

Multilingual Pragmatic Awareness in Collaborative Writing

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ABSTRACT

Research on pragmatic awareness of language learners has mainly focused on the target language (Takahashi, 2012). As argued by some scholars (Kecskes, 2019; McConachy, 2019), a multilingual perspective should also be adopted in the analysis of pragmatic awareness. In fact, existing findings (Safont & Portolés, 2015) point to the peculiar characteristics of multilingual pragmatic comprehension and awareness. Bearing these aspects in mind, this paper focuses on the pragmatic awareness of multilingual learners while they are performing a collaborative writing task in three different languages, namely those of Catalan, Spanish, and English. The corpus consists of recordings from 30 university students' oral interactions while working in pairs to write three email request messages. In an attempt to provide a holistic and ecological account of learners' performance, pragmatic-related episodes were identified by considering Brown and Levinson's politeness features (1987) and Leech's (1983) approach to pragmatic competence. Results are in line with previous studies tackling multilingual learners of English and they provide us with interesting insights about the mechanisms that multilingual students activate when planning and performing pragmatic production tasks during collaborative work.

Keywords: pragmatic awareness; pragmatic competence; collaborative writing; multilingualism; politeness

Introduction

Language learning and teaching require paying attention to the development of learners' awareness of appropriate language use according to context and cultural parameters (Martínez-Flor & Usó-Juan, 2010; 2020). In this sense, promoting learners' pragmatic awareness consists of addressing their ability to reflect about (in)appropriate language

use as influenced by context, individual assumptions, and language ideologies (McConachy & Spencer-Oatey, 2020). Previous studies suggested that learners tend to consider grammatical deviations more serious than pragmatic infelicities (Bardovi-Harlig & Dörnyei, 1998; Niezgodá & Röver, 2001; Schauer, 2006). Such research contributed some evidence to the need to implement awareness-raising tasks to improve learners' pragmatic awareness. Despite the fruitful insights provided by research on Interlanguage Pragmatics (ILP), there is a need for a multilingual approach to the analysis of pragmatic awareness in order to provide a stronger theoretical lens about its nature and development (McConachy, 2019) and move away from the established monolingual bias (Otwinowska, 2017). Both in research and the language classroom, this multilingual viewpoint conceives learners' language repertoire as a whole and looks at the relationships existing between the language systems (Cenoz & Gorter, 2011) in pragmatic-decision making and assessment.

Among the studies acknowledging the multilingual reality, some have focused on learners' acknowledgement of contextual features and pragmalinguistic forms in requestive behaviour (Safont, 2003; Portolés, 2015; Safont & Portolés, 2016; Portolés & Safont, 2018). Findings showed high levels of awareness when multilingual learners are to identify and justify pragmatic appropriateness and accuracy. A step further in this research field includes the analysis and description of the learners' understanding of pragmatic-related phenomena from a sociocultural lens, where learners collaborate in the co-construction of pragmalinguistic forms and sociopragmatic notions. Hence, this paper explores the pragmatic awareness of multilingual learners when working on a collaborative email writing task that elicits the use of requests in the academic context.

Literature review

Pragmatic awareness and requests

Pragmatic awareness may be defined as ‘the conscious, reflective, explicit knowledge about pragmatics’ (Safont, 2008: 193). From an intercultural perspective, McConachy (2012) conceived meta-pragmatic awareness as an ability by which individuals approach pragmatic phenomena considering culture as a frame of reference. Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor (2020) pointed out that an indicator of this type of awareness is language users’ linguistic and interactional choice of modifying strategies in relation to appropriateness and the communicative situation.

According to Thomas (1983) and Leech (1983), the knowledge of linguistic and sociocultural aspects is portrayed in the distinction between pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics. The former is related to knowledge of those language forms that may perform specific functions (Alcón-Soler, 2008) while the latter refers to knowledge of the contextual features (McConachy, 2019), that is, the communicative situation, the interlocutors, and cultural norms, among others, which a speaker/writer considers when using a particular language form. Therefore, speakers’ knowledge about the linguistic elements necessary to perform speech acts (Cenoz, 2007) is related to their pragmalinguistic competence. The choice of a particular form is subjected to their sociopragmatic competence as it addresses ‘how to vary contents, specific linguistic forms, choice of interpersonal meanings to convey (e.g. politeness value), and the type of action to take’ (Chang, 2011: 787).

A guiding principle for the production and comprehension of speech acts is that of politeness. Brown and Levinson (1978; 1987) described this phenomenon as the saving of participants’ face when a face-threatening act (FTA) is produced. For example, requests are FTAs that are ‘performed by the speaker in order to engage the hearer in

some future course of action that coincides with the speaker's goal' (Safont, 2008: 42). The nature of a request is face-threatening as it addresses participants' negative face, that is, 'the want of every "competent adult member" that his [or her] actions be unimpeded by others' (Brown & Levinson, 1978: 62). Therefore, a competent language user would attempt to soften the potential impact of the request by resorting to the most appropriate modifying strategy.

Considering the distinction between pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic knowledge employed in L2 pragmatics and the relevance of politeness when researching speech acts, the current study approaches pragmatic awareness as conscious understanding of the particular sociocultural context (e.g. relationships, situation, cultural norms, etc.) and the way it can influence pragmalinguistic choice.

Several studies have dealt with learners' pragmatic awareness when producing and interpreting requests (Bardovi-Harlig & Dörnyei, 1998; Bardovi-Harlig & Griffin, 2005, Cook & Liddicoat, 2002, Kim & Taguchi, 2015, 2016; Savić, Economidou-Koetsidis & Myrset, 2021). Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei (1998) investigated ESL and EFL learners and teachers' pragmatic and grammatical awareness. The sample consisted of secondary and tertiary level learners ($n= 543$) and teachers ($n= 53$) from USA and Hungary, and EFL primary school teachers from Italy ($n = 112$). Participants assessed 20 videotaped situations that included requests, suggestions, apologies, and refusals. Findings showed that EFL learners and teachers were keener on identifying grammatical deviations while their ESL counterpart considered pragmatic inappropriateness a more serious issue, displaying a heightened pragmatic awareness. Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei (1998) concluded that a high level of grammatical awareness did not guarantee appropriate pragmatic production. Thus, the authors argued for the need to implement awareness-raising activities in EFL contexts.

