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Assessing the impact of extramural media contact on the second-language pragmatic competence and awareness of English philology students in Spain

Introduction

Pragmatic competence is a fundamental aspect of communicative competence and is understood as a capacity to deal with the relationship between utterances and the acts that may be performed through them, as well as the contextual features that promote appropriate language use (Bachman, 1990). Pragmatic awareness consists of conscious, reflective, and explicit knowledge regarding the rules and conventions of appropriate language use in specific communicative situations and according to the social norms of specific speech communities (Alcón/Safont, 2008: 193). Generally, there is a consensus on both the importance of culturally appropriate language use and the difficulty of teaching and learning it across second or foreign language contexts (Washburn, 2001; Alcón, 2005; Alcón/Martínez-Flor, 2008; Alcón/Safont, 2008). Furthermore, a number of researchers have questioned the suitability of textbooks for teaching pragmatics in these contexts (Bardovi-Harlig/Hartford, 1996; Crandell/Basturkmen, 2004; LoCastro, 2003; Vellenga, 2004; Fernández-Guerra, 2008). In many cases, language learners must rely on resources from outside the classroom as a kind of ‘second best’ substitute to real language contact. This is where audio-visual material may play an important role. Although audio-visual media has already featured in several interlanguage pragmatics studies, the focus tends to be on its adequacy as a didactic tool or its use in differing instruction programmes. There is scarce work that focuses on the potential of out-of-school (extramural) contact with audio-visual materials as an incidental learning resource for developing second language pragmatic competence and awareness.

1. Film and television as an out-of-school factor in language learning

Exposure to film and television has been shown to affect L1 vocabulary acquisition in very young children (Rice/Woodsmall, 1988) and the important role of this type of popular media in EFL teaching has also been widely documented (Allan, 1985; Tomalin, 1986; Geddes/Sturtridge, 1988; Rivers, 1994; Baddock, 1996; Eken, 2003). However, a great deal of research into the language-learning potential of this type of media focuses on instructed settings, there is less work which considers its role outside the classroom in terms of incidental input.

Early research on the role of audio-visual material in language learning has not always been positive. Krashen (1987) was not convinced that beginner learners would be able to acquire a

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language by watching television because at lower levels of proficiency they would receive little by way of comprehensible input. However, he did concede that intermediate learners could profit from television because their more advanced proficiency would mean that the input was comprehensible to them. Television was seen as a ‘paradoxical’ means of learning a L2 by Cooper, Lavery and Rinvolutri (1991), who point out that although it constitutes a rich source of input it is often too quick, overwhelming, and culturally bound for language learners to comprehend. Moreover, Vanderplank (1993) was also concerned that while video had made television programmes increasingly available for use in language classrooms, it had not made them anymore accessible to language learners. In line with Krashen (1987), Guariento and Morely (2001) suggest that audio-visual materials should not be overused in the classroom because they may be inappropriate for learners at lower levels. Lastly, Chavez (1998) posits that once audio-visual materials are used in instructed settings, they automatically lose their authenticity. Nevertheless, a range of subsequent research has shown that film and television can provide a number of specific benefits in language learning contexts.

For example, d’Ydewalle and Van de Poel (1999) found that adults were able to acquire more FL vocabulary by watching TV with the audio in the L1 and the text in the FL (reversed subtitling mode) while children acquired more with the opposite configuration. They point out that subtitling is particularly informative because it provides three simultaneous channels of information: pictorial, aural, and textual. This type of enriched context can be considered to provide language learners with extralinguistic clues (Terrell, 1993). Furthermore, Koolstra and Beentjes (1999) found that young learners could acquire FL vocabulary by watching television programs with subtitles at home. Their study showed that, although learning was stronger with subtitles, ‘vocabulary acquisition was also found in the condition in which children watched the nonsubtitled English-spoken television program’ (Koolstra/Beentjes, 1999: 58). In contrast to Krashen (1987), this indicates that it is possible for some learning to take place by watching authentic television broadcasts as they were intended for the TL speech community in spite of a relatively low proficiency. Additionally, Weyers (1999) showed that learners of Spanish in the US improved their communicative competence after exposure to authentic TL input in the form of *telenovelas*. The study found that certain components of communicative competence, such as confidence in speech and detail in narration, could be enhanced by exposure to authentic TL materials. However, other components, such as effective speaking, style, and circumlocution, were not affected by the input and were more likely to be transferred from the L1. Finally, a number of years later, Kuppens (2010) carried out a longitudinal study of incidental FL acquisition through exposure to English-language media. The study showed that frequency of exposure to various types of popular media had a significant effect on Dutch/English translation competence, and this was most affected by subtitled films and television.

