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TOWARDS A MULTIMODAL PERSPECTIVE TO ASSESS PRAGMATICS: A STUDY BASED ON COMPLAINTS-RESPONSES TO COMPLAINTS

HACIA UNA PERSPECTIVA MULTIMODAL PARA EVALUAR PRAGMÁTICA: UN ESTUDIO BASADO EN QUEJAS Y RESPUESTAS A QUEJAS

Vicent Beltrán-Palanques
Universitat Jaume I, Castellón
vbeltran@uji.es

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The purpose of this study is to provide insights into pragmatic assessment in terms of appropriateness from a multimodal perspective at a conversational level. The study involved the design of a rubric for assessing pragmatic appropriateness from a holistic perspective, that is, it addresses linguistic and non-linguistic resources. The study was conducted in a Spanish higher education context and involved 64 participants, who were divided into two different proficiency levels (B1 and B2). Data were gathered by means of a role-play task that elicits complaints and responses to complaints, and a multimodal corpus consisting of 32 videos was compiled. Two raters examined participants' performance according to the rubric devised for the purposes of the study. Results reveal that general proficiency level appears to influence pragmatic appropriateness in terms of the expressions used and the management of turns during the conversation. This study suggests that analysing pragmatic appropriateness

from a holistic perspective deserves further investigation and its findings set the ground for future research in this area.

Key words: *pragmatics, multimodality, assessment, EAL, higher education, teacher training.*

El objetivo de este estudio es proporcionar información sobre la evaluación de la adecuación de pragmática desde una perspectiva multimodal al nivel de la conversación. Para este estudio se diseñó una rúbrica para evaluar la adecuación de la pragmática desde una perspectiva holística, es decir, centrándose en recursos lingüísticos y no lingüísticos. El estudio se llevó a cabo en un contexto español de educación superior y contó con 64 participantes, que fueron divididos en dos niveles de competencia (B1 y B2). La muestra se recogió con una actividad de role-play diseñada para recabar quejas y respuestas a quejas y se compiló un corpus multimodal de 32 vídeos. Dos evaluadores examinaron la producción de los participantes con la rúbrica que se diseñó para este estudio. Los resultados parecen indicar que el nivel de competencia general ha afectado a la adecuación de la pragmática en cuanto a las expresiones que se han usado y a la gestión de los turnos durante la conversación. Los resultados de este estudio desvelan el potencial de analizar la adecuación de la pragmática desde una perspectiva holística, así como la necesidad de llevar a cabo futuras investigaciones en esta área.

Palabras clave: *pragmática, multimodalidad, evaluación, ILA, educación superior, formación de profesorado*

1. Introduction

Pragmatic competence is part of the communicative construct and its relevance within language teaching and assessment practices has also been acknowledged by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (2001, 2018). However, the extent to which pragmatic competence is taught and assessed in the language classroom is still questioned (Bardovi-Harlig, 2017). Assessment is central to teaching and learning, it involves a process in which both teachers and learners take part (Bachman & Damböck, 2018) and therefore assessment and teaching practices should go hand in hand in English as additional language (EAL)

contexts. In the case of pragmatics, the discussion of pragmatic assessment practices has called the attention of different researchers. Ishihara (2010) contends that assessing pragmatics is part of teaching pragmatics and that the assessment process may reveal information as regards learners' achievements, the effectiveness of the instruction and the assessment plan and implementation. Pragmatics and appropriateness are tightly connected and therefore assessment practices should explore the extent to which speakers' pragmatic performance is appropriate for a specific context. In an attempt to do so from a holistic perspective, this study takes a multimodal conversational perspective to examine learners' pragmatic performance.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1. Pragmatics, Pragmatic Competence and Multimodal Pragmatics

Pragmatics is now a widely established discipline. Crystal (2008) argues that pragmatics refers to "the study of language from the point of view of the users, especially of the choices they make, the constraints they encounter in using language in social interaction, and the effects their use of language has on the other participants in an act of communication" (p. 379). In this definition, the author locates pragmatics at the level of conversation and acknowledges the role of users (speaker and listener) in interaction, focusing particularly on users' choices and constraints, as well as on the impact users' performance may have on each other. In the area of language teaching, pragmatics (or preferably pragmatic competence) has been extensively addressed. Broadly speaking, pragmatic competence refers to "the ability to use language appropriately in a social context" (Taguchi, 2009, p. 1), and consists of pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics (Leech, 1983; Thomas, 1983), which are related to those constrains Crystal (2008) refers to in his definition of pragmatics. In order to succeed in communication, EAL learners are expected to increase their pragmatic competence, for example, by becoming aware of the social norms that govern language use and how language should be used appropriately in specific contexts.

Pragmatic competence, as part of the communicative construct, has received great attention among scholars in Linguistics and Applied Linguistics. Pragmatic competence became an independent component of

the communicative construct in the model proposed by Bachman (1990), and has been acknowledged in other communicative models as part of other competences (e.g., Canale & Swain, 1980; Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei & Thurrell, 1995; Celce-Murcia, 2007). In addition to this, the CEFR (2001, 2018) also refers to pragmatic competence, or more specifically, pragmatic competences, including discourse competence, functional competence and design competence. For the purposes of this study, the model proposed by Celce-Murcia' (2007) deserves further attention as it addresses pragmatics at the level of conversation. Celce-Murcia' (2007) model consists of a series of competences, namely, discourse, sociocultural, linguistic, interactional, formulaic and strategic. Of these competences, interactional competence appears to be especially relevant when discussing pragmatics at the level of conversation as it includes: (1) actional competence (knowledge of how to perform speech acts), (2) conversational competence (turn-taking system and other dialogic genres), and (3) non-verbal/ paralinguistic competence (e.g., kinesics, proxemics, haptics, silence and pauses). These competences are aligned with pragmatics at a conversational level and pragmatics is not only viewed from a linguistic perspective, but also from a non-linguistic perspective. From that point of view, as discussed in what follows, pragmatic realisations involve the interplay of different modes –linguistic and non-linguistic– which contribute to shaping and making meaning.

