 IC development without necessarily resorting to pre-assigned pedagogical tasks. Thus, data from text chats can complement CA-based teacher programs (Salaberry & Kunitz, 2019) and be a valuable resource to enrich L2 instructors’ repertoires of practices for promoting language use beyond the confinements of the classroom.

Acknowledgements

I thank Averil Grieve, Anna Carolina Oliveira Mendes, and the two anonymous reviewers, for useful feedback on earlier versions of the manuscript; and Marie Will, for her support with the formatting of the paper. Additionally, a big thank you to the participants of the study, especially the teacher, who allowed me to investigate their WhatsApp interactions.

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Appendix

Table 1: Changes in the request sequences over time

Excerpt	Occurrence	Format of the requesting statement	Formulation of the requested object	Accompanying components/ actions	Treatment of the requests by the teacher
1	Beginning of month 1	Modal-can declarative construction <i>you-can</i> (no question mark)	- exercise of (information) corrected reference to requested object placed within the requesting statement	- <i>please</i> - 🙄🙄🙄🙄 - apology - 🙄🙄	- Upgrading of the deontic stance of the prior action Compliance prior to the granting of the request Unpacking of contingencies accounting for non-immediate compliance
2	End of month 1	Modal-can declarative construction <i>you-can</i> (no question mark)	- exercise of (information) corrected - reference to requested object placed within requesting statement	<i>I want</i> preface	- Upgrading of the deontic stance of the prior action - Granting of the request
3	End of month 3	Modal-can interrogative construction <i>can you</i> + question mark	- page photos - reference to requested object placed within preface in the same post	<i>I would like</i> preface	- Granting of the request
4	Beginning of month 5	Modal-can interrogative construction <i>can you</i> + question mark	- answers to exercises + picture - reference to requested object placed as a picture in a separate post		- Granting of the request

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