

## **Are classroom requests similar in all EFL settings? Focusing on a young multilingual learning environment.**

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### **Abstract**

For the last twenty years a considerable amount of studies have examined L2 pragmatic production in classroom discourse (see Bardovi-Harlig, 2013 for a review). Nevertheless, most research to date still ignores the multilingual background of language learners. Research on classroom pragmatics from a multilingual perspective is still scant but findings point to the peculiarities of L3 pragmatic production and development (Alcon, 2013; Portolés, 2015; Safont and Portolés, 2015). In order to contribute to this line of research, the present study seeks to examine multilingual requestive behaviour from a pragmalinguistic and a sociopragmatic viewpoint. In so doing, previous research from a monolingual and a multilingual perspective is taken into account. We have considered the specific request forms used and modification devices accompanying them (Alcón *et al.* 2005), the goal of the request (Dalton-Puffer and Nikula, 2006) and the classroom register (Christie, 2002) in which these goals may be embedded. Data for the study comprise transcripts from twelve video-recorded English as L3 lessons involving 268 learners (m.a.= 8.4) and 12 teachers (m.a.= 43.2). Results confirm previous findings in multilingual learning environments and they contradict results from SLA-based studies. Interestingly, this study points to the role of the language program in classroom requestive behaviour. We conclude by acknowledging the importance of adopting multilingual perspectives in the analysis of multilingual students.

**Key Terms:** requests, multilingualism, young learners, classroom discourse

### **1. Introduction**

The present paper aims to contribute to research on classroom discourse and pragmatic behaviour by focusing on one aspect that has raised much interest over the last decades (Bardovi-Harlig, 2013), namely that of the learning environment. As argued by Bardovi-Harlig (2014), studies on this issue have accounted for the effect of ESL vs EFL settings (Bardovi-Harlig and Dornyei, 1998; Schauer, 2007) and, above all, the role of study abroad contexts (Alcon, 2013; Felix-Brasdefer, 2004). Nevertheless, new learning contexts have arisen especially in the European continent that might not be simply included under the EFL general umbrella term. We particularly refer to CLIL (i.e. content and language integrated learning) and L3 (i.e. third language) language learning programs. In fact, existing research analysing classroom discourse has signalled out interesting differences between the pragmatic performance of teachers and learners in EFL and CLIL settings (Dalton-Puffer, 2005; Llinares and Pastrana, 2013; Nikula, 2006). Similarly, recent findings point to the peculiarities of L3 pragmatic production and development (Alcon, 2013; Portoles, 2015; Safont, 2013; Safont and Alcon, 2012; Safont and Portoles, 2015).

The present study is also motivated by the results obtained in a previous analysis of L3 classroom discourse in which learners' use of pragmatic formulas was examined (Safont and Portolés, 2016). These findings pointed out the effect of the language model adopted by the school and the fact that most pragmatic formulas related to the manipulation of others category (Girard and Sionis, 2004), which involved the use of requests.

On that account, this study seeks to further examine requestive behaviour in the L3 English classroom. In so doing, we examine teachers' and learners' use of requests from a pragmalinguistic and a sociopragmatic viewpoint. Therefore, we consider the request forms employed (i.e. pragmalinguistic) and the conditions involved in the use of these forms (i.e. sociopragmatic). For this purpose, we will consider the specific formulas used and peripheral modification devices (Alcón et al, 2005; Alcón, 2008) accompanying them, as well as the goal of the request (Blum-Kulka et al, 1987; Dalton-Puffer and Nikula, 2006) and the classroom register (Christie, 2002) in which it may be embedded. This may also allow for comparison with previous studies focusing on requests in classroom discourse (Dalton-Puffer, 2005; Dalton-Puffer and Nikula, 2006). Yet, while former studies deal with CLIL and EFL settings, our focus is on a multilingual learning environment where English is learnt as a third language.

Therefore, we may say that our goal is to analyse young learners' and teachers' requests in naturally occurring classroom discourse. Taking our main purpose into account, we shall next present the theoretical background underlying our study which includes previous research on the use of requests in the English classroom.