However, research into the benefits of contact with film and television goes beyond discrete linguistic skills. For example, Quagilo (2008) attempted to discern the suitability of television series in EFL teaching by comparing the language used in the series *Friends* with natural conversation. The study showed that the language used in the series could be considered a reasonably accurate representation of natural conversation due to its similarity to face-to-face conversations in its core linguistic features. However, there were also some notable differences, the language scripted into television series tends to be less vague, more emotional, and more informal than the language of natural conversations. Wang’s (2012) case study of Chinese EFL students indicated that self-directed, regular, and thorough contact with English-language television dramas may have a positive impact on not only linguistic and sociolinguistic competences, but also on pragmatic competence. This was due to the potential of the medium to enhance Asian learners’ understanding of Western culture and values, as well as the ability of these students to see TV series not ‘purely as a form of entertainment,

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but as a truly valuable learning resource’ (Wang, 2012: 346). Bunting and Lindström (2013) found that watching film and televisions in out-of-school contexts exerted a great influence on how Swedish schoolchildren learned English. Although the study looked at a number of media types, films and television were the most influential factors when it came to learning English. The study also revealed a clear dividing line between what the students perceived as acceptable and unacceptable media use in institutional settings. They were fully aware that what they actually use English-language media for (posting on social media, watching cartoons, and so on) would not be appropriate in a school setting. Moreover, the types of media which are used in school were generally described pejoratively by the students, indicating a lack of satisfaction (probably due to the media being stripped of its authenticity in these contexts – *cf.* Chavez, 1998). Finally, Nightingale (2016) showed the role of film and television in the formation of language attitudes in multilingual contexts. His study showed strong correlations between out-of-school contact with film and television and language attitudes towards foreign and minority languages as well as languages in contact. More specifically, television was shown to have a powerful impact across a range of attitude statements regarding the minority language.

These studies make clear that audio-visual material in out-of-school contexts has a wide-ranging impact on learning a second or foreign language, both in terms of specific linguistic competences and in more abstract areas of language development. We have seen above some indication that contact with television series in out-of-school contexts may impact on pragmatic development (Wang, 2012), but there is a need for more detailed research in this area. With this in mind, the following section will review existing pragmatics research which considers the role of audio-visual media.

2. The role of film and television in interlanguage pragmatics

Existing research advocates audio-visual materials as an additional resource for teaching foreign/second language pragmatics due to the fact that they present language in rich cultural contexts (Bardovi-Harlig, et al. 1991; Rose, 1997). It has also been suggested that authentic audio-visual material ‘provides ample opportunities to address all aspects of language use in a variety of contexts’ (Alcón, 2005: 419) and is ‘useful to address knowledge of a pragmatic system, and knowledge of its appropriate use’ (Alcón/Safont, 2008: 198). This section will highlight some pragmatics research which considers the role of audio-visual media; specifically, film and television.

Earlier studies have confirmed the validity of the language used in films and TV for pragmatics research and foreign/second language teaching. Rose (2001) found similarities between the scripted language used in films and naturally occurring speech in terms of syntactic formula and compliment topic. However, differences were found regarding gender distribution and results for compliment response strategy were mixed. From this, Rose (2001) concludes that the language used in films is more representative of naturally occurring speech from a pragmalinguistic perspective than from a sociopragmatic perspective. Washburn (2001) points out that sitcoms may be used profitably as an additional source of input. In line with earlier research (Salzmann, 1989; Meinhof, 1998), she highlights five principle advantages of TV for learning foreign/second language pragmatics. These advantages are: 1) English-language TV shows are accessible and available all over the world; 2) as viewers do not have to be directly involved in the interaction, they can better focus on patterns, forms, and language use; 3) TV shows can be recorded, which allows for repetition and more in-depth analysis; 4) TV shows present a wide variety of interlocutors and interactions set in rich contexts; and 5) the multimodal presentation of the input (visual, verbal, and nonverbal) supports comprehension

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and interpretation (Washburn, 2001: 22). Since then, a number of studies have examined the suitability of film and TV as a resource for teaching L2 pragmatics in terms of specific speech acts.

