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Overcoming textbooks' pragmatic deficiencies:

A teaching proposal to implement the instruction of requests in the EFL classroom

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I. Abstract

Over the years, English has become the language of the world. As a result, there has been a rising demand for learning the language, and consequently, a significant emergence of English courses. Nevertheless, some deficiencies have been identified in these courses and their materials (i.e. textbooks). Traditionally, English teaching and learning have been almost exclusively associated with the acquisition of its grammar. As a consequence, it is still unreasonably difficult to find materials for developing the pragmatic competence (Celce-Murcia 2007), despite having been regarded as essential in the acquisition process of a language. With a view to overcoming this lack of pragmatics in English courses developed in foreign contexts, the current study is aimed at designing a teaching proposal for the instruction of pragmatics, and more specifically, of the speech act of requesting. Prospective students will be given the opportunity to explore a most widely used speech act deemed as the most controversial due to its face-threatening nature. With this aim in mind, first, significant research conducted on this particular assumption will be outlined. Then, on the basis of previous literature, and considering the pragmatic deficiencies conventionally encountered in textbooks, the aforementioned teaching proposal will be elaborated. Target learners will be Spanish first-year baccalaureate students (at B1 level). Following Martínez-Flor's (2010) and Usó-Juan's (2010) approaches, five main stages, accounting for input, output, and feedback will be designed. The proposal is expected to ensure real-based and appropriate acquisition of the English language in foreign contexts.

Keywords: English courses, textbooks, pragmatic competence, speech act of requesting, teaching proposal.

II. Introduction

Globalisation is a reality that has brought about a new conception of life. It has introduced changes at different levels, especially, social, economic, and political. In this relatively recent situation, the world has metaphorically suffered a significant rearrangement resulting in a worldwide linkage between countries. In an interconnected world, there is a necessity for a vehicle of communication between people from all parts of the globe that allowed the exchange of information between speakers.

It is in that context that English emerged as the solution to this problem. In fact, due to reasons such as the number of speakers, its easiness, and its business relevance, the English language

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consolidated as the Lingua Franca (LF) internationally (Bodapati 2016). As a result of that popularity, together with the benefits it offered (i.e. communicating worldwide), people started showing a strong interest in learning English. That situation triggered the emergence of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) courses, whose main aim is to train people to communicate in English. Nevertheless, that training is not regarded to meet the expected goal: building English communicative competent speakers. Traditionally, the acquisition of a language has been associated with knowing its grammar. Grammar is not enough for a speaker to acquire the language and communicate. The lack of attention to the study of communication (i.e. pragmatics), in this specific case in English, has been identified as one of the most common and harmful errors in those courses.

Accordingly, the present study aims at providing a solution to the unreasonable modest role of pragmatics, and especially of the speech act of requesting, despite its extensive use and relevance in the learning process. Thus, with a view to overcoming this problem and highlighting the role pragmatics has in building communicative competent speakers, a teaching proposal has been elaborated. In this particular project, it has been addressed for Spanish baccalaureate students at a B1 level in an EFL context. Briefly, it has been designed following the five main shortcomings standardly identified in textbooks, which will be explained in more detail in the upcoming sections. Ultimately, through its future implementation, the design is expected to improve the language teaching and learning environment that fosters a real acquisition of EFL.

III. Theoretical background

3.1 Pragmatics: An overview

As a rising tendency, during the 21st century, the English language has been consolidated as a LF internationally. Consequently, it has become a worldwide language connecting people from all parts of the globe (Zikmundová 2016). As a result, there has been an increase in the percentage of people who want to become competent in English. English learned as a Foreign Language (FL) or Second Language (L2) occupies a major issue in primary and secondary education curricula, as well as in adult courses.

One of the main tenets of the learning process of EFL is the communicative focus, which upholds that communication is the core of language. The communicative competence was first postulated by Hymes in 1972, and it was later revised and reformulated by Celce-Murcia (2007). Her model consists of six competences which are known as socio-cultural or pragmatic, formulaic, discourse, linguistic, interactional, and strategic competences.