On that account, Bardovi-Harlig and Griffin (2005) focused on pragmatic instruction as an opportunity to develop pragmatic awareness. Participants were 45 ESL university learners from a variety of different language backgrounds. After watching different videotaped situations, they were asked to spot pragmatic infelicities and to perform a role play with the solution. While learners were able to address pragmatic deviations, they lacked the ability to refer to content or form in order to adjust to the cultural or linguistic conventions of the target language (TL).

Cook and Liddicoat (2002) contrasted request production and comprehension of native speakers of English and EFL/ESL learners. Fifty undergraduate native English speakers and 100 non-native speakers (L1 speakers of Japanese and Chinese) completed a multiple-choice questionnaire that assessed participants' ability to interpret the most appropriate answer given a particular situation. High proficiency learners and native speakers displayed awareness of direct and conventional indirect requests. Low proficiency learners struggled with conventional and indirect requests but properly interpreted direct ones. This gap between native and non-native speakers was explained in terms of differences concerning the processing and the accessing to contextual knowledge. Recently, Savić, Economidou-Kogetsidis, and Myrset (2021) examined the pragmalinguistic development of two groups of Greek and Norwegian young learners of English (ages 9, 11 and 13). Results showed the Greek learners' preference for conventionally indirect (CI) requests as age and proficiency increased while the Norwegian groups used CI requests across all ages and proficiency. The authors claimed that learners' reliance on their L1 as reflected in their L2 forms decreases as age and proficiency increases.

Pragmatic awareness as collaborative work

A sociocultural approach to the study of language learning highlights the importance of interaction for the promotion of negotiation and scaffolding (see Lantolf, 2000; Antón & DiCamilla, 1998; Swain & Lapkin, 2000, Swain, 2000; Storch, 2019). Pica (1994: 494) defined negotiation as the ‘modification and restructuring of interaction that occurs when learners and their interlocutors anticipate, perceive or experience difficulties in message comprehensibility’. The notion of negotiation is in line with Vygotsky’s (1978) idea that ‘higher forms of psychological functioning appear first between people’ (van Compernelle & Kinginger, 2013: 288). In the current study, this negotiation may adopt the form of modification of pragmatic-related notions as two or more learners agree upon the most appropriate pragmalinguistic form as influenced (or not) by their pre-established sociopragmatic conceptions. This modification and construction of new pragmatic knowledge may also promote scaffolding, where a more experienced student takes control over the task and helps their partner in the acquisition of pragmatic-related notions.

Bearing in mind the importance of mediation (Vygotsky, 1978) in language learning, the negotiation of language forms and contextual features can provide learning opportunities that benefit the development of pragmatic awareness. While previous research has addressed this issue with regards to grammar, vocabulary and other aspects of the language, recently some scholars also considered the learning and development of pragmatic competence by following the tenets of the Sociocultural Theory (SCT). For example, the work of van Compernelle (2019), van Compernelle and Kinginger (2013), and van Compernelle *et al.* (2016) explored the development of learners’ metapragmatic awareness and sociopragmatic knowledge through a concept-based approach which emphasises the importance of instruction and mediation. Findings showed how the provision of support enhanced learners’ understanding and assessment of sociopragmatic

notions when using the language. When implementing this concept-based pragmatic instruction, Myrset and Savić (2021) and Myrset (2021) observed that young L2 learners were able to interiorise metapragmatic terminology and use it to justify pragmatic-related decision-making. When studying discursive devices, Savić (2021) described the uniqueness of group discussion. Seventy-nine Norwegian EFL learners from two primary schools discussed in small groups what aspects to consider when requesting in English. Savić (2021) reported on the recurrent use of expansion (e.g. examples and collaborative utterances) and children's own personal experiences to justify requestive behaviour.

As explained by McConachy and Spencer-Oatey (2020), SCT work has looked into the relationship between collaborative talk and pragmatic awareness. According to these authors, tasks that promote dialogue push learners to articulate and position themselves in relation to L2 pragmatic norms. Kim and Taguchi (2016) explored the effect of task complexity concerning both cognitive and pragmatic task demand in learner-learner interaction. Forty-nine Korean secondary level EFL learners worked on collaborative writing tasks which included request-making expressions. Two groups were formed (high and low) which differed in the pragmatic complexity of the task. Results showed that tasks of higher complexity and pragmatic demand fostered pragmatic-related episodes, leading to the discussion of sociopragmatic concepts. Kim and Taguchi reported on the benefits of collaborative dialogue for interaction, negotiation, and deeper understanding of pragmatic features.

In their study, Kim and Taguchi (2016) resorted to recordings of learners' oral interaction in order to access those cognitive processes involved in pragmatic decision-making. In fact, verbal protocols have been employed largely as 'they offer direct access to the cognitive problem-solving steps a learner performs in working memory when dealing with a task' (Taguchi & Roever, 2017: 102). Nguyen (2019) explained that think-

aloud protocols, verbal reports within the category of introspective reports, allow for the exploration of cognitive processes. Gabryś-Barker (2019) saw in introspection techniques the possibility of accessing learners' multilingual processes of their individual languages as well as cross-linguistic influences.

Pragmatic awareness of multilingual learners

While previous studies have highlighted the importance of developing learners' awareness when it comes to pragmatic knowledge, only a few have adopted a multilingual perspective in their research. In the university context, Safont (2005) investigated pragmatic awareness and production of 160 female undergraduates when dealing with requests. Catalan-Spanish bilinguals ($n=80$) and Spanish monolinguals ($n=80$) engaged in open-role plays and discourse completion and evaluation tests. The latter measured participants' pragmatic awareness in terms of (in)appropriateness of a given situation, and participants were required to provide a justification and an offer of repair in case of inappropriate requestive behaviour. Findings showed that bilingual participants were keener on the identification and justification of pragmatic failure compared to monolinguals. This statistically significant difference between bilingual and monolingual participants was also tested against their ability to produce requests. The analysis of their pragmatic production showed that bilinguals made use of more conventionally indirect request strategies than monolinguals. Safont (2005) concluded by reporting on the bilingual advantage in terms of pragmatic awareness and production.