Grant and Starks (2001) explored the potential of video and television, specifically soap operas, to teach natural conversation closings. They concluded that, although not an ideal source of input, this audio-visual material is accepted as natural by its viewers and is a superior source of data than that provided in many textbooks. Martínez-Flor and Fernández-Guerra (2002) compared the request, suggestion, and advice speech acts presented in EFL textbooks and films. They found these speech acts to be artificial and inappropriate when presented in textbooks but in films they were highly contextualised and incorporated a wide variety of linguistic formulas. Martínez-Flor (2007) analysed drama, comedy, and romance films and found that they featured a wide range of request modification devices. From her study, she concluded that films provide a ‘good source of material for exposing learners to authentic samples of appropriate pragmatic input in a variety of contexts’ and may ‘contribute to improv[ing] learners’ pragmatic and intercultural competence’ (Martínez-Flor, 2007: 276). Fernández-Guerra (2008) compared the request speech act between TV series and naturally occurring discourse. She found a fairly close correspondence between the former and the latter in terms of request head acts and their peripheral modification devices. Beltrán-Palanques (2011) analysed the adequacy of films for teaching the speech act of requesting. He found ample evidence of both direct and indirect refusal strategies and proposed that film is an ‘important pedagogical source to bring pragmatics in to the FL classroom’. This is because films expose learners to different pragmatological forms to express refusals and these examples are contextualised, which offers an enhanced sociopragmatic understanding of this specific speech act (Beltrán-Palanques, 2011: 81). Building on this research, Martínez-Flor and Beltrán-Palanques (2014) included authentic input from film and television scenes in their proposal on teaching the speech act of apologising in order to ‘make learners aware of what apologies involve and how they work’ (Martínez-Flor/Beltrán-Palanques, 2014: 52). Lastly, in her well known experimental study, Alcón (2005) compared the impact of explicit and implicit instruction on EFL learners’ knowledge of request strategies and their ability to use them. In line with earlier research, she argues that audio-visual material can be beneficial in EFL contexts because it may ‘expose learners to pragmatic aspects of the target language’ and prepare them for ‘communication in new cultural settings’ (Alcón, 2005: 419). Her study used the TV series *Stargate* as a didactic resource and compared the effectiveness of implicit and explicit instruction programmes, highlighting the potential of the latter.

As we can see, pragmatics research has already considered the role of film and television (Rose, 1997, 2001; Grant/Starks, 2001; Washburn, 2001; Alcón, 2005; Martínez-Flor, 2007; Beltrán-Palanques, 2011; Martínez-Flor/Beltrán-Palanques, 2014) however this work tends to focus on instructed settings. Studies which explore the potential of television as an OSF in the development of pragmatic competence are extremely scarce; in fact, existing research in this vein is purely theoretical. For example, Cenoz and Gorter (2008) include television as part of the linguistic landscape, suggesting that it may provide suitable input for developing pragmatic competence. They point out that this type of input is necessary in FL contexts as learners have limited opportunities to come into contact with speech acts in authentic communicative situations. In this way, pragmatic input through watching television may help to remedy breakdowns in intercultural communication by raising learners' awareness of how to realise a range of different speech acts. Moreover, Nightingale (2014) proposed that watching cartoons in out-of-school contexts may benefit child pragmatic development. On the premise of research highlighting the early pragmatic awareness of multilingual children (Safont, 2013) and specifically based on the notion of *situation-bound utterances* (Kecskés, 2010), the study suggests that the formulaic language used in children’s cartoons could be a profitable

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resource to raise sociopragmatic awareness in young FL learners at the same time as providing them with pragmalinguistic resources. In this respect, he points out that not only do children’s cartoons present pragmatic input in an appealing and effective format, but they also ‘provide well illustrated situational frames which simultaneously contain both context and language’ (Nightingale, 2014: 216).

Now that we have explored the potential benefits of film and television as an out-of-school language learning resource, as well as the role that film and television may play in the development of pragmatic competence, we are ready to move on to the main focus of the current paper. The balance of this paper presents a study which assesses the impact of extramural media contact, through television series, on the pragmatic competence and awareness of English philology students in a Spanish university.

The study

From the literature review above, we were able to define a research gap. First, existing research on popular media as an OSF in language learning focuses on such factors as vocabulary acquisition, translation skills, written and oral competence, as well as more abstract areas such as identity, motivation, and language attitudes. Thus far, existing work which considers media contact as an OSF in pragmatic development is purely theoretical. Second, research on pragmatics which does actually consider the impact of film and television is somewhat limited in the sense that it frames this type of media as an in-class didactic resource, focusing on it as a form of input which complements instruction strategies rather than focusing on the potential of the medium itself. With this in mind, we can state that, to the best of our knowledge, there is currently no work exploring the impact of out-of-school media contact on the development of L2 pragmatic competence. For that reason, we have formulated four research questions to guide the current study:

RQ1: Does watching English-language TV series on out-of-school contexts have a positive impact on pragmatic competence?

