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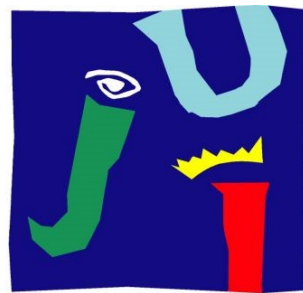
FINAL UNDERGRADUATE DISSERTATION

Apologies in Fiction TV Series

The Big Bang Theory

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Abstract

Since Austin's (1962) work *How To Do Things With Words* there have been numerous studies about the way in which utterances are used as a mean to perform actions. The branch of linguistics that deals with this phenomenon is pragmatics, which arouse in the sixties as a reaction to Chomsky's idea that language is just a set of rules that must be learnt. After the elaboration of various models of communicative competence presented by a number of authors, the idea that pragmatic awareness is necessary in order for speakers to be successful in communication has spread, being one of the most relevant constructs the one introduced by Celce-Murcia (2007). Research has been conducted especially on speech acts, as Leech's (2014) book *The Pragmatics of Politeness*. For that reason, we have carried out an analysis on speech acts, and in particular on apologies, of the TV series *The Big Bang Theory*. The aim of this study is to analyse whether apologies in the episodes analysed mirror real-life conversation and if so, to prove that this audiovisual material may be used for classroom activities, as an appropriate tool for the purpose of developing students' pragmatic knowledge.

Key words: communicative competence, pragmatics, speech acts, apologies.

Introduction

The last century has witnessed a development in the research of an appropriate definition of what speech acts are and on how they are employed to perform actions by the mere use of utterances. Actually, it was after the publication of Austin's (1962) pioneering work *How to Do Things with Words* that attention was drawn on this field of enquiry.

This paper is going to analyse several definitions of speech act by a variety of authors such as Austin and Searle who, together with Grice, formulated the speech act theory and the conversational maxims (McCarthy, 1991) and who are considered the founding fathers of pragmatics, and others more contemporary such as Bach (1994), Cameron (2001), and Leech (2014) thus providing a vast picture from the origins until the last decades of studies carried out.

With this theoretical framework in mind, this study aims at analysing one particular type of performative speech act, that is, apologies. In order to achieve this purpose, various episodes of the TV series *The Big Bang Theory* are going to be analysed to observe in which ways the characters perform such speech act in order to know if it resembles real-world conversations and if audiovisual material can be used in classroom activities in order to achieve pragmatic awareness.

In Chapter 1 we will present several models of Communicative Competence, which will provide a general overview on the topic. Then, Chapter 2 will narrow down the topic to pragmatic competence, where the speech act of apologising will be discussed. Chapter 3 will focus on the study carried out and the discussion of results, followed by the conclusion, the references and the appendix.

Part I: Theoretical Framework

1. Models of Communicative Competence

In Vance's (2015: 1) words, "communicative competence is a theory that seeks to understand an individual's ability to effectively convey meaning within given contexts" and it was first developed by Dell Hymes in 1972. As a matter of fact, he claimed that communicative competence is indispensable for speakers to negotiate meaning in various contexts. Later on, Widdowson defined

communicative competence as "an active force continuing creativity" (1983: 27), so he was the first who gave more importance to the concept of performance instead of competence (Bagarić & Mihaljević, 2007).

It is important to introduce the notion of communicative competence in the theoretical framework of this paper because a "competent language user should possess not only knowledge about language but also the ability and skill to activate that knowledge in a communicative event" (Bagarić & Mihaljević, 2007: 100) thus, it is crucial that speakers have full control on it in order for a speech event to be understood. In this sense, it may be argued that speech act theory developed into a notable instrument for the analysis of communicative competence since communication is performed by the use of speech acts.

1.1 Canale and Swain's Model

In the same line of thought, Canale and Swain (1980) understood communicative competence as a fundamental "system of knowledge and skill needed for communication" (Bagarić & Mihaljević, 2007: 96). They argued that there are four main components that form the construct of communicative competence and that are now widely accepted: grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence and strategic competence. Grammatical competence refers to the control of verbal and non-verbal linguistic code, including vocabulary, morphology, syntax, semantics, phonology and orthography; sociolinguistic competence is needed in order to understand language in different contexts; discourse competence comprehends the dominance of those patterns needed to combine form and meaning in order to obtain a meaningful text (spoken or written); strategic competence is considered as the knowledge of those strategies used by speakers in order to compensate for the lack in mastering some of the other communicative competence components (Bagarić & Mihaljević, 2007: 96). Following Canale & Swain's model, Bachman designed his own model, presented in the next section.

1.2 Bachman's Model

Ten years after the publication of Canale and Swain's model, Bachman proposed a new model much more complex than the previous one, in his work *Fundamental Considerations in Language*

Testing (1990), based on research on language testing.