Focusing on the same multilingual context, Safont and Alcón (2012) studied the effect of instruction of L3 English request modification items on the pragmatic awareness of 140 university students. Classified as either Catalan-Spanish bilingual or Spanish monolingual, participants received instruction on request behaviour using awareness-raising tasks, and comprehension and production tasks. The authors reported a wider

range of request modifiers employed by bilingual students according to the pre-post-test results. Moreover, the effect of instruction was significantly more noticeable in bilinguals. Safont and Alcón (2012) pointed out the advantages of multilingualism and the development of a higher pragmatic awareness when it came to L3 instruction.

Dealing with child requestive behaviour, Portolés (2015) analysed very young learners' pragmatic awareness of English as an L3. Requests in Spanish, Catalan, and English were presented to 402 participants between the ages of 4 and 9 by means of an audio-visual pragmatic test. Their pragmatic awareness was measured by the extent to which participants noticed the (in)appropriateness of the request forms. Portolés (2015) explained that despite the fact that the learners' language systems were still developing, they were able to identify the appropriateness of the situation. Similar results were found in Safont and Portolés (2015) after studying the extent to which 48 preliterate multilingual learners of L3 English comprehended and assessed the appropriateness of the requests. Data were collected by means of an audio-visual pragmatic test. High levels of pragmatic awareness were displayed in all three languages, independently of the developmental stage of participants' L1 and L2. In a similar line, Portolés and Safont (2018) focused on multilingual requestive behaviour of 127 primary school children by implementing a pragmatic comprehension test and analysing classroom discourse. Findings showed that children were able to use a variety of request strategies in Spanish, Catalan, and English based on their understanding and awareness towards politeness orientation. All in all, these results provided further evidence on the benefit of the multilingual experience when faced with pragmatic-related phenomena.

The above-mentioned studies have contributed to bridging the gap between research on pragmatic learning and multilingual language acquisition. Their findings point to a multilingual advantage in requestive awareness. However, data were mainly

obtained by means of production or judgement tests. As mentioned before, introspective methods may provide us with relevant information on the learners' degree of pragmatic awareness (Kim & Taguchi, 2016), and they may enable us to explore pragmatic decision-making as well as cross-linguistic influences (Gabrýs-Barker, 2019). Moreover, by focusing on the importance of collaboration, we intend to shed light on the role of negotiation as a social space for the co-construction of pragmatic knowledge. It is the aim of this study to contribute to this line of research by considering politeness features (Brown & Levinson, 1989) as well as Leech's (1983) dichotomy between pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic knowledge. By resorting to introspective techniques, the goal of this research is to explore multilingual learners' pragmatic awareness in oral exchanges when performing a collaborative writing task with a focus on request elicitation. With this aim in mind, the following research questions have been formulated:

- (1) RQ1: How is learners' pragmatic awareness manifested and co-constructed in collaborative writing tasks?
- (2) RQ2: Do learners use other languages, aside from the target language of the task, when engaged in pragmatic-related negotiation? If so, what is their role/function?

The study

Data and participants

The total corpus consisted of 6 hours and 37 minutes (34,725 words) of audio-recorded student-student interaction. This corpus was obtained from the oral exchanges of 30 first-year university students from the bachelor's degree in Mechanical Engineering and the bachelor's degree in Computational Mathematics from Universitat Jaume I (Castelló de la Plana, Spain). Participants were paired up and their oral interaction while completing a collaborative writing task was transcribed and analysed. Pairs provided a total of three

audio-recordings ($M= 08:49$), one per each language under analysis, namely, Spanish, Catalan, and English. Convenience sampling constituted the target sample group and data were collected from students' regular classroom activities with prior authorisation as well as approval from the ethics committee.

Ages ranged from 17- to 26-year-old with a mean age of 18.70 years ($SD= 2.184$). 83% of participants were males ($n= 25$) and 17% females ($n= 5$). Regarding their language background, 53% ($n= 16$) reported Spanish as their L1, 30% ($n= 9$) Catalan, 13% ($n= 4$) Romanian and 4% ($n=1$) Arabic. As for their L2, 50% ($n=15$) spoke Spanish, 46% ($n= 14$) Catalan and 4% ($n= 1$) Arabic. English represented the L3 for 83% ($n= 25$) of the participants, while for 17% ($n=5$) it was their L4. Finally, 17% ($n=5$) chose Catalan as their L3 and 4% ($n= 1$) as their L4.

Participants were selected from Universitat Jaume I and they were taking part in the compulsory English for Specific Purposes subject taught in their first year. All participants lived in an official bilingual community where Spanish, the majority language, and Catalan, the minority language, are taught and spoken. Moreover, we can consider such a community multilingual as in practice there are speakers of many other languages such as Romanian and Arabic. Aside from Spanish and Catalan, L3/L4 English as a foreign language was common to all participants. English was taught during their compulsory education years. Hence, they were emergent multilinguals either because they were learning English as an L3/L4 or because they brought their own home language (apart from Spanish or Catalan) together with L3/L4 English.

Results from the Oxford Quick Placement test (UCLES, 2001) placed 43% ($n= 13$) of participants in the lower intermediate level, 27% ($n= 8$) in the elementary level, 20% ($n= 6$) in the upper-intermediate level and, finally, 10% ($n= 3$) in the advanced level according to the Common European Framework of Reference. Only 10% ($n= 3$) of the

participants experienced a stay abroad in an English-speaking country. Participants' command of Spanish and Catalan was high due to the completion of their high school education in this bilingual community.