All the six competences play an essential role in the definition of a competent speaker, and in providing a complete acquisition of a language. However, this study is mainly concerned with the pragmatic competence, which is argued to be paramount due to its cognitive and social nature.

First of all, and for a better understanding of the term, the origin of pragmatics will be examined. The term 'pragmatics' was first coined by the philosopher Charles Morris (1938, 6), who defined the concept as «the study of the relations of signs to interpreters». From this moment onwards, there have been several authors throughout the history of applied linguistics who have made several attempts at finetuning the term 'pragmatics' (e.g. Levinson 1983, Yule 1996, Mey 2001 among many others). However, the most widely accepted and complete definition of the term is the one offered by David Crystal (1985, 240), who defines pragmatics as:

> The study of language from the point of view of 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 other participants in the act of communication.

On the basis of that definition, and as Bardovi-Harlig and Mahan-Taylor (2003) noticed, pragmatics studies the relation between three key elements in communication: language, context, and users. Therefore, pragmatically speaking, communication consists of speakers' ability to use language differently to fit the context (Taguchi and Roever 2017).

3.1.1 Pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic knowledge

When examining pragmatics, a revision of its components is required. Pragmatic competence is composed by two different kinds of knowledge: pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic (Leech 1983, Thomas 1983), which basically stand for linguistic and social factors.

The former term (i.e. pragmalinguistic knowledge), refers to the knowledge of language's norms and strategies necessary for the production of speech, or simply as the appropriateness of form (Trosborg 1995). The other main component is sociopragmatic knowledge, which can be conceived as the appropriateness of meaning (i.e. adapting a speech act to the set of social characteristics surrounding the context of a communicative act) (Trosborg 1995).

Altogether, the two types of knowledge must function simultaneously to convey a speech act properly, both linguistically and socially (Trosborg 1995). In the teaching context, there is a need for addressing both in the acquisition of L2 pragmatic competence

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since learners must become familiar with the grammatical, but also with the sociocultural norms in order to use language appropriately (Barron 2003, Flores-Salgado 2011). Consequently, students will be capable of using language correctly depending on the social and cultural conventions, as well as the particular context in which it is used (Bardovi-Harlig and Mahan-Taylor 2003).

3.1.2 A focus on the speech act theory

In an attempt to communicate, human beings do not only try to produce grammatical correct structures (i.e. sentences), but to «perform actions via these utterances» (Yule 1996, 47), and it was this idea the one that gave born to the theory examined in this section.

In 1976, Austin pointed out one of the most revolutionary tenets in the field of applied linguistics, and especially in pragmatics: speech acts. For the linguist, there was a lack of scrutiny on language, since for him, it was not only based on statements, or as he called them, 'constatives', but on performing actions when using language. In fact, as Taguchi and Roever (2017, 18) accurately signalled, Austin challenged «the truth value of statements» by defending that speakers do things with words.

Broadly speaking, speech acts were defined as communicative events or functional units of communication in which the speaker makes use of performative verbs and utterances in context (Austin 1976). Austin described speech acts as consisting of three different levels or acts: locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts. Briefly, these are defined as follows:

- Locutionary act: «The act of saying something» (Austin 1976, 94). It is the act of producing a meaningful linguistic expression.
- Illocutionary act: «the utterance which attempts to achieve some communicative purpose» (Flores-Salgado 2011, 9). It is the intended meaning of the utterance.
- Perlocutionary act: «What we bring about or achieve by saying something» (Austin 1976, 109). It is the verbal consequence on the hearer, since any locution has an effect on the interlocutor.

Austin's contributions were seminal for Searle's (1969) elaboration. A disciple of Austin, Searle emerged as the cofounder of the theory, coining the term 'speech act' and proposing a sub-classification of Austin's three speech acts. According to Searle (1969), all speech acts were illocutionary since whenever speakers produce locutions, they do it intentionally. On that basis, Searle (1976, 1-16) acknowledged a taxonomy of five types of speech acts, namely: assertives, directives, commisives, expressives, and declarations.