### **1.1. Requestive behaviour in the classroom. Forms, goals and register.**

Classrooms are instances of educational discourse in which requests are very often produced. Given their threatening nature and possibilities for mitigating or aggravating them, they constitute an interesting pragmatic formula that has received a great deal of attention in the last decades. Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper (1989) in their seminal work on IL and cross-cultural pragmatics provided the main tenets for ongoing research on the use and acquisition of request forms by language learners. These authors took into account Brown and Levinson's (1987) directness to politeness continuum as well as Leech's (1983) distinction between pragmalinguistics (i.e. linguistic forms used to perform requests) and sociopragmatics (i.e. social conditions that may affect such choice) in their suggested taxonomies. Due to this fact, most studies to date (Alcon, 2013; Economidou-Kogetsidis and Woodfield, 2012) have adapted an adopted their taxonomies of request forms (Blum-Kulka *et al.* 1989) and mitigation devices (Faerch and Kasper, 1989).

In a previous paper (Safont, 2008), a detailed description of the speech act of requesting is provided with a focus on its two main constituents, the head act and its peripheral modification items. For the purposes of our analysis we shall next summarise its main constituents. As far as the head part is concerned, Trosborg's (1995) taxonomy of request strategies best illustrates the possible forms to encode speakers' intention since it is based on Austin's (1962) and Searle's

theories (1975), Brown and Levinson's reformulations (1987) and Blum-Kulka *et al.*'s adaptations (1989). This classification of request acts realisations is constituted by three main categories namely those of indirect (e.g. It's cold in here), conventionally indirect (e.g. could you close the window?) and direct (e.g. close the window) request strategies. The peripheral modification items accompany the request head act with the purpose of varying politeness levels and decreasing threatening conditions. Alcon *et al.* (2005) present a typology based on previous work from Cross-cultural and IL Pragmatics (Faerch and Kasper, 1989), the studies by House and Kasper (1981), Trosborg (1995), Nikula (1996), Hill (1997), Márquez Reiter (2000) and Achiba (2003) in which they distinguish between internal and external modification items. The internal subtype includes those devices that syntactically modify the request head act (e.g. *Would you mind* closing the window), while external modifiers as their name suggests refer to external variation of the request formula. These then include some optional clauses that soften the threatening or impositive nature of the request head. (e.g. *Could you close the window as it is getting really cold in here?*).

According to Alcón *et al.* (2005), learners not only need to have knowledge of linguistic elements and devices (pragmalinguistic competence), but also knowledge of social and interactional factors (sociopragmatic competence) for performing the act of requesting. Sociopragmatic competence may determine the use and interpretation of request modification items. In this sense, we should not only consider request forms and peripheral modification items, but also the sociopragmatic conditions involved in learners' and teachers' choice. More specifically, attention should be paid to those sociopragmatic factors that relate to the learning environment. The educational context allows for little variability in terms of sociopragmatic conditions involving power or distance, as the teacher-student relationship already implies fixed roles. Yet, the request goal may influence the use of specific formulas and link to their degree of imposition (Dalton-Puffer, 2005). Previous studies dealing with classroom discourse distinguish between requests for action and information (Dalton-Puffer, 2005; Dalton-Puffer and Nikula, 2006) and examine their occurrence within the regulative or instructional classroom discourse type. According to Christie (2002), regulative discourse involves the interactional framework in which the activity is organised and the instructional register thus transmits the actual content.

As argued by Dalton-Puffer (2005, 2015), CLIL settings offer the sociopragmatic conditions that allow for the use of a wider range of request forms including direct but also indirect formulas and modification items. According to some scholars (Llinares and Nikula, 2013, 2016) these gains seem less obvious in teacher-centred classrooms. On the contrary, EFL settings have been traditionally linked to direct and unmodified request forms. We wonder whether the discourse we analyse here will also show specific discourse patterns that may resemble those of EFL or CLIL settings. Dalton-Puffer (2005) and Dalton-Puffer and Nikula (2006) have examined the presence of request acts in the English classroom from a discourse-pragmatic perspective. While these studies deal with English as a foreign language (henceforth EFL) and Content and Language Integrated learning (henceforth CLIL) settings, they also share specific characteristics with our multilingual language learning context. As argued by Dalton-Puffer