Task procedure

Data was gathered during participants' timetabled English lessons by means of a collaborative writing task, part of their academic activities for the course. When it comes to proficiency, previous research on collaborative writing reported that highly heterogeneous dyads can result in an uneven distribution of the work, with the most experienced learner taking charge (Kowal & Swain, 1994). Based on this, participants were paired up so that dyads consisted of students with the same level of proficiency in English, or one of them with a slightly better proficiency in order to work at a more or less equal level of language knowledge. Participants already mastered Spanish and Catalan and, therefore, the level of proficiency of these two languages was not a variable when pairing. The collaborative request email writing task consisted of three different scenarios, one for each of the dominant languages of the community, namely, Spanish and Catalan, and also the language they were learning, that is, English. All situations emulated the university lifestyle and were designed considering the sociological variables proposed by Brown and Levinson (1978; 1987). Hence, all scenarios were of high imposition and status, and far social distance as the hypothetical communicative situation proposed was between a student and a faculty member. These scenarios elicited formal language as expected from email communication (Pratama, 2019).

Instructions prompted participants to write an email containing a request: 1) asking for a deadline extension (Spanish); 2) asking for a change of an official exam date (Catalan); and 3) asking to change subjects when doing an Erasmus exchange (English). Before the beginning of the task, participants were briefly instructed on collaborative

writing and the sort of oral exchange expected. Dyads orally discussed task-and language-related issues while one of them was in charge of handwriting the final emails (50 to 80 words per email). Participants were encouraged to use whatever language they felt comfortable with when verbalising their ideas, independently of the language of the prompt. The duration of the task was of 30 to 45 minutes.

Data analysis

In order to gain a fuller insight into the co-construction of participants’ pragmatic awareness, pragmatic-related episodes (PREs) were identified as the unit of analysis. In the current study, PREs are understood as instances where participants actively engaged in conversation addressing pragmalinguistic or sociopragmatic aspects of the languages. Thus, PREs were instances where participants explicitly commented on forms or contextual features that led the co-construction of, for example, the request strategy. Therefore, an interactional sequence consisting of several turns – going from one comment to several exchanges in a row - between participants was the focus of the analysis. Whole episodes, from the beginning of the pragmatic-related problem to its resolution (or not) and change of topic, and their corresponding turns, were considered. Extract 1 illustrates the beginning and end of a PRE. S20 first introduced “dear” which motivated the co-construction of the pragmalinguistic form until reaching a final agreement, which marks the end of the PRE.

Extract 1. Example of a PRE

- 01 S20: Dear
02 S09: Dear enrollment manager
03 S20: we can...we can what’s his name...dear
04 S09: I don’t know... imagine a: dear Jim...o dear:

05 S20: Enrollment manager... dear enrollment manager. Despite...

PREs were examined to provide a description of participants' use and display of their pragmatic awareness. In order to do so, we decided to follow Thomas' (1983) and Leech's (1983) distinction between pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic knowledge. In addition to this, appropriate request moves in a PRE were based on Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) understanding of politeness together with the main sociological variables of social distance, relative power and rank of imposition. Learners' operating at a pragmalinguistic level of awareness comprised the collaborative construction of the appropriate pragmalinguistic form. Hence, this level is concerned with pragmalinguistic knowledge and learners' ability to choose the most appropriate form according to the context. Sociopragmatic awareness attended to sociopragmatic notions by resorting to contextual cues that help shape the language form. Learners' pragmatic awareness is displayed in the form of comments, judgements and questions concerning mainly social distance, power, and imposition as well as the communicative situation, relationship between interlocutors, and cultural norms. Table 1 illustrates the pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic awareness distinction followed throughout the study.

Table 1. Pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic awareness description

Pragmatic awareness level	Description	Example
Pragmalinguistic awareness	Learners suggest and co-construct the pragmalinguistic form to use. Pragmalinguistic knowledge is displayed.	<p>S6: <i>Per això vull que eh:</i> <i>Because of this I want that eh...</i></p> <p>S5: <i>O agrairíem si considereu, agrairíem si considereu</i> <i>Or we would appreciate if you consider, we would appreciate if you consider</i></p> <p>S6: <i>La possibilitat...</i> <i>The possibility...</i></p>

Sociopragmatic awareness	Learners explicitly comment and reflect upon the pragmalinguistic form by addressing contextual features such as the communicative situation, relationship, status, imposition and cultural norms. Sociopragmatic knowledge is displayed.	S21: <i>We need to start with a formal expression.</i> S22: <i>Good morning.</i> S21: <i>No, other formal expression.</i>
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In both levels of awareness, attention was paid to whether learners resorted to their other languages in order to support decision-making. Each level is not exclusive and the boundaries between them are not clear-cut as on one level might prompt the other. For example, negotiating the appropriate form (pragmalinguistic awareness) might lead to a reflection on roles in order to justify the pragmalinguistic form (sociopragmatic awareness).

Participants used their mobile phones to record their conversation. Once they finished the task, the recordings were sent to the researchers. The recordings were transcribed and quantitative and qualitative analysis were conducted. The quantitative analysis consisted of tallying the number of sociopragmatic- and pragmalinguistic-related episodes respectively. Numerical data is presented in order to 1) observe the distribution of PRE across languages and 2) report statistically significant differences, if any, between the two levels of awareness.

In addition to the quantitative analysis, we identified and extracted representative examples of observed interaction patterns from the collaborative dialogues. Considering the relevance of mediation in interpersonal communication as posited by SCT, PREs were also analysed in terms of negotiation and opportunities for scaffolding. Based on the data under analysis, negotiation took place whenever participants disagreed on or questioned the pragmalinguistic form and/or sociopragmatic notions. A further level of analysis