As a matter of fact, this author distinguished between organizational competence, which includes morphology, vocabulary, syntax, as well as cohesion and organization, and pragmatic competence that includes the performance of language use through the application of certain abilities and sensibility to register, spontaneity, cultural references (Bachman, 1990). Figure 1 below illustrates the hierarchy among the components of communicative competence (to which Bachman refers to as *language competence*).
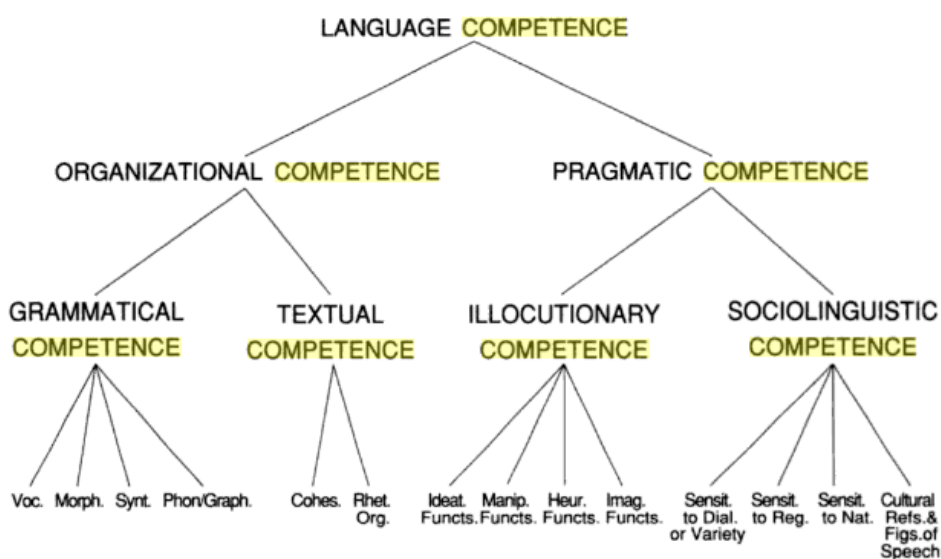

Figure 1: Bachman's Model of Communicative Competence (1990)

In Bachman's words, "in language use these components all interact with each other and with features of language use situation" (1990: 86) and this interaction is what characterizes the use of communicative competence.

1.3 Celce-Murcia's Model

A few years after Bachman's model, and as an attempt to address some problems arising from CLT, Celce-Murcia (1995) developed a new model of communicative competence. This construct included five components: discourse competence, linguistic competence, actional competence, sociocultural competence, strategic competence.

This model was presented "as a pyramid enclosing a circle and surrounded by another circle" (Celce-Murcia, 1995: 9). The circle inside the pyramid is discourse competence, and the three vertices of the triangle are sociocultural competence, linguistic competence and actional competence. The last component was defined as the ability to succeed in communication through the correct performance and understanding of speech acts. What is more, in this model discourse competence was shaped by lexico-grammatical knowledge, actional organizational skills as well as the sociocultural context and vice-versa. Then, the circle which surrounds the pyramid is strategic competence, which was supposed to be always present in communication since it is needed by the speakers in order to negotiate meaning and to compensate for the deficiencies in any other of the components (Celce-Murcia, 1995) (as Canale and Swain had previously argued). Figure 2 exemplifies the model.
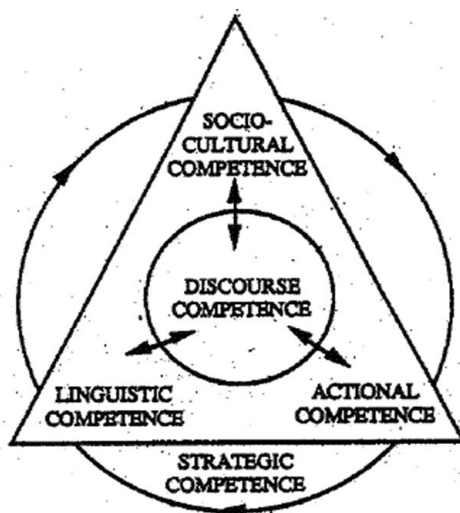

Figure 2: Celce-Murcia's Model of Communicative Competence (1995)

Celce-Murcia also explained the differences between this new proposed model and the other two previously presented in this paper. As a matter of fact, the approach taken in order to elaborate this construct is more pedagogical with respect to the other two models.

Her model of communicative competence uses the term linguistic competence instead of grammatical competence since "grammatical" may be misunderstood in the sense that it includes only morphology and syntax, and sociocultural competence instead of sociolinguistic competence in order to better mark the distinction with actional competence and to put much more emphasis on the fact that sociocultural competence is needed for the correct functioning of the other components (Celce-Murcia, 1995). Figure 3 below represents the evolution from Canale and Swain's model to Celce-Murcia's construct.
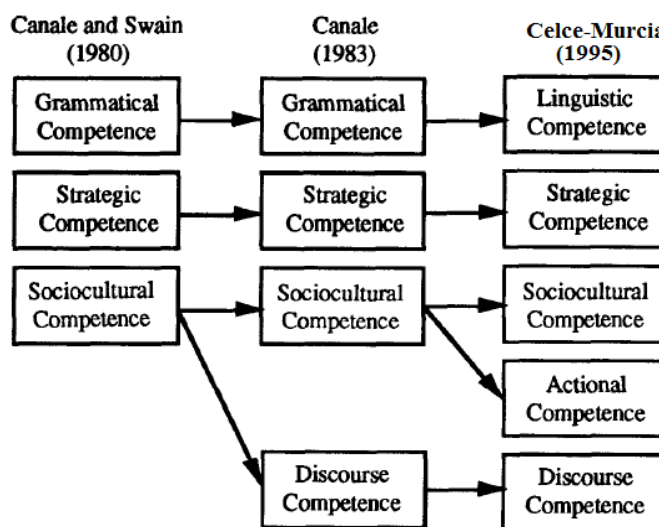
Figure 3: Evolution from Canale & Swain model to Celce-Murcia construct (1995)

In addition to this, similarities with Bachman's model were found, especially in the five components of Celce-Murcia's construct. However, differences rely in the pragmatic-sociolinguistic dimension as it occurred with Canale and Swain's model. Actually, the different names of the components show also the different approaches taken by the authors of both models: Celce-Murcia's construct aims at describing "speech acts and language functions" (Celce-Murcia, 1995: 13).