Then, pragmatics can be viewed from a holistic perspective, that is, including various semiotic resources or communicative modes, whether they are linguistic or non-linguistic. My concern here is to illustrate the existing relationship between pragmatics and multimodality. Jewitt (2014) argues that from a multimodal viewpoint, communication goes beyond speech itself and consists of an array of semiotic resources or communicative modes . Similarly, following Jewitt, Bezemer and O'Halloran (2016), multimodality, considered broadly, is an approach that sees communication as consisting of various semiotic resources or communicative modes other than speech. Communication is considered as inherently multimodal and therefore a holistic perspective is necessary to fully understand how meaning is constructed. If we accept that communication is multimodal, we may assume that pragmatics, as part of communication, is constructed and enriched by a variety of semiotic resources or communicative modes, such as gestures, facial expressions, gaze, prosody. In everyday interactions (e.g., face-to-face interaction) speakers draw on their full semiotic

repertoire (García & Li Wei, 2014) to communicate and convey pragmatic meaning. Although we are still at the very beginning of multimodality, especially when it comes to pragmatics as compared to, for example, discourse analysis (e.g., O'Halloran, 2004; Querol-Julián & Arteaga-Martínez, 2019), multimodality can provide further insights into the field of pragmatics. According to O'Halloran, Tan and M. K. L. (2014), the purposes of multimodal studies and pragmatic studies are closely related since both involve a context-based approach that attempts to explore how language is employed to reach communicative goals. The nexus between multimodality and pragmatics has been recently explored and evidenced in research studies.

Various scholars have explored interaction from a multimodal perspective. For example, Li (2014), following a conversation analysis approach, investigated the lexico-syntactic structure, prosody, and body movements and how these interacted with pragmatic resources in turn-taking in face-to-face interaction. This study revealed that while syntax and body movement seemed to signal possible turn-completion, prosody and other pragmatic features signalled turn-continuation. Romero-Trillo's (2012) edited volume constitutes a major contribution to the study of prosody features and pragmatic meaning. This volume provides both research and pedagogical insights into the existing relationship between prosody and pragmatics.

From a different perspective, O'Halloran et al. (2014), drawing on Halliday's social semiotic theory (Halliday, 1978), investigated how students employed a combination of different multimodal resources (e.g., linguistic, visual) to achieve pragmatic goals when completing a web-based task. This study highlights that a multimodal pragmatic approach can contribute to understanding how digital discourse is constructed by means of different semiotic resources. Following a conversation analysis approach, Drew and Couper-Kuhlen's (2014) edited volume offers insights into naturally occurring requests. Some of the contributors adopted a multimodal pragmatic perspective to the study of requests; for example, Goodwin and Cekaite (2014), focusing on the interplay of different semiotic resources (i.e., facial expressions, gestures, gaze and intonation), explored how speakers adjusted their communicative actions in adult-child face-to-face interaction. Similarly, Sorjonen and Raevaara (2014) centred on the interplay of linguistic and non-linguistic resources when requesting

a product at a store. In an operating room, Mondada (2014) investigated the possible multimodal formats of immediate requests, showing that in some cases requests may involve linguistic realisation (with or without gestures), or simply gestures. Also, Rossi (2014), drawing on everyday conversations, explored the role played by visible bodily behaviour in the performance of requests for specific objects. Broadly speaking, these studies contributed to understanding how speakers construct requests drawing on linguistic and non-linguistic resources.

In addition to this, Huang (2017) argued for the need to explore speech acts from a multimodal corpus-based perspective. Specifically, this study discussed the construction of a multimodal corpus of speech acts in Chinese as produced in authentic conversations to explore how speech content, prosodic features and non-verbal acts interacted with each other to produce different speech acts and described the mechanisms of the Illocutionary Force Indicating Device. Using role-plays, Gass and Houck (1999) conducted a pioneering study exploring the production of refusals and non-verbal aspects of interaction. The authors investigated the negotiation outcomes in refusals and found that participants' non-linguistic performance (e.g., posture, facial expressions) provided relevant information as regards the construction of interaction. Drawing on a multimodal corpus consisting of spoken data elicited by a role-play task, Beltrán-Palanques (2016, 2019) and Beltrán-Palanques and Querol-Julián (2018) conducted different studies exploring complaints and responses to complaints. Beltrán-Palanques (2016) compiled a multimodal pragmatic corpus of complaints and responses to complaints and explored how learners constructed complaint sequences and showed signals of active listenership by means of a variety of semiotic resources (e.g., gestures, facial expressions, head movements). Beltrán-Palanques and Querol-Julián (2018) found that speech was only one of the different resources learners employed during the face-to-face interaction, which was not always prevalent in all the complaint moves, the different roles, and the proficiency levels examined, thereby suggesting that focusing only on speech may lead to a biased understanding of learners' speech act performance. Finally, Beltrán-Palanques (2019) examined not only the interplay of different semiotic resources in the construction and deconstruction of complaint sequences (e.g., gestures, facial expressions, head movements) but also provided evidences of the emotional dimension of the face-threatening situation.