(2005: 1278) "CLIL or EFL classroom is asymmetrical discourse with unequal distribution of knowledge, power and speakers". This is also the case of the learning environment in which our data were collected. Furthermore, the target language in the three learning contexts is English. While CLIL settings include not only instruction of the target language but through that language (i.e. Maths course in English), EFL settings focus on the language exclusively (i.e. English course). Our setting also refers to the teaching of English courses bearing more similarities to EFL than CLIL contexts. However, English is not a second but a third language in our case. There is now evidence that distinguishes third from second language acquisition (Cenoz, 2013), both quantitatively, and above all, qualitatively. Such difference also applies to pragmatic production and awareness (Alcon and Safont, 2008; Safont, 2005; Safont, 2013) of third language learners.

Requestive behaviour in the classroom has been analysed in interventionist studies dealing with instruction, and using various elicitation techniques (see Alcon, 2008, 2013 for an overview). Nevertheless, as argued by scholars dealing with pragmatics and young language learners (Bardovi-Harlig, 2015; Llinares and Pastrana, 2013; Nikula *et al.* 2013) more studies are needed that account for what actually takes place in the classroom and, thus, adopt a naturalistic approach in its analysis. An early attempt was that of Lorsch and Schulze (1988) who examined requests occurring in an EFL classroom in Germany. As argued by these authors, most request formulas produced were direct and unmodified, and there were very few instances of polite (i.e. conventionally indirect) behaviour. Besides, these authors also point to the topicality of discourse and the lack of instances related to interpersonal communication. Dalton-Puffer (2005) criticises this interpretation as any act of interaction is in fact an example of interpersonal communication. We completely agree with that idea which has too often been related to classroom discourse also referring to its artificiality (Ellis, 1992). It is high time we consider classroom discourse within its own nature and specific sociopragmatic conditions. This perspective might help entangle how pragmatics may develop in instructional settings.

Such approach was followed by Dalton-Puffer (2005) in her analysis of requests occurring in the CLIL classroom. In this setting, English is a foreign language and it is also used to teach content, hence, as a medium of instruction. The author examined six lessons and particularly focused on the pragmatic routine used for requesting, the request goals and the classroom register in which they were performed. Results deriving from Dalton-Puffer's research (2005) reveal a clear pattern that links the request goal to the type of classroom discourse in which it may appear. The instructional register included requests for information which were direct, while the regulative register involved the use of requests for actions which were conventionally indirect. As argued by the author, and contrary to all expectations, the classroom shows a wide amount of formal possibilities for request realization providing a rich language environment for learners in terms of pragmatic input. Furthermore, there were many instances in which teachers mitigated their requests making use of internal and to a lesser extent external modification items. Nevertheless, Dalton-Puffer also states that there is little variability in those forms learners used for making requests, which mainly referred to asking for information, hence, involving direct forms. We agree with the author in that the educational discourse

implies unequal distribution of speaking rights, thus being the teacher in absolute control of the interactional negotiation of discourse. Another aspect that is also related to her results is that of the L1 culture. In Dalton-Puffer's study (2005), the surrounding L1 culture has a strong influence on what is said in the classroom. Being in a bilingual community with two different language programs in education, we wonder how these may also affect classroom requests.

In a similar instructional setting, Dalton-Puffer and Nikula (2006) conducted a contrastive analysis involving 17 lessons corresponding to either Austrian or Finish CLIL classrooms. Participants of the study belonged to grades 5 to 13; that is to say, 11 to 18 year old students took part in the study. These authors focused on requests used by teachers and students as part of the regulative and instructional register. Their study also analysed the effect of the request goal involved as well as the students' age. Results from this study point to the use of direct forms in the instructional register, while requests made in the regulative register displayed a wider range of forms, also including request modifiers. As argued by the authors, not only the activity type and age of students but also their L1 may have influenced the type of requests found in the classrooms analysed. While requests for action in Finnish groups were direct, they were more indirect in Austrian ones, especially in younger students. Age also appears as an influential factor. These findings would be in line with previous research on L1 requests where conventional indirect forms appear, as children get older and gain more command on their linguistic resources, given the syntactic complexity attached to many conventional indirect forms (Ervin-Tripp *et al.* 1987; Becker-Bryant, 2009). However, results from children acquiring English as an L3 contradict these findings since as early as four, a trilingual boy started using conventionally indirect forms and peripheral modification devices in all his three languages (Safont, 2013). We should point out here that his L1 and L2 are positive-politeness oriented languages hence not the reason for the boy's use of indirect forms. We may thus look at the learning environment as a potential factor influencing early multilingual pragmatic behaviour. As it is the case of the present study, the learning environment is a bilingual community where English is learnt as a third language.