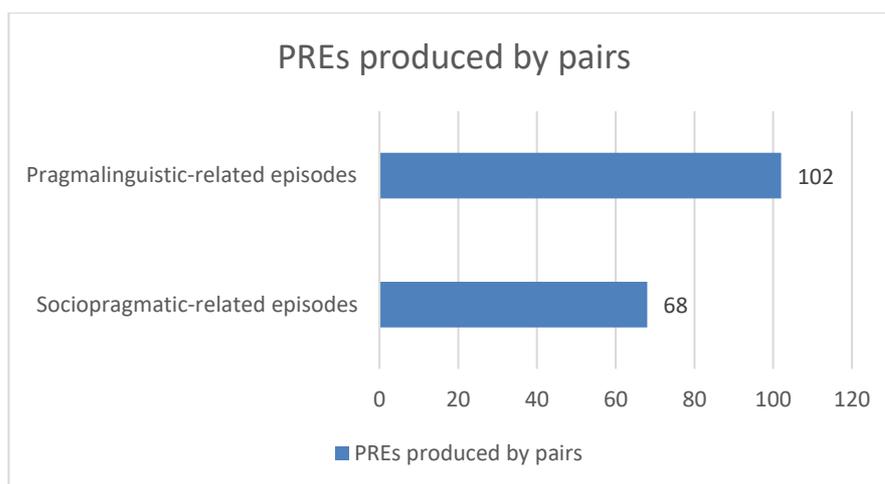
consisted in identifying whether this negotiation offered the opportunity for an expert-novice type of relationship, where one offers help (guidance, modelling or explicit explanation) to the other to better comprehend the pragmatic-related issue. We believe that employing semi-naturalistic data may enable access to the cognitive mechanisms that underlie pragmatic-related decision-making. In fact, Bardovi-Harlig (2010) and Nguyen (2019) suggested the need to further exploit this type of data in L2 pragmatic research. Furthermore, this introspection technique is of great help in multilingual research as it opens the way to how and why multilingual speakers process and activate their languages (Gabryś-Barker, 2019).

Results and discussion related to RQ1

The first research question guiding the study explored the way in which participants manifest and co-construct their pragmatic awareness while engaged in a collaborative writing task. First, instances where participants addressed pragmatic aspects were identified, that is, PREs. Next, all PREs were classified according to the two previously mentioned levels of pragmatic awareness: pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic level. A quantitative analysis illustrates the distribution of these episodes across languages. In addition to this, a qualitative analysis of participants' interactions completes these numbers and provides further insights.

Participants' collaboration during the email request writing task revealed their awareness towards pragmatic-related issues. They debated over aspects concerning pragmalinguistic forms as well as sociopragmatic notions of the language. The number of PREs and their distribution according to the levels of awareness is illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Distribution of PREs



Based on these numbers, participants mainly focused on the linguistic end of pragmatics as there were 102 instances of pragmalinguistic discussion against 68 of sociopragmatic-related talk. In order to affirm that their awareness was mostly centred on pragmalinguistic forms, a paired-sample *t*-test was run. The analysis confirmed a statistically significant difference between the pragmalinguistic level ($M= 6.80$, $SD= 1.521$) and the sociopragmatic level ($M= 4.53$, $SD= 2.326$), $t(14)= 3.523$, $p<.05$. Participants mostly displayed and co-constructed awareness of pragmalinguistic forms by referring to and discussing ideas at the level of language structure.

A qualitative examination of the data provided a deeper understanding of participants' co-construction of their pragmatic awareness in collaborative work. A thorough analysis of participants' exchanges revealed that participants either negotiated the pragmalinguistic form or simply wrote down a structure without engaging in negotiation. When negotiation occurred, there were instances where one learner guided and provided instructions to the other, creating a type of expert-novice relationship, thus, offering scaffolding. Table 2 provides a quantitative description of participants' pragmalinguistic awareness with and without negotiation.

Table 2. Negotiation at a pragmalinguistic level of awareness

Target language	PLA* - with negotiation	<i>PLA – Negotiation with scaffolding</i>	PLA – without Negotiation	Total PLA episodes
Spanish	25 (80.6%)	2 (8% out of 25)	6 (19.4%)	31
Catalan	22 (53.7%)	3 (13.6% out of 22)	19 (46.3%)	41
English	20 (66.6%)	5 (25% out of 20)	10 (33.4%)	30
All	67 (65.7%)	10 (14.9% out of 67)	35 (34.3%)	102

* PLA = Pragmalinguistic awareness

A look at the distribution and patterns of interaction showed that participants negotiated the pragmalinguistic forms by addressing issues concerning the structure of openings and closings of request emails, the request head acts and modification devices. In just 14.9% (n = 10 out of 67) of cases, this negotiation promoted scaffolding. This is a relatively small percentage when compared with the total number of pragmalinguistic episodes. In fewer instances, there was no negotiation of structures and participants mainly suggested language forms without engaging in an active co-construction.

A detailed description of this negotiation revealed interesting findings. To start with, when working on the collaborative writing task in Spanish, participants frequently negotiated language forms (80.6%, n= 25) but with limited opportunities for scaffolding. Regarding Catalan, there was a well-balanced distribution of instances with and without negotiation. This is particularly interesting as participants showed a lower engagement in the negotiation of the language forms (46.3%, n= 19) when compared to Spanish or English. In the case of English, participants mostly negotiated the pragmalinguistic forms (66.6%, n= 20) with 25% (n= 5 out of 20) of these episodes offering opportunities for

scaffolding. Hence, English exhibited the most cases of scaffolding when compared with Spanish or Catalan.

Extract 2. Collaborative task in Catalan: requesting change of date for official exam

- 01 S11: *Sí, se puede poner. Però no se com demanar...eh:: no se*
[com demanar.
- 02 S12: [(mumbles) era demanar si:: eh::
- 03 S11: Podria::
- 04 S12: Si es podria:: eh (3)
- 05 S11: Deixar una major distància entre les "feches" de::
- 06 S12: -Eh:: eh:: tindre més dies de diferència.
- 07 S11: Canviar la data. Canviar...
- 08 S12: Canviar-la, sí. Per a tindre més dies...
- 09 S11: La data per a tindre... més temps?
- 10 S12: Més temps.
- 11 S11: Millor que més dies, no? Més temps...
- 12 S12: Eh:: per a poder:: repassar.

Negotiation consisted of several turns where participants initiated the PRE with a question, doubt, or explicitly asking for help. For example, in Extract 2, S11 stated that he did not know which verb to employ for requesting in Catalan (line 1). Overtly expressing a gap in their pragmalinguistic knowledge motivated a discussion that promoted the negotiation and co-construction of the language form. Towards the end of the episode, the presence of questions and evaluative comments exemplified participants' reliance on each other to reach an outcome.