As shown in the above literature review, users employ different multimodal resources to construct and deconstruct meaning in interaction. From the perspective of pragmatics in social interaction, a multimodal pragmatic approach may enable researchers to, for example, deepen understanding of how speakers employ their full semiotic repertoire to reach communicative purposes, how semiotic resources are deployed, interrelated and interconnected and which pragmatic functions they perform, how speakers' choices and preferences contribute to constructing and deconstructing meaning, and the effects these choices may have on the interlocutors. Therefore, a multimodal perspective may serve to provide insights into speakers' pragmatic performance at the level of discourse and conversation. Nevertheless, this is not to say that studies that adopt a monomodal perspective –typically to what is linguistically performed– are without value; rather, what is suggested here is that a different perspective can be taken to analyse interaction.

2.2. Assessing Pragmatics

As Ishihara (2010) suggests, assessing pragmatics can mainly provide language teachers with insights as regards what learners have and have not learnt as well as feedback concerning the effectiveness of instruction, assessment planning and its implementation. Kasper and Roever (2005) identify various instruments that can be exploited from a pedagogical perspective to assess pragmatics, both pragmatic comprehension and pragmatic production, in the EAL classroom. These instruments can be grouped as follows: instruments for spoken production data (i.e., authentic discourse, elicited conversation, and role-play), questionnaires (i.e., discourse completion tasks, multiple choice questionnaire, and scaled-response formats) and self-report data (i.e., interviews, diaries and verbal protocols).

Focusing particularly on oral pragmatic production –the aspect examined in the current study–, the authors identify role-play tasks, which serve to elicit EAL learners' spoken data under specific circumstances. Two different types of role-plays can be distinguished, closed role-plays and open role-plays (Kasper & Roever, 2005). While the former type involves a single turn in response to a situation with specific instructions, the latter type provides learners with a situation,

with specific instructions, that engages them in spontaneous speech. Open role-plays allow learners to participate in interaction, construct communicative events and elicit features of interactional conversation such as turn-taking, backchannel, overlapping, and exhibit different communicative modes (e.g., gestures). A role-play task consists of a situation involving specific roles and sociopragmatic parameters, for example, degree of power, social distance and rank of imposition (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Therefore, language teachers can address sociopragmatic factors and rate responses according to, for example, the appropriateness of the pragmalinguistic choice, the appropriateness of the amount of speech and information provided, as well as the appropriateness of the level of formality (Cohen, 2010).

Pragmatics and appropriateness are intrinsically associated. Taguchi (2012) argues that pragmatic knowledge can be assessed in terms of accuracy of pragmatics and appropriateness of pragmatic production. Mey (2001) suggests that pragmatic appropriateness refers to the existing relationship between utterances and the context of use, which can be culture-specific and language-specific. That is, the use of an utterance is related to a context, which determines the appropriateness of such utterance. In line with this, Taguchi (2012) defines pragmatic appropriateness "as the ability to perform speech acts at the proper level of politeness, directness, and formality" (p. 89). Other researchers have also addressed the notion of appropriateness; for example, van Compernolle (2014), drawing on Hymes' (1972) parameters of communicative competence, indicates that utterances in a particular context, whether conventional or unconventional, have to be interpretable and reflect social relationships or identities. Sivenkova (2010) further elaborates on appropriateness and identifies different functions of appropriateness in interaction, namely, (1) interpersonal relationships between participants; (2) appropriate roles of interactants; (3) appropriate time; and (4) appropriate space of the conversational contribution. Of interest for the present study are the notions of interpersonal relationships between participants and appropriate roles of interactants since they point to the appropriateness of an utterance according to the relationship shared by the participants in a given context. For the purposes of this study, pragmatic appropriateness is understood as learners' ability to construct utterances that are adequate for both the interpersonal relationship between participants and the sociocultural context of the situation.

What seems to be clear is that pragmatic appropriateness requires mastery of the language in terms of pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics, which may be quite challenging for EAL learners. As a matter of fact, producing utterances that are pragmatically appropriate is not only a question of language proficiency but also sociocultural knowledge. In line with this, Marmaridou (2011) posits that while pragmalinguistic appropriateness may be closely related to language proficiency, sociopragmatic appropriateness seems to be less related to language proficiency. In Marmaridou' words, "L2 [second language] learners with a high general L2 competence are likely to build their pragmalinguistic competence more easily, but high general L2 competence does not guarantee correct judgements about sociopragmatic appropriateness" (p. 94). In the area of interlanguage pragmatics, various studies have explored pragmatic appropriateness. For example, Taguchi (2006, 2013), using a six-point scale for overall appropriateness, analysed learners' performance of requests and refusals as elicited by a role-play task at different proficiency levels. Focusing on requests, Taguchi' (2006) study revealed that there was a significant difference in appropriateness scores between the two groups, although only a marginal difference as regards the type of linguistic expressions used in the two groups. Furthermore, grammatical and discourse control appeared to have influenced the quality of requests. The study conducted in 2013 revealed a significant influence of proficiency on appropriateness and fluency, but a marginal difference in the type of linguistic expressions employed by the two groups. In terms of task type, proficiency effects were greater in formal situations than in informal situations. More recently, Cunningham (2017) focused on pragmatic appropriateness in the production of requests in telecollaboration for professional purposes in terms of discourse management (sociopragmatic knowledge) and grammaticality (pragmalinguistic knowledge) in oral synchronous interaction between speakers of German as first and second language. Data were analysed using an appropriateness rating taxonomy consisting of 5 points. Overall, results suggested that participants with higher levels of pragmalinguistic knowledge and sociopragmatic knowledge seemed to produce more appropriate requests.