RQ2: Does the amount of contact have a positive impact on pragmatic competence?

RQ3: Does the presence of subtitles have a positive impact on pragmatic competence?

RQ4: To what extent does the sample show pragmatic awareness and does contact with TV series impact on this?

The sample

The sample in the current study consists of 23 students (mean age 21.7 years; female $n = 18$ – male $n = 5$) who are in the third year of the English studies degree program at the University Jaume I in Castelló, Spain. This student profile was selected for three reasons: 1) they have already completed the first two years of their degree program, which is taught in English, and therefore have a level of proficiency around level B2 - C1, according to the CEFR; 2) they do not receive any formal training in pragmatics until the fourth year of the degree program (in the subject *Pragmática del discurso en lengua inglesa*); and 3) the majority of these students aspire to become teachers in EFL, CLIL, or EMI contexts.

The method

The current study takes a mixed-methods approach. Data for qualitative analysis were collected by means of a questionnaire, which the students were given around 30 minutes to complete. After collection, the questionnaires were numbered and data were inputted into Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) in order to obtain inferential statistical information. As the sample size is small, a Shapiro-Wilk test was used to test the distribution of the data. The test indicated a normal data distribution, so the parametric t-tests were used. The data derived from the responses to the pragmatic routines were accompanied by data for qualitative analysis, in the form of short written justifications for each choice; the participants were encouraged to write their comments in either Spanish, Catalan, or English according to the language they felt most comfortable expressing themselves in. This qualitative method was included in order to gather more information regarding dynamics, processes, and individual variation (Dörnyei, 2007; Komorowska, 2014; Wlosowicz, 2014). After collection, the written justifications were inputted into an Excel database and coded according to participant number, question number, speech act, degree of contact, and use of subtitles. This allowed more flexibility when exploring the data according to these criteria.

The instrument

As mentioned above, data were collected by means of an on-paper questionnaire. The questionnaire was divided into three sections, from which we were able to obtain data for quantitative analysis. The three sections are as follows: 1) general demographics, which solicited information on age, sex, and L1; 2) contact with English-language television series, which asked participants if they watched English-language TV series, what their favourite genre was, how long they spent watching series, and if they watched series with subtitles; and 3) responses to speech act routines, which included the speech acts of requesting, suggesting, apologising, complaining, and refusing. The routines were presented as a type of modified Discourse Completion Test. In a similar way to the study by Lorenzo-Dus (2001), this format was used to provide stereotypical requirements of what constitutes socially acceptable language use, as well as facilitate the speed of data collection. Below is an example of a speech act routine and the choices of response that were available to the participants:

Situation 1: A colleague invites you to have lunch together after work but you do not want to go so you refuse his invitation. What should you say? Circle the most appropriate option.

- A. No, I won't go to have lunch with you, I'd rather stay at home and rest.
- B. I'm sorry, but I can't accept your invitation, I have a doctor's appointment.
- C. No, I don't think I will be available to have lunch with you, sorry.

As can be seen from the example above, the three options provided for the participants contained only one response that was most adequate according to Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness variables; that is, the ranking of imposition implied by the speech act, as well as the social distance and power relationship between the supposed interlocutors. Additionally, two less adequate responses were provided, one was more obviously inappropriate and the other was less so. This allowed us to obtain a score for each speech act routine: 0 = inappropriate response, 1 = less appropriate response, and 2 = appropriate response. Lastly, the questionnaire provided a space for the participants to write a short justification of their choice for each speech act routine, as well as a larger space at the end where the participants could comment on why they thought it was important to teach young EFL learners about appropriate use of English. From these justifications, we were able to obtain data for qualitative analysis.

Results

As the current study takes a mixed-methods approach, the results section will be divided in two. The first part of the section will take a quantitative approach to the data collected in the questionnaire in order to explore the pragmatic competence of the sample and respond to the first three research questions. The second part of the section will take a qualitative approach to the data collected in the questionnaire in order to explore the pragmatic awareness of the sample and respond to the fourth research question, which, in turn, should shed additional light on the results from the quantitative data analysis.