Extract 3. Collaborative task in English: requesting change of subject out of enrolment period

- 01 S13: Dear enrolment manager I am writing to you to ask if I:
If I could... eh
- 02 S14: *Pero... ¡lo, lo estás resumiendo mucho en una frase, eh!*

- 03 S13: If I could change... yeah?
04 S14: *Primero tienes que explicar la situación.*
05 S13: *O sea... vale, vale, vale, vale, verdad porque ya iba a decirle que si podría ya cambiarme, jejeje.*
06 S14: *O sea...*
07 S13: *Claro tendríamos que empezar...*
08 S14: - I am writing you to explain eh...
09 S13: To explain ah....

Similarly, participants in Extract 3 negotiated the pragmalinguistic form out of a disagreement concerning the opening lines of their email (lines 1 to 2). This led to an episode characterised by negotiation and scaffolding as S14 provided an explicit explanation of the structure their request email should follow (line 4) which, in turn, could be potentially beneficial for his classmate. Hence, negotiation at a pragmalinguistic level may adopt different starting paths but all leading to opportunities for the co-construction and development of pragmatic-related knowledge. In addition to this, the use of participants' L1, as seen in Extract 3, may have contributed to their pragmatic awareness development and benefited task progression and social rapport (see results and discussion for research question 2).

Extracts 2 and 3 addressed pragmalinguistic awareness as no attention was paid to sociopragmatic notions that would back up the request form employed. Participants' awareness operated at a superficial stage of comprehension and understanding, that is, at a purely linguistic level. Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei (1998) found that EFL students focused more on grammatical inaccuracies than pragmatic inappropriateness. Dyads from the current study exhibited awareness at a pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic level. However, the focus of their interaction mainly targeted language forms without providing support from the contextual features. This was also commented on by Bardovi-Harlig and

Griffin (2005) who observed that their participants failed at addressing content or form as related to the cultural conventions of the target language community. Another possible explanation for this focus on linguistic aspects may derive from the tendency of the educational system to place emphasis on the linguistic competence. Studies analysing textbook and other classroom material reported a lack of attention to pragmatic aspects of the language. In this sense, participants develop an awareness of language forms that is mainly limited to basic rules when it comes to pragmatics (McConachy, 2019). As a result, critical thinking and deeper reflection around sociopragmatic notions is not being encouraged (Kim & Taguchi, 2016).

Despite the statistically significant difference between the pragmlinguistic and sociopragmatic level of awareness, the display and development of sociopragmatic notions was present as well. Kim and Taguchi (2016) observed that high complexity tasks offered the possibility to engage in pragmatic-related discussion around sociopragmatic concepts. Multilingual learners from the current study also engaged in sociopragmatic-related talk. As observed in pragmlinguistic-related talk, this exchange was also characterised by negotiation and scaffolding. Participants negotiated aspects concerning, overall, appropriateness, formality, roles, familiarity, and imposition. As given in Table 3, in those cases where there was negotiation, only in 18.7% of them ($n= 9$ out of 48) learners could benefit from scaffolding. Once again, a small percentage compared with the total number of episodes ($n = 48$). Finally, there were fewer cases ($n = 20$) where learners did not engage in negotiation.

Table 3. Negotiation at a sociopragmatic level of awareness

Target language	SPA* - With negotiation	<i>SPA – Negotiation with scaffolding</i>	SPA – Without Negotiation	Total SPA episodes
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Spanish	24 (66.7%)	3 (12.5% out of 24)	12 (33.3%)	36
Catalan	4 (40%)	2 (50% out of 4)	6 (60%)	10
English	20 (91%)	4 (20% out of 20)	2 (9%)	22
All	48 (70.6%)	9 (18.7% out of 48)	20 (29.4%)	68

*SPA: Sociopragmatic awareness

When working on the collaborative writing task in Spanish, in 66.7% ($n= 24$) of instances students engaged in negotiation and in 12.5% ($n= 3$) of cases this interaction was accompanied by scaffolding. As for Catalan, multilingual learners barely exhibited sociopragmatic awareness ($n= 10$) and negotiation only occurred in 40% ($n= 4$) of occurrences, with half ($n= 2$) of them promoting scaffolding. As it happened at the pragmalinguistic level of awareness, there was a lack of engagement with the Catalan language as not only seen in the limited number of PREs but also in the disinterest for negotiating. When working on the task in English, there was 91% ($n= 20$) of sociopragmatic-related talk with negotiation, of which 20% ($n= 4$) counted with scaffolding opportunities.

Extract 4. Collaborative task in Spanish: opening of request email and familiarity.

- 01 S2: Emmm::: querido profesor.
 02 S1: - ¿Querido?
 03 S2: Es que yo qué sé. Estimado profesor... fulanito de tal...
 04 S1: ¿No es muy... cercano?
 05 S2: Ya pero yo qué sé.
 06 S1: Señor::: tal...

07 S2: Vale pues...esto me... mejor esto que es más::: estilo más formal.

Extract 5. Collaborative task in English: language use and formality.

01 S14: ¡Para! ¡No se pueden poner contracciones en formal!

02 S13: Sí, sí se puede.

03 S14: No se puede.

04 S13: No se puede... no se puede... no se puede...

Extracts 4 and 5 exemplify sociopragmatic awareness in negotiation. Participants engaged in active discussion when questioning or explicitly showing disagreement with the decisions made. Participants backed up their arguments by resorting to their knowledge of sociopragmatic notions across languages. In Extract 4, S2 suggested the opening "dear professor" (line 1) to which S1 responded in disbelief (line 2). Furthermore, S1 questioned the sort of relationship being portrayed with that structure, stating that it was "too close" (line 4). While in English the formula "Dear + last name" would be the most appropriate one, in Spanish this structure can be perceived as overtly formal. Moreover, "*estimado*" and "*querido*" can reflect affection and a close relationship. In the following turns, S1 suggested the use of "Sir" (line 6) and S2 commented that it was better and more formal in style (line 7). Hence, S2 was displaying concerns about formality.