This section has addressed two main aspects: multimodal pragmatics and pragmatic appropriateness. As reported, adopting a multimodal perspective to the study of pragmatics can shed light on how speakers construct and deconstruct utterances and how different multimodal

resources contribute to the meaning making process. While most of the studies above reported focused on naturally occurring data, a limited number of studies have focused on the area of interlanguage pragmatics, thereby offering a future line of research. Moreover, this section has reviewed the nature of pragmatic appropriateness, which, broadly speaking, refers to the relationship between utterances and the context of use. The studies above reviewed, albeit relevant, addressed this particular issue from a mono-modal perspective, that is, relying only on one semiotic resource (speech), while multimodality was not considered. Bearing in mind these aspects, the research gap of this study is to illustrate how pragmatics can be explored from a multimodal perspective in EAL contexts. Specifically, this study addresses appropriateness from a multimodal pragmatic perspective in order to go beyond the traditional approach grounded in linguistic realisations that are commonly explored.

3. The Aim of the Study

This study aims to contribute to the area of multimodal pragmatics by examining appropriateness in simulated interactions elicited by learners of EAL at two different proficiency levels. The following research questions guided the study:

1. Is a holistic rubric developed for the purpose of the study reliable to measure pragmatic appropriateness from a multimodal perspective?
2. Does language proficiency affect participants' multimodal pragmatic appropriateness?

4. Methodology

4.1. Dataset

The pragmatic aspect selected is the sequence complaints and responses to complaints. Complaints are face-threatening acts (Brown & Levinson, 1987) that speakers utter when a given offence or damaged is committed and report on a dissatisfactory event or experience, making someone responsible for such negative situation (Trosborg, 1995). Complaints and responses to complaints, unlike other speech acts, are quite complex in terms of linguistic construction since there is not a specific or prototypical

set of strategies to perform them (Geluykens & Kraft, 2008; Laforest, 2002) and there is not a common pattern of adjacency pairs but instead, extended sequences (Drew & Walker, 2009). Then, speakers can employ different linguistic realisations to construct and negotiate complaints and responses to complaints (Beltrán-Palanques, 2016).

Data for the study are taken from a multimodal spoken corpus consisting of interlanguage complaints and responses to complaints elicited by a role-play task (Beltrán-Palanques, 2016). A total of 64 EAL learners studying at a Spanish higher education institution took part in the study. Learners' proficiency level was measured using the DIALANG Language Assessment System, resulting in B1 and B2 according to the CEFR (2001). Then, 64 participants were divided into pairs according to their proficiency level in order to perform the role-play task –32 participants in each proficiency group–.

A role-play task consisting of an imaginary scenario with two equal friends and classified as high level of offence due to participants' relationship and the damaged caused was devised to collect learners' data. Specifically, in this role-play, one of the participants has organised a party but he/she has not invited his/her friend despite the fact that all their friends will go to the party and that his/her favourite music group will be playing at that event. The task was designed drawing on the results obtained in an exemplar generation task and a likelihood questionnaire (Beltrán-Palanques, 2016). The role-play tasks were administered to each pair and they were asked to interact in a natural way and employ as many turns as necessary to reach communicative goals. No time restrictions were imposed and the participants were allowed to decide the role they wanted to perform (complainer or complainee). Each role-play was video recorded.

4.2. The Judgment Instrument

In most EAL contexts, rubrics are used to assess learners' performance, both written and spoken. In line with this, Ishihara (2010) indicates that a form of teacher-based assessment involves the use of rubrics, which can serve to assess learners' pragmatic ability. Assessing pragmatics at the level of conversation and holistically implies the adoption of a multimodal perspective, which necessarily requires revisiting the traditional approaches

that address the linguistic side in an attempt to focus on learners' full semiotic repertoire. Moreover, in contrast to traditional approaches to speech act performance in which the speaker is mainly active while a less active role is assigned to the listener, from a conversational analysis perspective, participants (speaker and listener) create action through and in interaction. Hence, following a conversation analysis perspective, face-to-face interaction involves a joint construction and deconstruction orchestrated by the participants, who may create discourse according to the situation.

Bearing in mind these aspects and drawing on previous research (Mey, 2001; Taguchi, 2006, 2013; Cohen, 2010; Ishihara, 2010; Sivenkova, 2010), a judgment task in the form of a rubric consisting of six different descriptors (communication, expressions, turn-taking, backchannel, kinesics, and paralanguage) and based on a 1 to 4 scale was purposefully devised to explore pragmatic appropriateness from a multimodal perspective (Table 1).