The overall purpose of this paper is to provide a descriptive account of those request forms produced in the L3 primary education classroom by adopting a pragmatolinguistic and a sociopragmatic perspective. We'd like to find out whether the requestive pattern in the L3 classroom shares characteristics with that of the traditional EFL classroom, or whether it also points out its own peculiarities. This last aspect would confirm existing research findings on young L3 requestive behaviour. In so doing, we shall contribute to research on early L3 and IL pragmatics.

In order to achieve this goal, the following research questions have been formulated:

RQ1: Will the requestive pattern in the L3 classroom be similar to that in other EFL or in CLIL settings? What request types are more often used?

RQ2: What goals appear in each discourse type examined?

RQ3: Is there a role for the language program adopted?

Taking into consideration the above research questions, the hypotheses deriving from previous research on EFL and CLIL settings (Hypotheses 1 and 2) and multilingual learning environments (Hypothesis 3) are the following:

HYP 1 Most request formulas will be unmodified direct forms as in EFL settings (Dalton-Puffer, 2005; Dalton-Puffer and Nikula, 2006).

HYP2 The instructional register will include requests for information which will be direct forms, while the regulative register will include requests for action which will be conventionally indirect and may be accompanied by modifiers (Dalton-Puffer, 2005; Dalton-Puffer and Nikula, 2006).

HYP3 The language program adopted will have an effect on the requestive behaviour of the classroom. (Safont and Portolés, 2016)

## **2. Method**

### **2.1. Data**

Data have been taken from twelve lessons involving 268 students and 12 teachers. The lessons were video and audio-taped and they were transcribed for their subsequent analysis. The lessons are subdivided as follows: six lessons belong to schools that adopt a Spanish-based program, that is, two languages are mainly promoted, Spanish and English, and six lessons belong to schools that adopt the Catalan-based program. These last schools follow an immersion program where Catalan is the means of instruction in most subject courses, and the learners are also exposed to Spanish and English in some courses. The goal in immersion schools is to promote multilingualism so that by the end of primary education students are familiar with three languages, Catalan (minority language of the speech community), Spanish (majority language), and English (foreign language). Data may be best summarised as follows.

INSERT TABLE 1 HERE

As previously mentioned, the present study uses discourse analysis to investigate naturally-occurring classroom requests. As suggested by some scholars (Bardovi-Harlig, 2015), we believe that requestive behaviour in the L3 classroom is best analysed without constraints or

tailor-made data elicitation techniques. Following Williams' (2014) terminology, the approach we follow is interactional where observation of intact classes takes place. Instead of a CA micro-analysis, or examination of feedback turns, more attention is put on the pragmatic analysis of discourse. Therefore, we have examined speech that occurred naturally in classrooms. Yet, we understand that classroom discourse is dynamic and complex and long-term analyses are also needed. We have considered all instances of requestive behaviour including both teacher and student's turns, and, as in other studies describing classroom requests (Dalton-Puffer and Nikula, 2007; Jakonen, 2015, 2016), questions are also considered instances of requests.

## 2.2. Data collection procedure and analysis

As mentioned earlier in this paper, the goal of the study is to provide a pragmalinguistic and a sociopragmatic account of requests employed in the English as an L3 classroom. In so doing, we have considered request forms and peripheral modification items employed (i.e. pragmalinguistic perspective), as well as the goals of the request forms used and the register in which such goals appear in discourse (i.e. sociopragmatic perspective). Our units of analysis were request forms and the goals they performed, and we counted them as they appear in classroom discourse. The following table may best illustrate the procedure followed for data coding and further analysis.