Quantitative data analysis: pragmatic competence

In response to the first research question, a comparison of mean scores was carried out in order to determine the effect of watching English-language television series on the overall pragmatic competence of the sample, operationalised as the combined mean score from the responses to all speech act routines. Furthermore, an independent samples t-test was performed in order to ascertain if any differences in the mean scores reached statistical significance. The results showed a higher mean score for overall pragmatic competence from those participants who reported not watching TV series (the ‘no’ group: $M = 0.900$, $SD = .087$) than from those who did (the ‘yes’ group: $M = 0.763$, $SD = .099$); moreover, the t-test results indicated that this difference was statistically significant ($t = 2.251$, $p = .035$). From these results, we infer that the incidental input provided by watching TV series is not sufficient to have a positive impact on the sample’s pragmatic competence; that is, the mere presence of the input is not enough. For this reason, we may conclude a negative answer to RQ1 (*Does watching English-language TV series on out-of-school contexts have a positive impact on pragmatic competence?*). As these initial results were not what we expected, we decided to look at the mean score for each of the five speech acts to ascertain more detail (see table 1).

SPEECH ACT	YES	NO	DIFFERENTIAL
Requests	0.875	1.000	- 0.125
Suggestions	0.645	0.917	- 0.272
Apologies	0.913	0.833	+ 0.080
Complaints	0.775	0.917	- 0.142
Refusals	0.613	0.833	- 0.220

Table 1: Do you watch English-language TV series? (Mean scores)

As can be seen from the data, the ‘no’ group ($n = 3$) shows a higher mean score than the ‘yes’ group ($n = 20$) for the following speech acts: requests, suggestions, complaints, and refusals. Moreover, t-tests revealed that the difference in the mean score for request speech acts reaches statistical significance ($t = 3.684$, $p = .002$). The only speech act in which the ‘yes’ group performs better is apologies (marked in bold type); however, this difference is not statistically significant ($t = -1.026$, $p = .316$).

In response to the second research question, a comparison of mean scores was carried out in order to determine the effect of the amount of time spent watching English-language TV series on the overall pragmatic competence of the sample. Again, a t-test was performed in order to ascertain if any differences in the mean scores reached statistical significance. To test the second research question it was necessary to exclude the participants from the ‘no’ group in the first question. The remaining participants were divided into two groups: those who reported less than 14 hours contact

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time per week, and those who reported more than 14 hours contact time per week. This reconfiguration of the sample resulted in a ‘low contact’ group ($n = 16$) and a ‘high contact’ group ($n = 4$). The results showed a higher mean score for overall pragmatic competence from the ‘high contact’ group ($M = 0.825$, $SD = .087$) than from the ‘low contact’ group ($M = 0.747$, $SD = .099$); however, the t-test results indicated that this difference was not statistically significant ($t = -1.439$, $p = .167$). From these results, we can see some effect stemming from increased contact with incidental input from TV series; we can consider this an effect of a change in the *quantity* of the input. For this reason, we may conclude an affirmative answer to RQ2 (*Does the amount of contact have a positive impact on pragmatic competence?*). Again, to ascertain more detail about these results, we decided to look at the mean score for each of the five speech acts (see table 2).

SPEECH ACT	HIGH CONTACT	LOW CONTACT	DIFFERENTIAL
Requests	1.000	0.844	+ 0.156
Suggestions	0.625	0.650	- 0.025
Apologies	0.938	0.906	+ 0.032
Complaints	0.875	0.750	+ 0.125
Refusals	0.688	0.594	+ 0.094

Table 2: How much time per week do you spend watching English-language TV series? (Mean scores)

As can be seen from the data, the ‘high contact’ group shows a higher mean score (marked in bold type) than the ‘low contact’ group for the following speech acts: requests, apologies, complaints, and refusals. Moreover, t-tests revealed that the difference in the mean score for request speech acts reaches statistical significance ($t = -4.038$, $p = .001$). The only speech act in which the ‘low contact’ group performs better is suggestions; however, the differential between the mean scores is negligible; at 0.025, it represents the smallest difference between the two groups.