This rubric adopts a holistic perspective to analyse participants' overall appropriateness in face-to-face interaction and consists of six different descriptors. This rubric does not focus on linguistic competence –understood in Celce-Murcia's (2007) definition– as occurs in most EAL contexts. Rather, it takes a pragmatic-based perspective. This rubric attempts to examine aspects as regards communication by focusing on whether participants' intended pragmatic message is delivered and received by the listener successfully. The descriptor of expressions refers to participants' pragmalinguistic choices according to the sociopragmatic conditions of the situation. The descriptor of turn-taking involves the management of turns over the course of the conversation. The descriptor of backchannel refers to participants' role as active listener. Also, two descriptors associated to how speakers' non-linguistic resources contribute to constructing the overall communicative event are included: kinesics and paralanguage.

In short, this rubric has been devised considering that both speakers and listeners perform different sequences through and in interaction and the contributions they make serve to generate social action. Then, attention is paid to what and how speakers and listeners communicate, the effects their contributions may have on each other and their role as active listeners.

Descriptor	Excellent (4)	Very good (3)	Good (2)	Poor (1)
Communication	No communicative problems	A few communicative problems appear but these are sporadic	There are some communicative problems but they do not impede communication	Communicative problems are observed
Expressions	Expressions are fully appropriate for the situation	Expressions are almost appropriate for the situation	Expressions are usually appropriate for the situation	Expressions are rarely appropriate for the situation
Turn-taking	Turns are performed successfully and in a natural manner Keeps the flow of the conversation in a successful and natural manner	Turns are performed successfully but not always taken in a natural manner Keeps the flow of the conversation most of the time	Turns are not always performed successfully but they do not impede communication Keeps the flow of the conversation in some parts of the conversation	Turns are not taken in a natural manner impeding communication Unable to keep the flow of the conversation
Backchannel	Backchannel is commonly observed	Some backchannel is observed	Backchannel is rarely observed	Backchannel is not observed
Kinesics	Fully supports the other speaker's understanding of the communicative event	Usually supports the other speaker's understanding of the communicative event	Occasionally supports the other speaker's understanding of the communicative event	Lack of non-verbal communication/inadequate nonverbal communication
Paralanguage	Fully supports the other speaker's understanding of the communicative event	Usually supports the other speaker's understanding of the communicative event	Occasionally supports the other speaker's understanding of the communicative event	Lack of paralanguage elements/inadequate use of paralanguage elements

Table 1. Rubric for multimodal pragmatic appropriateness.

4.3. Data Collection and Analysis

Raters were two non-native speakers of English who had previous experience in teaching and assessing EAL in higher education who were interested in multimodal research. Although native speakers of English involved in the teaching of EAL would provide valuable results concerning participants' performance, non-native speakers were considered to be appropriate since in most cases non-native speakers of English are involved in the teaching and assessment of EAL. The analysis of multimodal pragmatic appropriateness consisted of three different phases of analysis; (1) each rater rated the participants according to the descriptors of communication, expressions, turn-taking and backchannel; (2) each rater rated the participants according to the descriptors of kinesics and paralanguage; (3) raters' results were compared to see whether they were some discrepancies between the two raters. In attempt to ensure concordance between the two raters, an analysis of inter-rater reliability was estimated (Cronbach's Alpha). The quantitative analysis of appropriateness was conducted using the IBM Statistics SPSS 23 by means of independent-samples t-test to explore proficiency effects and Cohen's *d* to identify effect size.

5. Results and Discussion

The appropriateness of the spoken production was analysed using the rubric above introduced. Each descriptor (i.e., communication, expressions, turn-taking, backchannel, kinesics and paralanguage) was ranked from 1 to 4 in the rating scale for each participant across the two proficiency levels and the arithmetic mean was calculated.

The first research question asked whether the holistic rubric designed for the purpose of the study was reliable to measure pragmatic appropriateness from a multimodal perspective. Using Cronbach's Alpha (alpha coefficient >.9), inter-rater reliability was estimated to ensure internal consistency between the two raters. As shown in Table 2, results indicated excellent (≥.9) and good (.9> α ≥.8) internal consistency between the two raters in the different descriptors.

Descriptor	N	Cronbach's Alpha
Communication	2	.909
Expressions	2	.958
Turn-taking	2	.951
Backchannel	2	.893
Kinesics	2	.898
Paralanguage	2	.875

Table 2. Internal consistency between raters.

Concerning the first research question, results seemed to suggest there was internal consistency between the two raters that rated the participants' performance, thereby confirming the reliability of the rubric to explore multimodal pragmatic appropriateness.

Each rater rated the participants' overall appropriateness from a holistic perspective across the two proficiency levels. Table 3 shows a summary of the statistical results.

As shown in the analysis conducted for rater 1 and rater 2, no *statistically* significant differences as regards the descriptors of communication, backchannel, kinesics and paralanguage were found; *statistically* significant differences were only observed in the descriptors of expressions and turn-taking, both $p<.001^{**}$. Additionally, effect size was calculated applying Cohen's *d* to measure the absolute magnitude of the effect of the mean differences to those descriptors that exhibited significant differences. The outcome for expressions yielded $d=1.613$ for rater 1, and $d=1.521$ for rater 2; and for turn-taking results revealed $d=1.636$ for rater 1, and $d=1.549$ for rater 2. In these cases, results hinted at a large effect, revealing an accepted degree of generalisation.

The second research question asked whether proficiency level affected participants' multimodal pragmatic appropriateness. To answer this particular research question, a statistical analysis of the rubric scores made by raters according to the participants' proficiency levels was made. Table 4 shows a summary of the statistical results.