INSERT TABLE 2 HERE

Previous studies on EFL and CLIL settings adopted a monolingual approach in the identification of request forms as only those ones produced in English (i.e. the learners' L2) were considered. As mentioned before, we have followed a multilingual perspective in our analysis and all learners' and teachers' languages (i.e. Catalan, Spanish and English) have been taken into account. As shown in table 2 above, the request types and modification forms examined include direct and conventionally indirect forms in English, Spanish and Catalan. We have thus adapted the taxonomy employed in previous studies (Alcón *et al.* 2005; Safont, 2008) as no instances of indirect or opaque forms were found in the corpus. Some examples for such codification are shown below.

### Example 1

```
01 T: ok, stop, stop, enough, shh [direct request + intensifier - Regulative - Action](.) Jose, please, can you tell me [modifier + conventionally indirect request - Instructional - Information] what's the weather like today?  
02 S: err, it's /mondai/  
03 T: no, no, the weather [direct request - instructional - information]
```

For purposes of reliability, a senior researcher and applied linguist coded part of the data, the inter-rater reliability index was 0.9, as there was agreement in 95% of cases. One-sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests showed that the values for the request forms examined were not normally distributed. In all cases the null hypothesis was rejected. Therefore, we employed the Friedman, Wilcoxon signed ranks test, and Mann Whitney U tests in order to identify whether reported differences in our results were statistically significant. Spearman correlation tests were

also employed in order to confirm part of the results obtained during the hypothesis testing process.

### 3. Results and discussion

#### 3.1. Results and discussion related to RQ 1 & HYP 1

The first research question of this study wondered about the requestive pattern in the L3 classroom. The hypothesis related to this first research question predicted that the request formulas would be direct unmodified instances as in EFL settings (Dalton-Puffer, 2005; Dalton-Puffer and Nikula, 2006). In order to test this first hypothesis and provide an answer to the first research question, all request forms were analysed on the basis of the type of form and accompanying (or not) modifiers.

The boxplot below shows the type of request forms found in classroom discourse.

INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE

As shown by the boxplot above, most request forms are direct and unmodified. In fact, according to our results from a Wilcoxon signed ranks test ( $Z = -2.516; p = 0.012$ ), the difference between the amount of unmodified and modified request forms is statistically significant. Hence, we may say that our first hypothesis is confirmed by our findings. Interestingly, we may also see that an important amount of requests are modified and they also include indirect formulas. In that sense, one could argue that the L3 classroom also allows for some variability including direct and conventionally indirect forms.

If we observe specific request types (see figure 2 below), we may see that over 60 per cent are direct forms in English. However, there are also other types of forms that either include the use of modifiers or the use of other languages as well.

INSERT FIGURE 2 HERE

The second type of forms that appear more frequently in our corpus are those of direct request forms accompanied by a modifier and conventionally indirect requests as shown in the following excerpt.

#### Example 2

```
01 T:    January February: what's the weather like in this season?
02 Joa:  °snowy°
         (the T cannot hear Joan)
03 T:    come on, what's the weather like in January? In January, it's:
04 Joa:  snowy
05 T:    snowy, that's ok, so Joan repeat please, in January it's snowy
06 Joa:  in January it's snowy
07 T:    and Marta Paez, what's the weather like::?
```



Example 2 above shows the use of an imperative direct request 'repeat' and external modifiers 'please' and 'so Joan'. Furthermore, the direct request 'what's the weather like?' appears modified by 'come on' which in this case acts like an intensifier, yet since the question is followed by another direct request of an elliptical subtype 'In January it's:', this acts as an expander thus, neutralizing the effect of the intensifier, and downgrading the threatening nature of the original direct request in this turn. We believe that these instances of modification would not have been found if an elicitation technique had been employed. In this sense, our findings also point to the relevance of the research method used in identifying pragmatic behaviour (Bardovi-Harlig, 2015).