In spite of that, it is not only after more than ten years that Celce-Murcia proposed a new model of communicative competence (2007). Actually, the one elaborated in 1995 had been revised, filling the gaps that were found. Figure 4 illustrates Celce-Murcia's construct of communicative competence elaborated in 2007.
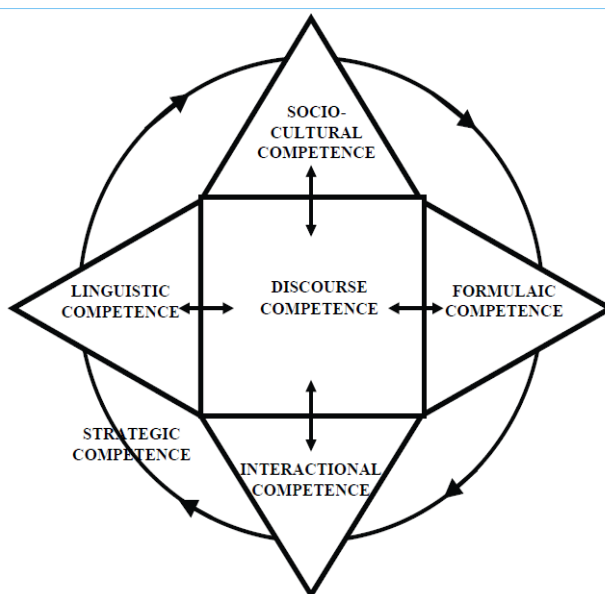

Figure 4: Celce-Murcia Model of Communicative Competence (2007)

As Celce-Murcia stated, "this new model maintains the top-down role of sociocultural competence" (2007: 46) meaning by sociocultural competence the pragmatic knowledge of the speakers. Of the diverse variables of sociocultural competence described in 1995, Celce-Murcia considered that three of them were fundamental for this new proposal, that is, social contextual factors, stylistic appropriateness, and cultural factors.

The new proposed construct also keeps the central role of discourse competence but draws much more attention of four sub-areas described in the previous model: cohesion, deixis, coherence, generic structure.

Nevertheless, there is a change in this new model, since it distinguished between linguistic competence and formulaic competence. Linguistic competence includes knowledge of phonology, lexicon, morphology and syntax and formulaic competence is its counterbalance. As a matter of fact, "formulaic competence refers to those fixed and prefabricated chunks of language that speakers use heavily in everyday interaction" (Celce-Murcia, 2007: 47).

Moreover, interactional competence is a new component of the construct, and it functions as a counterpart of sociocultural competence. It has three sub-components fundamental for this model, that is, actional competence, conversational competence, non-verbal paralinguistic competence. Besides, Celce-Murcia claims that this is a key component of the construct, since "the typical performance of speech acts and speech act sets can differ in important ways from language to language" (2007: 49) and that it must be combined with common rules of conversational knowledge.

Strategic competence is also maintained in the revised model and it involves learning strategies and communication strategies. Celce-Murcia considered three main learning strategies relevant for this model: cognitive, metacognitive, memory-related; and five communication strategies: achievement, stalling, self-monitoring, interacting and social ones.

As we have seen, the field of pragmatics expanded rapidly after the introduction to the notion of communicative competence since it may be analysed by the classification of language according to communicative functions elaborated in the speech act theory. Besides, according to this theory, speech acts contribute to the realization of those communicative functions (Vance, 2015).

As has been observed through the review of the most important models of communicative competence, pragmatics is part of it and it is necessary for speakers to achieve their knowledge in

order to be successful in communication. That is why we turn to consider the field of pragmatics in Chapter 2.

2. Pragmatics

Pragmatics is the branch of linguistics that arouse in the 1960s, in particular as a response to Chomsky's competence theory according to which language is an abstract idea whose importance lies in the correct use of grammar independently from the actual usage of language itself (Martínez Flor & Usó Juan, 2010). One of the authors that reacted to that theory was Leech (1983), who argued that, instead of competence, the main aim when acquiring a target language should be the ability to use it for communication, that is, performance should be the purpose of language (Martínez Flor & Usó Juan, 2010).

As Cameron (2001: 68) states, "pragmatics is the field of enquiry that deals with how language can be used to do things and mean things in real-world situations". She also mentions another important author in this field, Thomas (1995), who argued that meaning is constituted by the negotiation between the speaker and the hearer, the context and the potential meaning of the utterance, being meaning a dynamic process rather than a static one. Moreover, pragmatics helps the speakers to understand what kind of actions their interlocutor is trying to perform by means of utterances, and so being able to reply correctly (Jones, 2012). What is more, in pragmatics interaction also plays a crucial role, since it does not only focus on the speakers' intentions but also on the way the interlocutors perceive what is being told (Martínez Flor & Usó Juan, 2010). Having its roots in the philosophy of language, pragmatics takes a logical approach, in the sense that it tries to find those conditions that are necessary for a conversation to be successful (Jones, 2012). In this way, it could be said that Austin (1962) referred to those requisites as *felicity conditions*, and he argued that they were indispensable for a speech act to be *happy*, that is, to be understood.

2.1 Speech Acts

During the second half of the twentieth century many authors dealt with the topic of speech acts. Nevertheless, John L. Austin (1962) could be considered the first who deeply analysed and elaborated a speech act theory summarised in his work *How to Do Things with Words*. Indeed,

Austin divided utterances into constatives and performatives, the former being statements used to describe or report something, the latter considered as "being part of the doing of an action, which again would not normally be described as, or 'just', saying something" (1962: 5). This author challenged the traditional theories about language, focusing on what language *does* instead of what language *is* (Petrey, 1990).