Lastly, in response to the third research question, a comparison of mean scores was carried out in order to determine the effect of the use of subtitles on the overall pragmatic competence of the sample. As in the previous research questions, a t-test was performed to ascertain if any differences in the mean scores reached statistical significance. Again, it was necessary to exclude the participants who reported not watching TV series in English and divide the remaining participants into two groups: those who reported watching TV series with subtitles, and those who reported not using subtitles. This reconfiguration of the sample resulted in a ‘subtitles’ group ($n = 13$) and a ‘no subtitles’ group ($n = 7$). The results showed a slightly higher mean score for overall pragmatic competence from the ‘subtitles’ group ($M = 0.773$, $SD = .110$) than from the ‘no subtitles’ group ($M = 0.743$, $SD = .097$); however, the t-test results indicated that this difference was not statistically significant ($t = -0.635$, $p = .533$). From these results, we can see some effect from an enrichment of the context regarding the input provided by TV series; we can consider this an effect of a change in the *quality* of the input. For this reason, we may conclude an affirmative answer to RQ3 (*Does the presence of subtitles have a positive impact on pragmatic competence?*). In line with the previous research questions, to ascertain more detail about these results, we decided to look at the mean score for each of the five speech acts (see table 3).

SPEECH ACT	SUBTITLES	NO SUBTITLES	DIFFERENTIAL
Requests	0.904	0.821	+ 0.083
Suggestions	0.688	0.571	+ 0.117
Apologies	0.885	0.964	- 0.079
Complaints	0.808	0.714	+ 0.094

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Refusals	0.596	0.643	- 0.047
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Table 3: Do you watch English-language TV series with subtitles? (Mean scores)

As can be seen from the data, the ‘subtitles’ group shows a higher mean score (marked in bold type) than the ‘no subtitles’ group for the following speech acts: requests, suggestions, and complaints. While t-tests revealed that the difference in the mean score for these speech acts was not statistically significant, the suggestions speech act showed the greatest differential between the means. The ‘no subtitles’ group performs better in the apologies and refusals speech acts; however, the differential between the mean scores is quite small for both.

In summary, our results show that the mere presence of input in the form of TV series is not sufficient to affect L2 pragmatic competence. It would seem that, in contrast to Wang (2012), our sample does not move beyond television as a form of entertainment, failing to convert it into a valuable tool for learning. In this sense, after having tested the impact of TV series as an out-of-school language learning resource, we agree with Alcón (2005) that awareness raising and instruction are necessary to maximise the benefits of audio-visual media in the development of pragmatic competence. Nevertheless, our results did show an interesting effect emerging from a quantity change (amount of contact) and a quality change (presence of subtitles) in the input. Results from the former change highlight the positive impact of increased contact with the TL, and now open an avenue to link L2 pragmatic development research with existing work on the development of additional language skills in out-of-school contexts (i.e.: frequency of exposure – Kuppens, 2010). While results from the latter change are in line with Terrell’s (1993) notion of ‘extralinguistic clues’ and Washburn’s (2001) contention that multimodal input supports comprehension and interpretation of language and how it is used in different contexts. Furthermore, this study consolidates existing work on the benefits of subtitles in L2 development (d’Ydewalle/Van de Poel, 1999; Koolstra/Beentjes, 1999) by adding additional empirical data from the area of L2 pragmatics. Now that we have explored the pragmatic competence of the participants in this study, the next section will explore their pragmatic awareness.

Qualitative data analysis: pragmatic awareness

As mentioned above, the qualitative approach to data analysis in our study aims to give some insights into the pragmatic awareness of the sample, as well as provide an answer to RQ4 (*to what extent does the sample show pragmatic awareness and does contact with TV series impact on this?*). Almost all participants gave some form of justification for their response to the speech act routines, however, due to restrictions of space, we will only focus on specific aspects of their comments in this section in an attempt to enhance the data from the previous section. In what follows, wherever there is a focus on an individual participant’s comments, that participant is identified in brackets using a capital P and a number (i.e.: P22).

In general, from the results we see that the participants show a reasonable degree of pragmatic awareness, as in many cases their comments allude to Brown and Levinson’s (1987) politeness variables. Moreover, in some cases they even indicate awareness of the perlocutionary effect of their response to the speech act and mention it as a reason to justify their choice. However, as mentioned earlier, the pragmatic routines were presented as a type of modified Discourse Completion Test; in the sense that participants could choose from three predefined responses. This means that the participants were presented with specific English-language pragmalinguistic resources. For example, *would you mind... , can I... , if I were you... , you really should... , really sorry... , excuse me... , I don’t*

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like to... but..., I don't think..., I'd love to... but...., and so on. The participants' comments show that, with the exception of one specific mention of the word 'please', none of them indicated any of these pragmlinguistic elements in the justifications for their choice of response. This does not necessarily mean that they did not notice the pragmlinguistic resources, but they did not reflect on them. These results are interesting in light of Rose's (2001) observation that the language used in films is more representative of naturally occurring speech pragmlinguistically than sociopragmatically, because the participants in our study reflected far more on the sociopragmatic element of the routines than on the corresponding pragmlinguistic resources. Perhaps this is related to the idea that audio-visual media provides well-illustrated situational frames which help to clarify the context of the interaction (Nightingale, 2014). We believe this provides an answer to the first part of RQ4 (*to what extent does the sample show pragmatic awareness*), in order to explore the second part (*does contact with TV series impact on this*) we will now return to the first three RQs.