The answer to our research question refers to the fact that while the L3 classroom shares the requestive behaviour of EFL contexts (Dalton-Puffer, 2005), it also presents modified requestive behaviour and a variety of forms including direct and conventionally indirect instances being produced by both teachers and learners. Therefore, it may also be stated that some characteristics are shared with other language learning contexts, like that of CLIL (Dalton-Puffer and Nikula, 2007). However, further research is here needed to find out whether this difference between our findings and that of other EFL settings is due to the peculiarities of L3 classroom or to the monolingual perspective adopted in most studies on classroom requests. In fact, should a monolingual perspective be adopted in this study the use of direct request would increase (up to 75 %) and less variety would be present in our data.

### 3.2. Results and discussion related to RQ2 & HYP2

In order to further examine the requestive pattern of the L3 classroom, a sociopragmatic perspective is adopted that focuses on the interactional and contextual factors affecting the use of requests. Our second research question wondered about the request goals and the register in which they appear. In this sense, the second hypothesis predicted that the instructional register would include requests for information which would be direct forms, while the regulative register would include requests for action which would be conventionally indirect and might be accompanied by modifiers (Dalton-Puffer, 2005; Dalton-Puffer and Nikula, 2006). According to our results, direct and conventionally indirect request forms are found in both regulative and instructional discourse. The pattern, unlike predicted by previous research, seems to point to more conventionally indirect forms in instructional discourse, while regulative discourse allows for both direct and indirect request forms. Results from the Wilcoxon signed ranks test show that the difference between regulative and instructional discourse in terms of conventionally indirect forms is statistically significant ( $Z = -3.076$ ;  $p=0.02$ ) not being the case of direct forms ( $Z= -1.415$ ;  $p= 0.157$ ). Therefore, we may state that our second hypothesis is not confirmed by our findings.

#### Example 3

(REGULATIVE REGISTER)

01 T:     open the book come on  
  
          ( the T helps individually the ss)  
02 T:     five minutes to write the questions  
03 sn:     cinco minutes?  
04 T:     yes::.. now four  
          (4 minutes)  
05 T:     ok stop writing!finish!stop stop!stop writing!first we are  
06         going to check the exercise above we are going to listen to the  
07     cd player check the answers we are going to check the exercise  
08     above *el de arriba*  
09     ♪one two three listen to me one two three be quiet please♪  
          (the T correct the exercise with the Cd player)  
  
10 T:     now Irene and Hugo stand up take your activity books please  
  
          (the T prepares two chairs face to face)  
11 T:     this is an interview, now Hugo you are going to ask her the  
12         questions ok ready?  
  
(INSTRUCTIONAL REGISTER)  
  
13 Hug:    can you play football?  
14 Ire:    no  
15 sn:     I can't  
16 T:     shhh shhh  
17 Hug:    can you swim?  
18 Ire:    yes::  
19 T:     yes?  
20 Ire:    yes I can  
21 Hug:    can you drums?  
22 T:     can you PLAY the drums?  
23 Ire:    no  
24 T:     no::  
25 Ire:    I can't  
26 Hug:    can you dance?  
27 Ire:    no  
(REGULATIVE REGISTER)  
28 T:     no she can't. now Irene TO Jugo ask him the questions  
(INSTRUCTIONAL REGISTER)  
29 Ire:    can you play football?  
30 Hug:    yes I Can

Example 3 above shows instances of conventionally indirect forms in blue in the instructional discourse, and direct forms underlined in the regulative register. As shown in lines 04, 19 and 24, the teacher makes use of elliptical phrases which are often employed as samples of direct requests within the regulative and instructional register. There are also instances of conventionally indirect forms in both registers unlike predicted by previous research (Nikula, 2006). This discrepancy with former studies may be due to either the politeness orientation of the L1 or L2 in each instructional setting or to classroom dynamics. In fact, as mentioned before, teacher-centred classrooms allow for little variability in terms of pragmatic input, and this would be the case of some EFL lessons examined in other studies (Dalton-Puffer, 2005).

As illustrated in example 4 below, requests for information (I) are included within the instructional register, that is, where the actual content is transmitted. In lines 05 to 15 the teacher is retrieving information from the students as they deal with the days of the week.

Request for action (A) appear mainly within the regulative register, that is, the interactional framework within which activities are to take place.