As Bach states (1994: 1) "both words and people mean things" because what a person says maybe is not what he or she really means (or maybe it is) and here lies the importance of understanding that speech acts are closely related to meaning and context, an idea that was first developed by Malinowski in his paper *The Problem of Meaning in Primitive Languages* in 1923. This is why Bach (1994) stated that non-linguistic factors are the ones who determine the nature of a speech act. Furthermore, since they are also influenced by context, as mentioned above, one can say that their meaning is affected by the culture the speakers belong to and more specifically it is negotiated by the speakers themselves (Cameron, 2001). As a matter of fact, Bloor and Bloor (2013: 16) claimed that "the context of the utterance must be the right one because certain conditions have to be met for the words to function fully as performative". Besides, these authors also stated that listeners may interpret wrongly the speech act being performed by the interlocutor, but that normally the knowledge of a social situation help listeners to identify the act that is taking place (2013). This is the reason why speakers need to share knowledge (also known as mutual knowledge) in order to have successful communication.

Some authors also talked about *intentionality*, such as Bach (1994) and Tsohatzidis (2002). The first one argued that "what one intends can contribute to what one is doing" (1994: 4) and also that speech acts convey a *communicative* intention which has to be recognised as an attitude in order to be successful. In turn, Tsohatzidis (2002: 51) claimed that "an intention of an act is the purpose the agent intends to achieve by performing the act. Even when the agent's intention for her act is realized, the intention of her act may not be", furthering Bach's explanation.

2.2 Performative Speech Acts

As mentioned in the previous section, performatives are sentences through which the speaker performs an action, while constatives are used in order to "just" describe something (Austin, 1962: 5). For the purposes of the present study, this section is going to centre on the former.

Austin (1962) claimed that this type of sentences have not truth-value in the sense that, since they are not mere statements, they cannot be true or false. For instance, if someone says "I bet you" he or she is simply betting someone else, but the utterance itself cannot be true or false because it is an action being performed. Furthermore, this author also argued that, since the one who is performing the action is also the utterer, this type of sentences usually make use of a verb in the first person singular, present tense and an active voice and it has to be an action that is being performed at the very moment in which the sentence is being told. They also "make explicit what we are doing by using a performative verb like 'promise', 'pronounce', 'apologize', or 'request'" (Bach, 1994: 5). On the other hand, Searle contradicted Austin by saying that performatives are just statements with truth value indeed and that the only difference is that some statement can be performed directly while others cannot (Kasher, 1998).

In recent years research about performative speech acts has been conducted. For example, Hazen (2015: 311) argued that "a performative speech act is when uttering the words completes the action of the speech act" and that the utterance itself means to perform the act. He also added that some performative speech acts are more common than others, such as promising, apologizing, accepting, betting and quitting.

Once we have discussed the notion of performative speech acts, we turn to consider the specific speech act under analysis, i.e., that of apology.

2.3 Apologies

The specific type of performative speech acts that are going to be analysed in the TV series *The Big Bang Theory* are apologies. So, the following lines present a brief overview of this speech act.

In his work *The Pragmatics of Politeness* (2014) Leech makes reference to the conditions proposed earlier by Searle. To begin with, he talks about the *sincerity condition* that could be not respected by violating the Maxim of Quality (Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principle); in fact, one can apologize without feeling regret. The second condition mentioned is the *propositional content condition* that is taken into consideration when the speech act occurs in the present or in the future, rather than in the past. For instance, if someone enters a room while a person is speaking and says "Sorry for interrupting", the apology and the actual event for which one has to apologize occur at the same time. On the other hand, anticipatory apologies (for the future) do not need to be apologies

for a real offence, but they could rather be used to warn somebody or, for example, when someone says "Excuse me" to catch a stranger's attention. Moreover, Leech (2014) also mentions the *preparatory condition* according to which the speaker does not acknowledge his or her guilty but just expresses regret, for instance, if someone says "I'm sorry you failed your exam"; and finally the *essential condition* that "counts as an expression of contrition" (2014: 124).

In his book, Leech also deals with the diverse strategies employed by speakers while apologizing. For instance, he mentions formulaic devices that often take place alone, such as *sorry, pardon me, excuse me* which, according to him, have been *pragmalized* in the sense that they have lost their grammatical value to come to be just a pragmatic particle.

We will take Leech's (2014) taxonomy on apologies in order to classify the apology strategies in our data. These are the following ones:

1. expressions of regret

2. asking somebody for pardon (or forgiveness)

3. using a performative utterances

According to this author, the first strategy is commonly used by speakers, while the third one, compared to the previous, is infrequently used (Leech, 2014).

Once we have discussed the theoretical framework of our study we will turn to the study itself in Part II.

Part II: Apologies in Fiction TV Series *The Big Bang Theory*

3. The Study

3.1 Rationale

The present study aims at ascertaining whether apologies in a popular fiction TV series (*The Big Bang Theory*) resemble real-life ones so that they can be used as proper input for the teaching of this speech act. Indeed, some research has shown that audiovisual material can be a good source of speech acts, for instance, Martínez-Flor & Usó-Juan (2010: 427) claim that "video input has long been used as a valuable resource that enhances the language learning process in the classroom, as it provides learners with realistic models to imitate". What is more, the use of videos in classrooms may be an appropriate method to introduce pragmatic issues since students can observe the use of language in context.

Following the above-mentioned research, this study intends to analyze the authenticity of the apologies appearing in this particular TV series.

3.2 Data collection procedure

We selected this TV series because it provides a clear example of how the different techniques proposed by Leech (2014) are used in the performance of apologies in everyday conversations. Specifically, nine episodes belonging to seasons 1, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10 were chosen as they illustrate a wide array of apologies. Those episodes were watched and every time an apology appeared, it was transcribed for subsequent classification. The context in which it was uttered was also provided so as to better understand the whole scene.