Similarly, in Extract 5, S14 reminded his classmate of the importance of full forms in formal emails. This led to a brief moment of disagreement but S13 accepted the use of full forms. In this sense, this negotiation also offered an opportunity for scaffolding when S14 highlighted a critical feature of formal emails. In most PREs tackling sociopragmatic awareness, participants referred to formality as a common argument to justify language use. However, the idea of formality was no further

developed as there seemed to be a common understanding of what it meant. In several PREs it could be intuited that further explanation of what they understood by “formal” could have benefited the resolution of the PRE.

All in all, participants engaged in pragmatic-related discussion across all languages. These episodes hint at interaction helping in the development of learners’ pragmatic awareness at two levels of awareness, that is, pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic. An overview of all episodes indicated concerns mainly with pragmalinguistic issues. Nonetheless, negotiation of language forms and sociopragmatic notions predominated with a limited number of cases leading to scaffolding. When working on the collaborative task in English, multilingual learners were committed to displaying pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic awareness and to negotiate to a greater extent.

Results and discussion related to RQ2

Concerning the second research question, we examined whether participants would rely on their languages to address PREs in relation to awareness. This was only the case for the task in English as a foreign language. When collaborating, participants resorted to Spanish, aside from the target language, to deal with pragmatic issues. At a pragmalinguistic level of awareness, participants pooled their language repertoire in 6 (20%) occasions to contrast and double-check meaning and form. Concerning sociopragmatic awareness, participants resorted to Spanish on 6 (27.2%) instances as well (see Table 4).

Table 4. Pragmatic awareness and multilingual episodes in English

PLA*	PLA Multilingual episodes	SPA**	SPA Multilingual episodes	Total PLA and SPA	Total PLA and SPA Multilingual episodes
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30	6 (20%)	22	6 (27.2%)	52	12 (23%)
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* PLA = Pragmalinguistic awareness ** SPA: Sociopragmatic awareness

To illustrate these numbers, Extract 6 represents an example of participants making use of Spanish to address a pragmalinguistic form in English. S18 made use of Spanish to contrast the request proposed. In line 4, S18 questioned whether to use present or past simple when performing a request in English. By resorting to Spanish, S18 provided an explanation and a translation of the structure he intended to write. He used the conditional sentence "*me gustaría*" to contrast it with "I wanted". Thanks to this, S18 was able to paraphrase his first choice and rewrote the request in the form of a want statement "I would like", a literal translation from the Spanish conditional (line 6). In this sense, S18's awareness of pragmalinguistic forms was displayed and tested thanks to resorting to a structure in Spanish that resembled the meaning he wanted to convey. Because of this, they were able to move the task forward and expressed their request more appropriately.

Extract 6. Multilingual episode at a pragmalinguistic level of awareness

- 01 S17: I want to ask you if I could change, no if you could change the subject.
02 S18: Alright.
03 S17: I wanted.
04 S18: Wanted or want? It's not past... alright in Spain we... we say, *claro, me gustaría*, like in past. But here is like... because of this...hmmm I will like you to change... (5)
05 S17: like o?
06 S18: I will... I would like... changing my subject, no, this subject. I would like to change this subject. Change... eh: for one or to one? You change to or you change for?

Multilingual episodes were characterised by translations of language forms and the provision of explanations and instructions. The use of Spanish served for checking meaning and

comparing structures across languages as well as for task-related purposes. Furthermore, all multilingual episodes but one featured negotiation. Previous research on SLA and collaborative writing reported on the importance of participants' L1s when dealing with the target language (Antón & DiCamilla, 1998; Swain & Lapkin, 2000; Storch & Wigglesworth, 2003; Storch & Aldosari, 2010). In the specific case of English L2 pragmatics, McConachy (2019) acknowledged the relevance of the L1 and participants' cultural frames in the understanding and development of L2 learners' pragmatic awareness. In our study, participants resorted to Spanish, the majority language, at both levels of awareness. From a multilingual perspective, translingual practices when dealing with pragmatic phenomena were reported by Nightingale & Safont (2019).

Extract 7. Multilingual episode at a pragmalinguistic level of awareness (II)

- 01 S26: *Vale (10+) Ya está. Yo ahora pondría "en ese caso, cítame en su despacho y miraríamos las..." o sea [in that case*
02 S25: *[in that case ¿cómo sería cítame?*
03 S26: *Eh::: escíbeme, write me.*
04 S25: *- Write me back.*
05 S26: *With the answer, with the answer, si... and::: we should look the solutions.*
06 S25: *¿cómo, cómo?*
07 S26: *Y miraríamos las soluciones, we should look the solutions...*
08 S25: *in that case, write me back with the answer.*
09 S26: *With the... escíbeme... con... no yo pondría "in that case write me back with..." ehh las soluciones. No. En ese caso escíbeme, el "with" lo quitas. Escíbeme.*
10 S25: *Es que pones con las soluciones si ya hemos escrito antes...*
11 S26: *Vale. Write me back and we... Nosotros hablamos... sobre cómo solucionarlo.*
12 S25: *Write me back and we can...*
13 S26: *Es que ya lo hemos puesto "solve".*
14 S25: *Si...*

15 S26: I wanted to know if the situation could be solved. In that case, write me back.
En ese caso, if it is possible, write me back. Y ya está, ahí se acaba ¿sabes? En plan, si es posible...

16 S25: *Mejor.*

In Extract 7, S25 and S26 worked together to shape the form of a second request which supported the first one. S26 suggested to tell the enrolment manager to arrange a meeting to discuss the possibility of a subject change. When doing so, she formulated such a request in Spanish for later attempting to translate it into English (line 1). Between lines 2 and 8, both partners moved back and forth between Spanish and English in order to perform the speech act. In line 9, S26 suggested a simpler structure for the head act, but less polite: "write me back". In line 15, when reviewing their final choice, S26 mitigated the strength of the imperative form with the structure "if it is possible". S26's translation from Spanish into English and vice versa helped in the process of finding a proper request form. She constantly went from Spanish to English in what seemed to be a way of double-checking the structures proposed. Moreover, Spanish was the main language of communication and understanding between partners and, as such, served the purpose of aiding in task resolution. In this sense, the use of Spanish served two functions: 1) cross-pragmatic support and 2) creating a space for social cohesion and rapport.