#### Example 4

##### REGULATIVE

01 T: Javier finish (2.0) Angela finish (3.0) °come on° Joan please  
02 close your book. (A)  
(3.0)

##### REGULATIVE

01 ok:: (3.0) PLEASE let me see who is silent (5.0) (A)  
02 T: jaume come here (A)  
03 Alb: et diu que vages.  
04 T: alberto, don't translate (A)

##### INSTRUCTIONAL

05 jaume can you tell me the days of the week? (I)  
06 Jau: Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday ehh Friday mmm Saturday Sunday  
07 T: and today is:::  
08 is today Monday?  
09 boys and girls is today Monday?  
10 SS: No:::  
11 T: it's today Tuesday?  
12 SS: no:::  
13 T: is today Wednesday  
14 SS: No:::  
15 T: is today Friday?

Regarding the request goal, our results are in line with Dalton-Puffer's (2005) findings. In fact, requests for action mainly appear in the regulative discourse (m. r. = 7.50), while requests for information are widely used in the instructional discourse type (m. r. = 6.50), being such difference statistically significant as our results from the Wilcoxon signed ranks test ( $Z = -2.831$ ;  $Z = -3.076$ ;  $p < 0.005$ ) show.

Although our second hypothesis is not confirmed, we may say that results are partly in line with previous research. Therefore, the role of the request goal in the production of specific forms seems to be inconclusive. Further research may thus be needed that accounts for the interplay with other variables like that of the educational context.

### 3.3. Results and discussion related to RQ3 & HYP3

The third research question dealt with the role of the language program adopted by the school in L3 requestive behaviour. As mentioned before, our data has been taken from a Spanish-based (i.e. focus on the majority language as means of instruction) and a Catalan-based program (i.e. the minority language as means of instruction – also termed bilingual immersion program). In the light of previous findings, the fourth hypothesis of the present study predicted a clear role for the language program adopted in teachers and learners' use of requests in classroom discourse. We have subdivided our results as they refer to the effect of the language program in a) the request forms used and b) the goal of the requests.

Regarding the request forms found in classroom discourse, we may say that there is a role for the language program in the use of modified direct requests in English as they appear more frequently in the Catalan-based (m.r.=9.5) than in the Spanish-based schools (m.r.=3.5) being such difference statistically significant ( $Z = -2.956$ ). There are also more instances of conventionally indirect forms including modifiers in the Catalan (m.r.=8.5) than in the Spanish-based (m.r.=4.5) classrooms ( $Z = -0.971$ ), as well as more direct requests in Catalan (m.r.=8.4;  $Z = -2.298$ ); while we find more instances of Spanish direct requests (m.r.=8.5;  $Z = -2.000$ ) in the Spanish-based subgroup. All the differences reported above are statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ). Results from the Spearman correlation test further confirm our findings ( $r < 0.8$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ).

Interestingly, while the difference in terms of direct requests in English is not statistically significant, if we take into account direct requests in all languages, we find that the Spanish-based (m.r.=9.17) subgroup makes a more frequent use of these forms than the Catalan based one (m.r.=3.83), being such difference statistically significant ( $Z = -2.627$ ;  $p = 0.009$ ). This would be in line with previous research on EFL classroom discourse (Safont and Portolés, 2016) as more direct forms were employed in the Spanish than in the Catalan-based classroom.

Regarding the goal of the request form, we find that requests for information in the instructional register are more frequent in the Spanish-based classroom (m.r.=8.83) than in the Catalan-based one (m.r.=4.17) being such difference statistically significant ( $Z = -2.299$ ;  $p = 0.02$ ). These results are also confirmed by Spearman results ( $r = -0.693$ ;  $p = 0.012$ ). In line with findings mentioned above, we find that these requests for information include direct request forms in most cases. Hence, it seems that the Spanish-based classroom provides learners with more direct pragmatic input than the Catalan one. Similar results were obtained in previous studies (Dalton-Puffer, 2005; Nikula, 2006) dealing with a majority language as basis for the language program in which EFL classes were conducted. It might also be worth mentioning that most requests for information are produced by teachers. Hence, our findings may reveal a teacher-centred pattern in the EFL classroom of Spanish-based programs. In fact, this is in line with results from a previous study (Safont and Portolés, 2016) in which teachers in Spanish-based classrooms initiated most requests for information.