One should bear in mind the differences among each character in order to better understand the strategies employed and also the responses received. As a matter of fact, it is an unspoken truth that Dr. Sheldon Cooper (one of the main characters, a physician) suffers from Asperger Syndrome as it has been argued in the electronic magazine *Quo* (2014). If this hypothesis were true, it would explain all the weird behaviours of this character, for instance, the fact that he understands language literally or he does not understand sarcasm, irony and double meanings (apart from other actions that have nothing to do with language).

The other characters of the TV series are Penny, who is a waitress and accomplishes the stereotype of blondes; Dr. Leonard Hofstadter, who is Sheldon's flatmate and a physician (at a certain point he and Penny start a relationship); Dr. Raj Koothrappali who is an Indian astrophysicist and at the beginning of the series has problems in interacting with women; Howard Wolowitz who is a Jewish aerospace engineer (he is the only one of the four boys who has not a PhD and this is the reason why Sheldon is always despising his work); Dr. Bernadette Rostenkowski, a microbiologist and Howard's fiancé, and finally Dr. Amy Farrah Fowler, a neurobiologist and Sheldon's fiancé (actually, she is considered weird as well, but not as much as Sheldon who seems unable to maintain physical contact with other human beings).

3. 3 Results and discussion

This section is devoted to analysing the results of the research carried out. As previously mentioned, nine episodes of the TV series *The Big Bang Theory* were examined as data for the present study aiming at establishing if these apologies mirror real-life apologies and thus if they might be used as appropriate input for teaching purposes.

A total number of 9 episodes were transcribed. Results show that the use of expressions of regret is the most common strategy in the episodes, in line with Leech's (2014) research. Nevertheless, not all the times does a character utter the sentence "Sorry/I'm sorry" when he or she really intended to apologize for an offence. As a matter of fact, the expression was used once ironically (episode 4, season 1) and in another example it was employed in order to start a conversation with somebody who the character did not know, as a politeness marker (both cases in episode 4, season 1).

The second most common strategy employed by the characters is asking for pardon or forgiveness. However, this strategy is sometimes not used as a real apology, but just to be ironic in an argument (episode 6, season 4) or as a politeness marker (episode 4, season 1). What is more, other indirect strategies for apologising are used the same number of times. Actually, a way to apologize is acknowledging the error, such as "I just wanted to say that I was wrong" (episode 4, season 1), "Look, I admit it, I may have cross the line here" (episode 6, season 4), or "All you did was offer maternal care and affection, and all you received in return was rude and insensitive behaviour" (episode 13, season 9). Furthermore, it has been observed that justifications are also used as apologies, for instance, in the sentence "I was not myself. I had lost a lot of thumb blood" (episode 16, season 5).

Therefore, results show that, as Leech (2014) claimed, the least frequently used strategy is the performative sentence. In fact, it is used just twice in the nine episodes examined and once it was employed as an indirect request: "I hope you can accept my apology" (episode 13, season 9), instead of "I apologise". Figure 5 below illustrates how the strategies have been employed by the characters of the TV series.
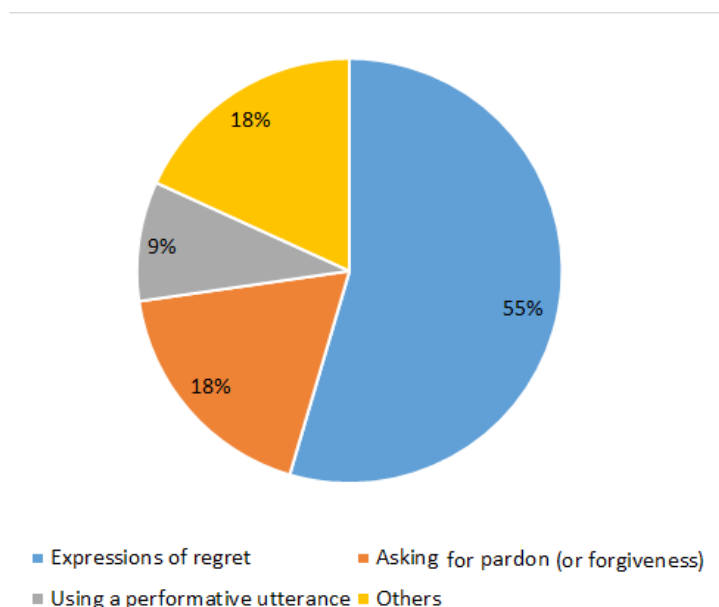

Figure 5: Strategies employed

In spite of this, one should bear in mind that Sheldon Cooper's apologies sound contrived due to his peculiarities and the fact that he is believed to suffer from Asperger syndrome. Instances of this are found in different episodes: when Sheldon is forced to do so by his mother (episode 4, season 1), when he uses absurd justifications instead of starting the conversation with a real apology (episode 16, season 5), in the episode where he starts apologising everybody just because he wants to be forgiven in order to be able to go to the trip with his friends (episode 13, season 5), and especially when he says that a proper apology requires of three steps and then he enumerates them all (episode 23, season 9).

It is also worth mentioning the fact that results also show different responses to the apologies performed. Indeed, some reactions were positive, while others were negative. What is more, some responses were made through the use of questions. In this sense, one of the negative reactions was non-verbal (episode 2, season 1), that is, when Penny closes the door in Sheldon's face, and in two different cases the apology was ignored (episode 4, season 1): Consider examples 1 and 2:

Example 1:

Mrs Cooper: Excuse me, Dr Gablehouser, are you busy?

Gablehouser: Well, actually….

Mrs Cooper: Sheldon, he's just doodling, get in here.

Example 2:

Sheldon: Um, as you know, several weeks ago in our first encounter we may have gotten off on the wrong foot, when I called you an idiot. And I just wanted to say that I was wrong. To point it out.

Gablehouser (to Mrs Cooper): I'm sorry, we haven't been introduced. Dr Eric Gablehouser.