Extract 8. Multilingual episode at a sociopragmatic level of awareness

01 S27: Dear... dear isn't like, for close people? Like friends and family?

02 S28: Emmm I think that Dear is formal.

03 S27: Ah, ok. I ask because I didn't remember. Dear...

04 S28: Yes. Dear Manager.

05 S27: Dear. *Ahora estoy muy seguro que es querido.*

06 S28: *Sí, o sea...*

07 S27: *Querido enrolment man...*

08 S28: *pero yo creo que es formal.*

09 S27: *Vale.*

- 10 S28: Eh.
11 S27: Eh... enrolment manager.
12 S28: Yes. Eh::
13 S27: Eh::
ok.

At a sociopragmatic level of awareness, attention was paid to contextual features while also relying on Spanish as a source of pragmatic knowledge and awareness. In Extract 8, a conversation between S27 and S28, attention was paid to the idea of familiarity. When proposing the salutation, S27 suggested the use of “dear” but hesitated, as he perceived such structure as denoting a close relationship. S28 provided explicit explanation, associating it with a formal register (line 2). In the following turns, S27 affirmed that dear meant “querido” (line 5) and translated the sentence into Spanish (line 7) in a funny tone. Once again, S28 explained that it was a formal structure (line 8), but providing this explanation in Spanish. Strong sociopragmatic awareness was shown by S28 who repeatedly explained that the use of “dear” was associated to formality. On the other hand, S27’s uncertainty regarding familiarity elicited a translation into Spanish to double-check the meaning of this structure. Finally, S28 ended up providing an explanation by using Spanish as the main language of communication to convince her partner about the use of this structure. Once again, multilingual learners employed more than one language in an attempt to make sense of pragmatic-related problems. This provides further evidence on how multilingual learners rely on their whole language repertoire, suggesting that it is dynamic, involving pragmatic knowledge and awareness as well (Portolés & Safont, 2018).

To sum up, multilingual learners resorted to Spanish when dealing with pragmatic-related episodes in the target language. The influence of the majority language was evidenced in 23% ($n= 12$) of these episodes. Learners resorting to their languages was commented on by Jessner (2005, 2006) who referred to the idea of a “supporter language” when searching for similarities across language systems and in order to draw from common

languages resources (Jessner, 2008). By making use of Spanish, participants from our study were able to solve doubts, double-check, and provide further support at a pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic level of awareness. Moreover, it also served a social function, that of maintaining rapport in the resolution of the task. Hence, multilingual pragmatic awareness was observed as participants did not limit themselves to operate within one language system but across languages. Moreover, the use of Spanish and English operated at the level of pragmatic competence and awareness, entailing that multilinguals were not only able to exhibit cross-linguistic influence but cross-pragmatic influence as well. In addition to this, all but one of these episodes were characterised by negotiation, implying that the use of more than one language in interaction paves the way for richer exchanges, resulting in deeper understanding of the pragmatic phenomenon.

Conclusion

The current study focused on the co-construction of multilingual learners' pragmatic awareness in collaborative tasks. We may state that participants displayed awareness at two levels of pragmatic knowledge, namely, pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic. Notwithstanding, most episode occurrences tackled pragmalinguistic awareness. This suggests that participants were mostly focusing on the language forms, disregarding sociopragmatic issues concerning familiarity, status and imposition, among others, which play a relevant role in request production and comprehension. In this sense, our participants mostly operated at a superficial level of awareness, not engaging in deeper thinking processes to justify and back up pragmalinguistic forms. In those cases where sociopragmatic notions were evaluated, multilingual participants engaged in negotiation and scaffolding which might have helped in pragmatic awareness co-construction. Moreover, when working in L3 English, the use of Spanish served different purposes such as helping in task

progression as well as social rapport and cohesion. In addition to this, the presence of Spanish could have benefited learners when improving their awareness in English and Spanish. Catalan was disregarded as a source of reference in pragmatic-related discussion. This may be explained in terms of language status in the broader sociolinguistic context. In this sense, the absence of Catalan as a source of reference might be due to its minority language status.

We provided further evidence concerning multilingual learners' use of their language repertoire as an asset in language learning. While monolingual views in EFL tend to ignore other languages in the classroom, the multilingual reality of our learners is characterised by translingual practices which, as seen, can offer opportunities for the co-construction of pragmatic knowledge.

We can draw some pedagogical implications considering the outcomes of this research. Participants from this study actively engaged in conversation addressing pragmatic-related issues. As already explored by Storch (2013; 2019), collaborative tasks can offer opportunities for language development by addressing the social dimension of learning. While the current study does not provide evidence of actual language learning, it does show that collaboration can promote opportunities for pragmatic development in interaction. Secondly, given that participants mostly focused on pragmalinguistic forms, more tasks should be designed to encourage discussion around sociopragmatic notions as this is when learners have the opportunity to reflect about the impact of social meaning over pragmalinguistic forms (van Compernelle, 2014). Finally, our participants resorted to Spanish to complement and overcome PREs in L3/Ln English. This supports the need to implement multilingual practices such as pedagogical translanguaging (Cenoz & Gorter, 2021) as they acknowledge the multilingual reality of learners. In this sense, the use of the learners' whole language repertoire is looked as an asset in the resolution of pragmatic-related issues.

This research is not without limitations. Firstly, the study analysed a small group of participants working on a specific task. A more longitudinal approach to the study of pragmatic awareness with a larger group of multilingual learners could provide a more in depth understanding of the relationship between pragmatic awareness and multilingual language development. Secondly, a combination of individual and collaborative tasks could reinforce the analysis of multilingual learners' pragmatic awareness. Finally, participants' other languages such as Romanian were not explicitly employed during conversation and, therefore, were not part of the analysis either. This issue deserves further attention as the influence of participants' other languages should also be examined and considered in multilingual pragmatic awareness. Future research should explore pragmatic awareness development in relation to the quality of pragmatic-related episodes. The description of learners' engagement with pragmatic-related episodes could allow for a more detailed picture of learners' languaging and co-construction of their pragmatic awareness.

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Appendix. Transcription conventions

S = student

(transcriber's notes)

– cut off speech

(1) pause in seconds

[overlap in speech

::: extension of sound