Rater 1						
Descriptor	**Group**	**N**	**M**	**SD**	**t**	**p**
Communication	B1 B2	32 32	3.38 3.56	.554 .504	1.417	.162
Expressions	B1 B2	32 32	2.22 3.31	.706 .644	6.471	.000**
Turn-taking	B1 B2	32 32	2.63 3.50	.554 .508	6.588	.000**
Backchannel	B1 B2	32 32	1.69 1.84	.896 1.110	.620	.538
Kinesics	B1 B2	32 32	3.50 3.53	.508 .507	.246	.806
Paralanguage	B1 B2	32 32	3.25 3.31	.508 .535	.479	.633
Rater 2						
Descriptor	**Group**	**N**	**M**	**SD**	**t**	**p**
Communication	B1 B2	32 32	3.38 3.56	.554 .504	1.417	.162
Expressions	B1 B2	32 32	2.34 3.28	.653 .581	6.067	.000**
Turn-taking	B1 B2	32 32	2.56 3.38	.564 .492	6.139	.000**
Backchannel	B1 B2	32 32	1.47 1.56	.621 .759	.541	.591
Kinesics	B1 B2	32 32	3.47 3.50	.507 .508	.246	.806
Paralanguage	B1 B2	32 32	3.22 3.34	.553 .545	.911	.366
p<.001**						

Table 3. Appropriateness according to proficiency level.

Descriptor	Group	N	M	SD	t	p
Communication	B1 B2	32 32	3.38 3.56	.508 .504	.1482	.143
Expressions	B1 B2	32 32	2.28 3.30	.659 .594	6.476	.000**
Turn-taking	B1 B2	32 32	2.59 3.44	.545 .471	6.624	.000**
Backchannel	B1 B2	32 32	1.58 1.70	.731 .906	.608	.546
Kinesics	B1 B2	32 32	3.37 3.42	.439 .459	.417	.678
Paralanguage	B1 B2	32 32	3.34 3.42	.465 .459	.675	.502
p<.001**						

Table 4. Appropriateness according to proficiency level.

Results revealed that in analysing multimodal pragmatic appropriateness at different proficiency levels, no *statistically* significant differences were observed in the descriptors of communication, backchannel, kinesics and paralanguage; *statistically* significant differences were only found in the case of the descriptors of expressions and turn-taking, both at p<.000**. Effect size for each of the descriptors showing statistical differences was calculated applying Cohen's *d* to measure the absolute magnitude of the effect of the mean differences. In the case of expressions results yielded d=. 1.6259 and in turn-taking d= 1.6688. The outcomes showed a large effect in these two cases, thereby indicating an accepted degree of generalisation.

Concerning the descriptor of communication, results showed no statistical differences in the overall analysis across proficiency levels. This descriptor focuses on whether participants' pragmatic message was delivered successfully, or by contrast, they showed some problems. Results indicated that, in both proficiency levels, the participants seemed to exhibit similar behaviour in terms of communication, although the mean for the

B2 group was slightly greater (M=3.56) than that of B1 (M=3.38). This particular result could be associated to the fact that the descriptor of communication focuses on whether participants' intended pragmatic message is delivered and received by the listener successfully, and, apparently, in all cases, the participants' production was effective at their corresponding proficiency levels.

In the case of backchannels, no statistically significant differences were identified across proficiency groups. Nevertheless, when comparing the total number of occurrences performed by each proficiency group, results suggested that the B2 group (M=1.70) produced slightly more instances than the B1 group (M=1.58). Regardless this slight difference in terms of mean scores, their performance remained quite similar in both proficiency groups. What is observed here is that the mean score did not exceed 2, which, in terms of the rubric, would be qualified as "good". That is, "backchannel is rarely observed". Backchannels, broadly speaking, serve to show signals of active listenership, contribute to the ongoing construction of sequences and constitute a common aspect of interactional competence (Celce-Murcia, 2007; Young, 2011). Pragmatic knowledge concerning the use and function of backchannels is paramount in interaction, and this result suggests that the participants at the two proficiency level did not show pragmatic awareness as regards this issue.

Finding no statistical differences in the case of kinesics and paralanguage could be, in a way, expectable since speakers and listeners, in authentic face-to-face interaction, employ a full semiotic repertoire of communicative modes apart from the spoken mode. However, this is not to say that differences cannot be identified in other studies or following different approaches. In this particular study, by means of the rubric, raters identified kinesics and paralanguage resources and rated them according to whether they served to support understanding. Results revealed that, in general, in both descriptors, the mean did not exceed 3.50, which according to the rubric would involve "usually supports the other speaker's understanding of the communicative event". That is, the participants' performance of these non-linguistic resources serve to contribute to the construction and deconstruction of meaning over the interaction. Results showed that the mean for both groups was rather equal for the descriptor of kinesics (B1, M=3.37; B2, M=3.42) and paralanguage (B1, M=3.34; B2, M=3.42).