In light of our findings, we may state that our third hypothesis is confirmed. In fact, our results indicate the influence of the language program adopted in the request forms used and the request goal performed. These results are in line with previous research on the effect of the language program (Safont and Portolés, 2016) in learners' use of specific pragmatic routines. Considering previous and present results, we may state that the language program has an effect on young learners' pragmatic comprehension (Portolés, 2015) and on the use of certain pragmatic routines (Safont and Portolés, 2015, 2016). In fact, as argued by Gorter (2013), the language program influences discourse skills of teachers and learners, and this has been the case in our study too.

Summing up, we may state that the results of this paper are in line with previous studies conducted in multilingual settings. They also show that the L3 classroom shares characteristics with both CLIL and EFL settings. Requests used in the L3 classroom also include some degree of modification and variability while they also share characteristics with other EFL contexts. Our findings confirm previous research on the pattern related to the goals of the request produced, but they contradict some of those studies dealing with the classroom register and the request forms employed. There may be a role for the L1 and L2 as it has also been argued by other scholars. There are different requestive patterns in the two language programs examined in terms of the request forms used. As mentioned above, this confirms the role of the language program in the pragmatic production of instructional settings.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The present study aimed at contributing to research on the effect of the learning environment on the pragmatic behaviour of English teachers and learners. The main goal was to find out whether pragmatic discourse in the L3 classroom would differ from or could be included within the EFL general umbrella term. For that purpose, we took into account previous studies in EFL and multilingual settings. On the basis of previous research in EFL settings, we hypothesized that (i) most requests forms would be direct and unmodified and that (ii) requests for information would mainly appear in the instructional register. Our results have partly confirmed these hypotheses. While most request forms were direct and unmodified, we have also identified modified requestive behaviour and more variability in the use of these pragmatic forms than the one described in previous studies. The classrooms examined shared characteristics with EFL and CLIL settings in terms of the forms employed. However, the sociopragmatic variables analysed were not in line with previous EFL and CLIL research. For that reason, further research would be needed to account for sociopragmatic development in the young L3 classroom. Yet, we may state that results from our second hypothesis have provided us with more information on third language learners' pragmatic production which contributes to existing research on early L3 learners' pragmatics in multilingual learning settings.

Considering research in multilingual settings, it was predicted that (iii) there would be significant differences in the use of request forms in Catalan and Spanish-based classrooms. This last hypothesis has been confirmed by our results which implies that the language program adopted does play a role in teachers' and learners' pragmatic behaviour. However, as we used non-parametric tests in the analysis of our data, more studies dealing with the multilingual learning environment and a normal distribution of data values are needed to corroborate our results.

This study is subject to a number of limitations as we have considered one pragmatic aspect (i.e. requests) and one specific age group (i.e. 8/9-year-old students). It may be worth accounting for other pragmatic targets and a wider range of age groups in order to be able to

generalise results that call for the peculiarities of third language pragmatic production. Nevertheless, we believe that our findings are relevant to the extent that they further confirm previous findings and they also include a different perspective in its analysis. We might have contributed to research on L3 pragmatics and IL pragmatics by focusing on the learning environment. Adopting a multilingual perspective and tackling data in authentic classroom discourse may have enabled us to widen the scope of expected results from IL pragmatics studies. In any case, what seems obvious is that the type of pragmatic input found, in this case direct request forms, bears relevant connotations as far as the expected learning outcome is concerned. As shown in many studies (see Alcón, 2008 and 2012 for a review), learners tend to produce unmodified direct requests. Too often these results have been linked to either transfer from the learners' L1 (and L2 in our case) or lack of pragmatic knowledge. Maybe it's not just learners' or their L1's fault, maybe more attention should also be paid to the teachers' pragmatic competence so often ignored or taken for granted. In fact, we may agree with the idea that most pragmatic input does not come from textbooks; and teachers' output affects learners' pragmatic learning and development.

Finally, the role of the language program, that was also confirmed in previous studies (Portolés, 2015; Safont and Portolés, 2016), raises the need that policy makers in bilingual communities make informed choices when modifying existing curricula. To sum up, we could say that multilingual learners deserve multilingual approaches in their teaching as they do in the analysis of their pragmatic behaviour.

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