In RQ1, we saw that the group which reported not watching TV series scored consistently higher in their responses to the speech act routines. This was especially the case for requests, which showed a statistically significant difference in the mean scores. Now we will explore some of the participants' justifications for their responses to see if we can shed any additional light on these results. Focusing on item 8 of the questionnaire, a request speech act routine in which a student has to ask to borrow the notes of a classmate they do not know very well, participants from the 'no' group all specifically mention the social distance aspect of the request: *ya que no tienes mucha confianza con él* (since you don't know him very well – P7), *because I don't know the person very well* (P8), and *because you do not have confidence enough* (P12). On the other hand, a number of participants from the 'yes' group also focused on the social distance aspect, however others failed to reflect on this, focusing instead on more vague terms such as *polite*. Nevertheless, the comment of one participant indicated awareness of the perlocutionary aspect of the routine, *by being polite I might have chances on getting [the notes]* (P3), and another explicitly mentioned the considerations stemming from the imposition of the request, *I am asking for a favour and I cannot give him/her a direct order* (P1). Lastly, another participant mentioned adding the external request modification device 'please' (P20), although they chose the *can I* response rather than the more appropriate *would you mind*, so this may have been influenced by their L1. Although these data give more of an insight into the pragmatic awareness of the sample, they do not offer much by the way of explanation as to why the no contact group scored higher for pragmatic competence. Here, we reiterate that the simple presence of the input seems to have little influence.

In RQ2, we saw a consistent relationship between higher contact with English-language TV series and more appropriate responses to the speech act routines. Once again, the speech act of requests showed a statistically significant difference in the mean scores. Now we will explore some of the participants' justifications for their responses to see if we can shed any additional light on these results. Focusing on item 9 of the questionnaire, a request speech act routine in which a woman asks her husband to buy some milk before arriving home, the participants from the 'high contact' group consistently choose the most appropriate response. Their justifications make explicit mention of the imposition of the request: *it's an easy task so you can't be rude* (P3) and *it's not a problem for the husband* (P14). There is also mention of the social distance between the interlocutors: *most caring and closer* (P2). On the other hand, the participants from the 'low contact' group mention less specific terms such as *informal, natural, polite, friendly, nicer, and confidence*. However, some participants from this group mention maintaining a good relationship between the married couple, and two participants imply awareness of the imposition of the request: *it doesn't represent an effort* (P17) and *it shouldn't be any problem to buy something on your way home* (P23). This indicates that they are

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aware of some pragmatic constraints on requests but do not have the same ability to verbalise them as the ‘high contact’ group. In this sense, we can say that the ‘high contact’ group is more pragmatically aware because they demonstrate more conscious, reflective, and explicit knowledge of appropriate language use (Alcón/Safont, 2008). Therefore, a *quantity* change in the input appears to influence both pragmatic competence and pragmatic awareness.

In RQ3, we saw that watching English-language TV series with subtitles resulted in more appropriate responses to the speech act routines of requesting, suggesting, and complaining. Now we will explore some of the participants’ justifications for their responses to see if they tell us any more about these results. Bearing in mind that none of the differences in mean scores were statistically significant, we will focus on the speech act that showed the greatest differential; that is, suggesting. Focusing on item 10 of the questionnaire, a request speech act routine in which a student has to suggest to a friend that they study more to be able to recuperate a failed exam, the participants from the ‘subtitles’ group more frequently choose the most appropriate response. Their justifications mention the perlocutionary aspect of the routine: *to motivate him* (P1), *choice B is the most encouraging* (P3), *to show him/her your support* (P13), and *show understanding and support them* (P22). One participant even makes explicit mention of the face-threatening nature of the exchange (P19). On the other hand, the participants from the ‘no subtitles’ group also mention the perlocutionary aspect of the routine: *encouraging* (P2), *encourage* (P9), and *support* (P21). However, in this group was the only participant to choose the most inappropriate response, her justification being: *you know your friend and it’s better to be honest* (P11). Although these results are not particularly conclusive, we can suggest that the ‘subtitles’ group, by the fact gave more pointed justifications and made specific reference to politeness theory, are somewhat more pragmatically aware than the ‘no subtitles’ group. Therefore, as above, a *quality* change in the input also appears to influence pragmatic competence as well as pragmatic awareness.