From a qualitative perspective, this study shows that the different modes the participants used during the face-to-face interaction were instrumental in constructing the conversation. Various kinesic resources (e.g., gestures, head movement, face expression, gaze) and paralanguage resources (e.g., short pauses, filled pauses) were identified in the data. Gestures are spontaneous movements speakers use along with speech (Stam, 2018). In general, the gestures identified were iconic, metaphoric, deictic, beats (McNeill, 1992), adaptors and emblems (Ekman & Friesen, 1969). Data showed, for example, iconic gestures that served to reinforce the linguistic message; metaphoric gestures to, for example, metaphorically picture abstract ideas (e.g., scale of friendship); deictic gestures used to, for example, point towards themselves when talking; beats gestures used to show the rhythm and tempo of the speech; adaptors gestures used probably to show emotional content; and emblems used with or without speech (e.g., show agreement). Other resources observed were head movements, facial expressions and gaze, which were, in some cases, combined with gestures and paralanguage resources. Situations involving the participants' head movement were identified, for example, in combination or not with backchannels. This performance included the combination of linguistic backchannels and head nods, reinforcing the meaning of the backchannel, and non-linguistic backchannels consisting of head nods (Gass & Houck, 1999; Carter & Adolphs, 2007). Facial expressions were used to, for example, emphasise, modulate and underline the content and meaning constructed (Ekman, 1976), and provided emotional information. In observing gaze, results indicated that some participants avoided eye contact, probably as a result of the face-threatening nature of the situation. Gaze may not be always continuous in an interaction (Querol-Julián, 2011), and changing gaze direction (Goodwin, 1994) can be frequent, especially in face-threatening situations. Changes in gaze direction were also employed for thinking process or planning. Although kinesic resources are reported here separately, they tended to occur in combination with various resources, for example, facial expressions with gaze, gestures and speech, or gaze, facial expressions and filled pauses. The paralanguage resources identified in the data were mainly short pauses, filled pauses and laughter, which were all identified across proficiency levels. Short pauses were quite natural and did not necessarily impede comprehension; nevertheless, longer pauses involving lack of fluency and planning were found, mainly in the B1 group. Filled pauses were observed in the two proficiency groups while interacting and they were not performed in isolation but in

combination with other non-linguistic resources, such as gestures, head movement, facial expressions and gaze. Laughter was identified as part of the communicative exchange between the speakers and performed in combination with other modes, such as gaze and facial expressions. This particular paralanguage resource was also found to be associated to nervousness, especially in the B1 group. Paralanguage resources occurred as part of the communicative exchange between the complainer and the complainee. In general, as observed in the results obtained in the rubric, the use of paralanguage resources did not affect negatively the communicative outcomes, but rather, they seemed to usually support interaction.

Concerning expressions, results seemed to suggest that the B2 group outperformed the B1 group. That is, as shown, raters ranked the B2 level group with greater results as compared to the B1 group, and this was observed in all the cases examined. According to proficiency level, results revealed statistically significant differences; the mean scored obtained by each proficiency group differed and the B2 group (M=3.30) outperformed the B1 group (M=2.28).

In terms of pragmalinguistic construction, the B2 group outperformed the B1 group, probably due to learners' overall competence in the target language (Marmaridou, 2011). Nevertheless, although higher language proficiency may not necessarily involve higher pragmatic knowledge (Bardovi-Harlig, 1999; Marmaridou, 2011), in this study, the B2 group exhibited more appropriate sociopragmatic realisations than the B1 group. Then, the B2 group showed more ability to construct more elaborated pragmalinguistic realisations and to employ them more appropriately than the B1 group. Proficiency and the specific politeness parameters established in the task could have influenced these results. On the one hand, although complaints and responses to complaints do not have prototypical strategies (Geluykens & Kraft, 2008; Laforest, 2002) and common adjacency pairs, the participants, at higher proficiency levels, could have had more opportunities to construct extended sequences (Drew & Walker, 2009) that allow them to negotiate complaints and responses to complaints (Beltrán-Palanques, 2016). On the other hand, in light of the results obtained, it could be suggested that achieving greater results in expressions may be associated to the participants' awareness and understanding of the sociopragmatic conditions of the situation. Nevertheless, it should be

acknowledged that using a task that contains familiar politeness parameters may also facilitate the production of more appropriate utterances. This leads us to think about the design of tasks in terms of sociopragmatic parameters, since employing situations and roles that learners may be more familiar with could facilitate their pragmatic production. However, the design of tasks depends on the specific aims of each study.

In the case of turn-taking, results also suggested that the B2 learners group outperformed the B1 group. Turn-taking refers to the management of turns over the course of the conversation and it is related to learners' knowledge of conversation mechanisms (see Celce-Murcia, 2007; Young, 2011). In this case, results revealed that the mean scores according to proficiency level were greater in the B2 group (M=3.44) as compared to the B1 group (M=2.59). Turn-taking mean score did not exceed 3.44, which involves that "turns are performed successfully but not always taken in a natural manner. Keeps the flow of the conversation most of the time". In fact, this is in line with the parameters established by the CEFR (2018). At B2 level, in terms of turn-taking, learners are expected to, for example, intervene appropriately using appropriate language, initiate, maintain and close a conversation, or use specific phrases to gain time and keep the turn (CEFR, 2018). In contrast, at B1 level, learners can initiate, maintain and close a conversation that are familiar with or of personal interest as well as to use suitable phrases in less complex conversations as compared to B2 (CEFR, 2018).