Mrs Cooper*: Mary Cooper, Sheldon's mom.*

    The fact that in the nine episodes studied the characters reacted positively in most of the cases is shown in the following figure.
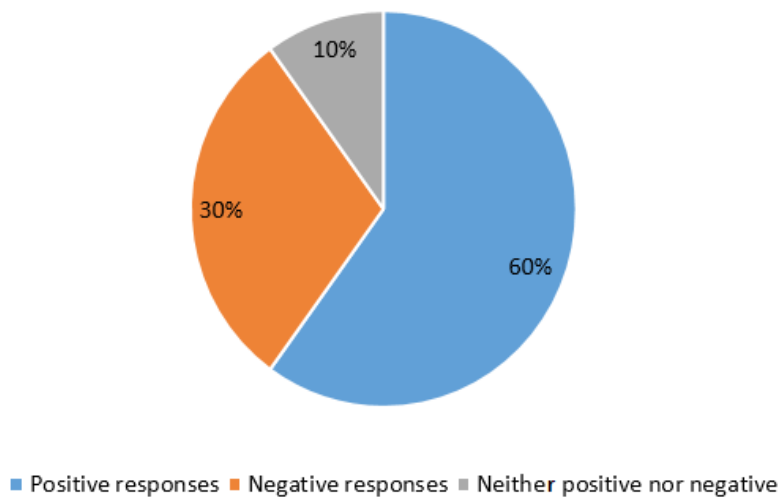

Figure 6: Types of Response

    In three negative situations the character asked a question for clarification, as in "What? You slept with my sister?" (episode 6, season 4). However, in most of the situations there was a response with a declarative statement such as "Get out" (episode 2, season 10), or "Well, I don't accept your apology" (episode 13, season 9).

On the other hand, all positive reactions were performed by means of a declarative or affirmative statements such as "You're forgiven" (episode 16, season 5), or "Thank you, I appreciate that" (episode 13, season 9).

What is more, as it happens with the strategies employed, Sheldon's responses to the apologies received were exaggerate. For instance, he says "But that behaviour is beyond the pale and cannot be tolerated. We are no longer friends." (episode 6, season 4) just because Raj has used his toothbrush.

Taking everything into consideration, we can say that as Leech (2014: 130) stated "polite speech events […] tend to come in pairs syntagmatically; that is, one speech event typically evokes, or is followed by, another kind of speech event as response" which form an adjacency pair, and that usually the most common response is the polite one, that is, to accept the apologies.

The results obtained were somewhat expected, since they corroborate previous research reported in the theoretical framework about apologies, being the first strategy (i.e. expressions of regret) the most used in real-life conversations. Therefore, the findings of this study imply that the dialogues of the TV series *The Big Bang Theory* mirror everyday conversations and for that reason this audiovisual material could be used as input in classroom activities in order for students to improve their pragmatic awareness.

Conclusion

The field of pragmatics has been widely developed in the last fifty years as a response to Chomsky's competence theory, starting with the publication of *How To Do Things With Words* (1962), to more recent works such as *The Pragmatics of Politeness* (2014).

It is important to highlight the link that exists between the elaboration of the concept of communicative competence and the one of the speech act theory, since pragmatic competence is considered to be part of the construct of communicative competence. In fact, the speech act theory classifies language according to communicative functions that are exemplified in the models of communicative competence.

A number of authors have tried to provide an appropriate definition of what pragmatics is, but it could be argued that the central idea is that it is the branch of Linguistics according to which language can be used to do things, that is, to perform actions just by the mere utterance of a sentence. For that reason, context plays a crucial role, since the meaning of an utterance may vary

accordingly. Also, it is relevant to say that speakers are the ones who should negotiate meaning in order to achieve a successful communication. In fact, according to Bach (1994) non-linguistic factors are the ones that determine the nature of a speech act and for that reason speakers need to share mutual knowledge (Bloor & Bloor, 2013).

Bearing the issues in mind, this paper focused on the use of performative speech acts, which are considered to complete the action a speaker wants to perform (Hazen, 2015), and more specifically on apologies. As a matter of fact, they are considered to be one of the most common types of performative speech acts and they are usually accomplished using different strategies, that is, expressions of regret, asking for pardon and using a performative utterance (Leech, 2014). Therefore, the study conducted in the fiction TV series demonstrates that the use of apologies mirrors real-life dialogues since the results obtained coincide with the research conducted by Leech (2014) in the English language. Actually, the most common strategy used is the one of expressions of regret such as *I'm sorry*. Also, several types of responses have been observed, and again the results coincide with previous research, since positive responses are more frequent than negative ones.

Thus, the findings indicate that this particular TV series may be appropriate audiovisual material for classroom activities and for this reason further research on that field of enquiry should be conducted since the lack of pragmatic awareness in ESL or EFL students is considered a problem in education and in the mastery of the target language.

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Appendix 1

Season 1 Episode 2 'The Big Bran Hypothesis'

Penny (opening door): What?

Sheldon: ==I am truly sorry for== what happened last night, I take full responsibility. And I hope that it won't colour your opinion of Leonard, who is not only a wonderful guy, but also, I hear, a gentle and thorough lover. (Penny closes door in his face.) I did what I could.

Season 1 Episode 4 'The Luminous Fish Effect'

Scene: The apartment

Mrs Cooper: Because you're going to go down to your office, you're going to apologise to your boss, and get your job back.

Sheldon: No.

Mrs Cooper: ==I'm sorry,== did I start that sentence with the words "if it please your highness?"

Sheldon: I'm not going to apologise, I didn't say anything that wasn't true.

Scene: Dr Gablehouser's office

Mrs Cooper: ==Excuse me==, Dr Gablehouser, are you busy?