Finally, item 18 of the questionnaire asked the participants to comment on the following question: *why do you think it is important to teach young EFL learners about appropriate use of English?* In this way, we were able to gain insight into not only their pragmatic awareness in the classic sense (as defined above by Alcón and Safont, 2008), but also their awareness of the importance of teaching pragmatics to language learners. Results show that, of all the participants, only three explicitly mentioned the term ‘pragmatics’: *enseñar pragmática es una de las cosas más importantes* (teaching pragmatics is one of the most important things – P7), *pragmatics is a very important aspect to teach* (P17), and *you are not yourself without dominion over pragmatics* (P22). Moreover, one participant explicitly mentioned the term communicative competence: *la competencia comunicativa de los españoles en inglés es muy baja* (Spanish people’s communicative competence in English is very low – P19). Nevertheless, in general, almost all participants agree that it is very important to teach appropriate use of English in EFL classes.

Some participants mention such issues as using the language correctly, being polite and formal, and using language in context. Several participants mentioned the importance of awareness of politeness variables (Brown/Levinson, 1987), such as the power relationship and the social distance between interlocutors, for example:

- 1) *...és important conèixer les diferents formes d’expressar-te depenent de la persona/autoritat amb qui parles* (it is important to know the forms to express yourself depending on the person/authority to whom you are talking - P4)

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- 2) *...you don't have to use the same language and expressions if you are talking to your parents or to your boss (P5)*
- 3) *...debes saber cómo dirigirte a una persona u a otra dependiendo de tu grado de confianza con ella (you must know how to address one person or another depending on how close you are to them - P7)*
- 4) *...it is important to know what type of expressions of grammatical forms you should use depending with who you are talking to (P15)*

While others focused more on behavioural and affective issues related to the language learner, for example:

- 5) *...para evitar situaciones incómodas o malentendidos (to avoid misunderstandings or uncomfortable situations – P3)*
- 6) *...it will be better for them in order not to get embarrassed in public (P13)*
- 7) *...we should know the appropriate use of English because when we have to face these situations, we don't know how to react (P21)*
- 8) *...teaching people an appropriate use of any language is important in order to make the learners feel more comfortable when speaking (P23)*

Moreover, some participants mentioned that teaching appropriate use of English could be beneficial to EFL students when they have to use the FL in *real-life situations* (P10), or to *confront challenges* (P12) or *communicate appropriately outside a classroom* (P16), and lastly to use the language *according to the culture of that country* (P11). These results indicate that our participants are acutely aware of the role of pragmatics in the language-learning classroom, which is important because our sample deals with potential future English-language teachers. The relevance this has in terms of L2 pragmatics research is that the more aware of the importance of appropriate language use we are able to make future teachers the more prepared they will be in the task of teaching English in spite of the paucity of consideration given to L2 pragmatics in traditional didactic materials.

Conclusion

By way of a conclusion, this study has shown that audio-visual materials used in out-of-school contexts do have an impact on pragmatic development to a limited extent. Although it appears that the simple presence of incidental input through TV series was not sufficient to have an impact in this regard, we do observe an effect when we consider a quality change and especially a quantity change in the input. Not only do these changes have an effect on the pragmatic competence of our participants, but they also appear to make their mark on their pragmatic awareness. This finding corroborates Cenoz and Gorter's (2008) contention that watching television may raise awareness of how to realise specific speech acts. Notwithstanding, our participants seem to be more able to reflect on the sociopragmatic aspects of the speech routines they were presented with, paying little attention to the pragmalinguistic resources. As a result, we are inclined to agree with Alcón (2005) that pragmatic instruction is essential in order to maximise the benefits of audio-visual material as a pragmatic resource. However, we also believe that these benefits should be complemented with, and reinforced through, continuous contact with this type of authentic input in extramural contexts. Finally, one clear limitation of the current study is the small sample, which makes the results difficult to generalize. Although the rich data from the participants' comments goes some way towards compensating for the sample size, we believe that more definitive results could be obtained in a follow up study conducted with a larger number of participants.

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