Concerning the second research question of this study, which asked whether proficiency affected participants' multimodal pragmatic appropriateness, this study showed that the participants' proficiency level appeared to influence the overall appropriateness in the descriptors of expressions and turn-taking since the B2 group outperformed the B1 group. Despite the fact that the B2 level did greater in these two descriptors, differences were not observed in the descriptor of communication. It seems therefore that although the participants at different proficiency groups were able to convey pragmatic meaning successfully, their pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic choices differed. These particular findings seemed to be in line with Taguchi (2006, 2013), who found that proficiency, grammatical control and discourse control had an effect on the overall appropriateness of speech act production. Similarly, Cunningham (2017) also found that higher levels of pragmalinguistics resulted in more appropriate pragmatic

utterances. In the case of expressions, the B2 group showed more ability to construct utterances that were more appropriate for the given context in terms of pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics, revealing not only greater knowledge of pragmalinguistic construction but also greater sociopragmatic awareness of the situation. Concerning turn-taking, this study revealed that turns were not always performed successfully and that the flow of the conversation was kept only in some parts of the conversation. Similarly, Galaczi (2014) found that B1 learners showed lack of connection with the interlocutor's utterances while B2 learners exhibited more collaborative construction. Findings indicated that the ability to construct and take part actively and collaboratively in the construction of the conversation seemed to be related to language proficiency. As Ishida (2011) and Galaczi (2014) argue, the ability to jointly construct the conversation seems to increase as interactional competence increases. This may also affect the role of the active listener, which serves to create conversational flow and collaboration (Ishida, 2011; Galaczi, 2014). In the case of backchannels, no differences across proficiency groups were found, but it should be indicated that, in general, the participants used them rarely, which calls for pragmatic instruction as regards the role of the active listener in interaction. The descriptors of kinesics and paralanguage were added in order to explore how they could contribute to the overall construction and deconstruction of the conversation. Although an in-depth analysis would be required, it seems that these two descriptors were also instrumental during interaction since the participants, as in any other kind of interaction, employed their full semiotic repertoire to construct and convey meaning.

6. Final Remarks

This study has provided theoretical grounding that justifies the nexus between pragmatics and multimodality, and has exemplified how multimodal pragmatics can be applied in the EAL classroom. Particularly, this study has sought to assess pragmatic appropriateness from a multimodal perspective. The assessment carried out in this study adopted a holistic perspective, that is, including both linguistic and non-linguistic resources at a conversational level. The reason behind this rationale is the assumption that communication is inherently multimodal and therefore a mon-modal perspective would provide a partial representation of the data, especially in face-to-face interaction. The main contribution of this study is to show

how pragmatics can be viewed from a multimodal perspective and how language teachers can explore pragmatic appropriateness at the level of conversation taking into account learners' full semiotic repertoire.

To that end, a rubric for assessing multimodal pragmatics and appropriateness was created and implemented with a group of participants belonging to two different proficiency levels performing a role-play task. The rubric addressed pragmatic appropriateness according to some specific descriptors and therefore grammatical aspects such as phonology or syntax (Celce-Murcia, 2007) were not directly assessed. Two raters examined 32 pairs complaining in a given situation. Results as regards the linguistic resources suggested that, in all the cases examined, the B2 group statistically outperformed the B1 group in the descriptors of expressions and turn-taking. These particular results might be associated to the participants' proficiency level and sociopragmatic awareness of the situation. It seems that the participants' disposal of linguistic resources and knowledge of how to use grammatical resources and elaborate discourse had a strong impact on overall pragmatic appropriateness. However, concerning communication and backchannel, no statistical differences were found. On the one hand, the participants showed sufficient ability to transmit the intended pragmatic meaning, although it was the B2 group who did it better in the descriptors of expressions and turn-taking. On the other hand, backchannel was rarely used by the two groups, despite the fact that it represents an interactional feature of communication (Celce-Murcia, 2007; Young, 2011). In the case of kinesics and paralanguage, results seemed not to provide any difference as regards the two proficiency groups. This is probably related to the fact that communication involves the use of various semiotic resources for making meaning (Jewitt et al., 2016). The interwoven of semiotic resources the participants displayed served to provide further evidences as regards the construction of interaction; that is, the speakers and listeners constructed pragmatic appropriateness over the different turns not only by means of linguistic elements but also non-linguistically, as they would do in authentic interaction.

This study is not without certain limitations. Further role-play situations involving different relationships and various levels of offence would be needed in order to provide more evidences of the usability and effectiveness of the rubric as well as to explore (im)politeness. Also, a qualitative analysis of raters' rating was missing in this study. For example,

by means of interviews (conducted after rating participants) further insights into rating could have been obtained.

This study has pedagogical implications as regards the implementation of multimodal pragmatics in the EAL classroom as well as suggestions for teacher training. Language teachers should acknowledge both the importance of pragmatics at the level of conversation and the multimodal nature of communication. In a way, adopting a multimodal perspective requires teachers to revisit their current teaching practices to adapt them to the multimodal trend. In order to do so effectively, teacher training is necessary to expand potential and current teachers' knowledge as regards new modes of communication and how to integrate them in the EAL classroom. The study reported here is in line with current trends in language teaching and assessment as it supports the inclusion of pragmatics and multimodality in the EAL classroom. Instruction dealing with multimodal pragmatics is needed to foster learners' communicative competence, which can be done by providing them with opportunities to understand how pragmatics is constructed and deconstructed in interaction.

Notes

[1] In this study, the term open role-plays is only used here to explain the typology. Throughout the paper, I use the term role-plays or role-play tasks to refer to open role-plays.

[2] Effect size: small, d = .2; medium, d = .5; and large, d = .8 (Cohen, 1988).

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