Gablehouser: Well, actually….

Mrs Cooper: Sheldon, he's just doodling, get in here.

Sheldon: Dr Gablehouser.

Gablehouser: Dr Cooper.

Mrs Cooper: Let's go, baby, we're losing daylight.

Sheldon: Um, as you know, several weeks ago in our first encounter we may have gotten off on the wrong foot, when I called you an idiot. And ==I just wanted to say that I was wrong==. To point it out.

Gablehouser (to Mrs Cooper): ==I'm sorry==, we haven't been introduced. Dr Eric Gablehouser.

Mrs Cooper: Mary Cooper, Sheldon's mom.

Season 4 Episode 6 'The Irish Pub Formulation'

Leonard: Look, I'm sorry Raj, but the truth is I was with Priya last night.

Sheldon: Don't listen to him, he's still light headed from all the Irish whiskey and pickled eggs in his system.

Raj: What were you doing with Priya?

Sheldon: I believe they engaged in coitus but, more importantly, if Leonard had not abandoned his story, would you have found it plausible?

Raj: What? You slept with my sister?

Leonard: Yeah.

Howard: How could you? We had a pact!

Raj: Excuse me, I think how could you she's my sister takes precedence over a five year old pinky swear!

Sheldon: May I point out, in a parallel universe, your friends are saying Maggie McGeary, she sounds lovely.

Leonard: Look, I admit it, I may have crossed a line here, but come on, Raj, your sister is a grown woman. To her, I'm a forbidden piece of white chocolate.

Raj: I… I don't believe it, this is a terrible betrayal of my trust.

Leonard: No, no, no, would it help if I told you that I offered her my heart and she kind of stomped on it.

Raj: How hard did she stomp?

Leonard: Very hard.

Raj: Okay, I'm good.

Howard: Yeah, well, Raj, I just want to say that I'd never betray your trust. Unlike Leonard, I respect you.

Leonard: Really?

Howard: Mmm.

Leonard: Was it out of respect that you didn't tell Raj about the time you dropped his iPhone in a urinal?

Raj: Dude! I put that thing on my face!

Sheldon: I think a more amusing violation of Raj's trust is when Howard convinced him that foreigners give presents to Americans on Thanksgiving.

Howard: Hey, I didn't see you giving back your Snoopy snowcone maker.

Raj: That was all a lie? This year's gifts are already wrapped!

Howard: And as long as we're talking about betraying our friends, how about the month Sheldon spent grinding up insects and mixing them into Leonard's food.

Sheldon: Well, excuse me. That was not a betrayal, that was an experiment to determine at what concentration food starts tasting mothy.

Leonard: You put moths in my food?

Sheldon: For science.

Raj: I can't believe you kissed my sister with moth mouth.

Leonard: Well, uh, I can't believe you used Sheldon's toothbrush.

Sheldon: You used my toothbrush?

Raj: Not the brush part, just the little rubber thing to pick food from my teeth and massage my gums.

Leonard: Okay, I, I, I think it's safe to say that we've all done some things we're not particularly proud of. But come on, we're friends. Friends overlook each other's minor lapses. For the record, Howard, ==I'm sorry== that I broke our pact.

Howard: Thank you, and ==I'm sorry== about your phone. And Thanksgiving. And while we're at it, you don't have to wash our clothes on the fourth of July.

Raj: As long as we're apologising, Sheldon, I, ==I'm sorry== I used your toothbrush.

Sheldon: And ==I'm sorry==. But that behaviour is beyond the pale and cannot be tolerated. We are no longer friends.

Raj: I got you a talking Thomas the Tank Engine for Thanksgiving.

Sheldon: With real puffing smoke?

Raj: Yes.

Sheldon: Alright. But I'm watching you.

Season 5 Episode 5 'The Russian Rocket Reaction'

Howard: Do you realize what a big deal this is? What an honour it is to be chosen to go into space?

Bernadette: Yeah, I get it. I just wish you included me in the decision. We're supposed to be partners. We're supposed to be a team.

Howard: ==I'm sorry==. You're right. Okay, let's try this again. Bernadette, an opportunity has come up that impacts both of us, and I'd like to discuss it.

Season 5 Episode 16 'The Vacation Solution"

Sheldon: (Knock, knock, knock) Amy? (Knock, knock, knock) Amy? (Knock, knock, knock) Amy?

Amy: What do you want?

Sheldon: I was kind of hoping I could continue vacationing in your laboratory. After all, I did book the whole week.

Amy: Do you honestly think you can just waltz back in here after the way you behaved yesterday?

Sheldon: ==I was not myself. I had lost a lot of thumb blood.==

Amy: That's not an apology.

Sheldon: That is your opinion.

Amy: I want a real apology.

Sheldon: ==I'm sorry that you weren't able to…==

Amy: No.

Sheldon: ==That my genius…==

Amy: No.

Sheldon: That the soap was…

Amy: Sheldon.

Sheldon: Fine. ==Sorry==.

Amy: You're forgiven. Now, if you want to stay, get started on those beakers. They're still dirty from yesterday.

Season 6 Episode 12 'The Salad Equivalency'

Scene: Penny's apartment. Penny answers the door. Leonard is playing his cello outside.

Leonard (singing): <mark>I'm sorry</mark> Alex hit on me, hit on me, hit on me. I'm sorry Alex hit on me, I'd no idea I'm cute.

Penny: Oh, damn it, you are.

Leonard: <mark>Please forgive me.</mark> I should have told you about Alex.

Penny: I don't care about Alex. Fine, I care. Okay, I hate that bitch. But what really hurt is that you liked it so much. I mean, do I need to be worried?

Season 9 Episode 13 'The Empathy Optimisation"

Scene: The apartment

Sheldon: Hey, if you didn't know Bruce Willis was dead the whole time, that's not on me. Okay. Here it comes. You tried to take care of me when I was sick, and I was mean to you. There's no excuse for that. And <mark>I'm truly sorry</mark>.

Leonard: Thank you. I appreciate that.

Sheldon: I want you to know that that is sincere. I do feel bad. I'm not just saying it to be included on your trip.

Leonard: Appreciate that, too.

Sheldon: Terrific. Now all that's left is for you to invite me to come, me to ask are you sure, you to say absolutely, and then me to bring it home with, how could I say no to that face?

Leonard: You're still not coming.

Sheldon: What? I apologized and I meant it. I know that we don't play this game very often, but you're doing it wrong.

Leonard: Sheldon, I accept your apology, but you upset a lot of people while you were sick. I'm not in a position to just say you can come.

Sheldon: Well, all right. What if I apologize to all of them?

Leonard: Fine, if you apologize to everyone, they all say it's okay, then yes, you can come.

Sheldon: Challenge accepted. Sounds like it's time for the Sheldon Cooper Apology Tour.

Scene: Howard and Berndette's house.

Sheldon: Howard and Bernadette, you tried to comfort me when I was ill, and I treated you terribly. ==I'm sorry==.

Howard: Wow. I'm impressed.

Sheldon: No, no, no, wait. I'm not done. Allow me to underscore my sentiment with a haunting rendition of Brenda Lee's I'm Sorry played on the pan flute.

Howard: Apology accepted.

Bernadette: Forgiven, forgiven.

Sheldon: All right, that's eight hours of practice down the drain. And to memorialise this occasion, here are your commemorative T-shirts.

Howard: Sheldon Cooper apologized to me

Bernadette: And he made it all better.

Scene: The apartment bathroom.

Sheldon: ==All you did was offer maternal care and affection, and all you received in return was rude and insensitive behavior.==

Penny: Can this wait?

Sheldon: I'm afraid it can't. The trip is tomorrow. And I have more apologies to make.

Penny: Okay, fine, I accept your apology, now get out.

Sheldon: Wonderful. would you mind holding up this shirt while I take a quick…?

Penny: Leonard.

Scene: The comic book store.

Sheldon: You brought me my comic books when I wasn't feeling well. That, that was thoughtful. And I was insensitive. I'm sorry.

Stuart: Thank you, Sheldon. I appreciate that.

Sheldon: And I want you to know that I mean it, you know? This isn't me just wanting to go on the trip to Las Vegas.

Stuart: What trip to Las Vegas?

Sheldon: The one everyone's taking this weekend on the party bus.

Stuart: Of course, I wasn't invited.

Sheldon: That would be my understanding. On a less painful subject, what size T-shirt do you take?

Scene: Raj's apartment.

Sheldon: Raj, you were being a good friend, and my illness was no excuse for my behaviour. I hope that you can accept my apology.

Raj: Of course I do.

Sheldon: And, Emily, I'm sorry for saying dermatologists aren't real doctors. And I'm sure you're tired of hearing that.

Emily: Do you honestly think I hear that a lot?

Sheldon: Well, I would imagine when your job is popping zits and squirting Botox into old lady faces…

Raj: Okay, okay, the point is that we accept your apology.

Emily: Uh, maybe you do. He just insulted me again.

Raj: Yeah, but he doesn't mean it.

Emily: Why are you defending him?

Sheldon: I believe I can answer that. Uh, like me, Raj is demonstrating empathy. Now, why don't you accept my apology receive your free T-shirt, uh, I hope extra small is okay. For some reason Wolowitz took a medium.

Emily: Well, I don't accept your apology.

Raj: What are you doing?

Emily: It's called standing up for myself. You should try it some time.

Raj: Fine, how about this? You're making me uncomfortable by prolonging this ridiculous fight, and I wish you'd stop.

Emily: Oh, you want me to stop? No problem.

Raj: No, come on, please don't leave.

Sheldon: Point of clarification, are you still going on the trip? Because if not…

Emily: Don't worry, you're good.

Sheldon: I caused that fight, I feel terrible. Wait, I can do that better. I caused that fight. I feel terrible. Yeah, wow, I don't know which one I like more.

Season 9 Episode 23 'The Line Substitution Solution'.

Sheldon: Hello, everyone. Oh, Beverly, good to see you. I'd love to chat, but there's a line that could start moving any minute, so let's do this. Amy? A proper apology requires three steps. Step one, an admission of wrongdoing. Amy, I was wrong. Step two, a promise never to repeat said action. Amy, that action will never be repeated, and that's a promise. Step three, an earnest request for forgiveness. Amy, <mark>I hope you can forgive me</mark>. And I hope you do it right now, 'cause there's an Uber waiting downstairs, and I don't want to repeat this apology nonsense with my driver Ganesh.

Amy: Fine.

Sheldon: Oh, thanks, you're a peach.

Season 10 Episode 2 'The Military Miniturization'

Scene: Bernadette's office

Penny: Okay, all right, honey, you know what? There was something I was too scared to tell you yesterday, and now I'm just balls-out terrified to tell you, but the truth is it wasn't Barbara Chen, it was me. I'm the reason everyone knows.

Bernadette: Why did you do that?

Penny: Well, it was an accident. <mark>I am so sorry</mark> I lied.

Bernadette: Get out.

Scene: Outside Penny's door.

Penny: Oh, hi.

Bernadette: Got a minute?

Penny: Yeah, come on in.

Bernadette: <mark>I just wanted to apologize</mark>. I know what you did was an accident.

Penny: Oh, thank you, and <mark>I'm sorry</mark> I lied about it.

Bernadette: For what it's worth, you're a great liar.