Assuming that speech acts can be addressed more or less directly depending on the function they want to attain, a distinction between direct and indirect speech acts can be established. On the one hand, a direct speech act expresses a connection between structure and function, whereas an indirect speech act denotes an indirect relation (Yule 1996). Briefly, whereas the former avoids misunderstandings and is regarded as more impolite, the latter is closely associated with a higher degree of politeness in English (Yule 1996).

Overall, meaning is a controversial issue, in which language, speaker's communicative intention and context appropriateness play a major role. As a matter of fact, and in a very simplistic way, this is what speech act theory reflects. Speech acts perform an intention, whereas politeness is pursuant to the context and the interlocutors.

3.1.3 An insight into the politeness theory

The motor for communication is speakers' intentions and their performance against socio-cultural norms. From the late 1970s, several linguists have worked towards a proper definition of 'politeness', a quite complex term comprising language and culture. Lakoff (1977), Brown and Levinson (1987, 2011), and Leech (1983) are generally regarded as the founders of politeness theory.

According to Brown and Levinson (1987, 2011) language use implies some kind of universal strategies common in every language and culture which build the core of politeness. Therefore, politeness is not something desirable but intentional depending on the purpose of communication. Accordingly, the linguists developed a theory supported by two main tenets: face and rationality.

Initially, Brown and Levinson (1987, 2011) distinguished between 'positive politeness' and 'negative politeness', or in other words, between 'positive face' and 'negative face'. Hence, in an attempt to explain their theory, they invented the figure of the Modal Person (MP), a rational agent who had both faces. Briefly, the notion of face responds to «the public self-image of a person» (Yule 1996, 60).

Faces are also interpreted as wants since all MPs desire to have something accomplished with the help of others which is ensured by means of different strategies. Face can be saved, if others try to complete interlocutors' wants, or contrarily, threaten or lost by Face Threatening Acts (FTAs) such as requests, suggestions, or warnings, if speakers' desires are not respected. Thus, depending on the actions taken, speakers would alter interlocutors' negative face (i.e. MP's desire to not be imposed by the others), or positive face (i.e. MP's willingness to be accepted) (Yule 1996).

Secondly, Brown and Levinson (1987, 2011) studied the notion of 'rationality', referent to all the logical actions performed when acting or speaking. In this context, they proposed a set of sociological

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variables present in any act of communication: social distance, power, and ranking of imposition. The former includes the social similarities and differences between speakers. The second corresponds to hearer's imposition on the speaker. Finally, the last refers to the degree of imposition the act has over the positive or negative face of a hearer or speaker.

Thirdly, Lakoff (1977) dealt with politeness in pragmatics. In his chapter, he proposed the 'politeness principle', a theory based on three main tenets: (i) don't impose; (ii) give options; and (iii) make your receiver feel good.

Whenever we produce a piece of speech, one of the requirements is to fit the social context. Similarly, being polite, and considering the social variables and the linguistic strategies are indispensable for a speech act to suit the context correctly. Indeed, language theories are not independent assumptions, but they counterbalance each other (Trosborg 1995).

Politeness has been traditionally considered one of the most influential factors when classifying requests. Accordingly, the section below will be devoted to present a more extended scrutiny of requests, those speech acts which have been in the spotlight of pragmatic research over the last three decades (Usó-Juan 2010). Their frequency, wide range of meanings, versatility of interlocutors, face-threatening nature, and the linguistic choices they allow, have brought requests to such a privileged position in the pragmatic inquiry.

3.2 Requests: Towards a working definition and classification

Requests are one of the speech acts that have received more attention throughout the history of pragmatics (Trosborg 1995, Barron 2003). In fact, for a complete and appropriate instruction of EFL, pragmatic competence is necessary. As a result, speech acts, which are the chief element of pragmatics, have a major role in examining the reasons behind speakers' communicative intentions, which is pragmatics' main premise.

Following Austin's (1976) and Searle's (1969) studies on speech acts, communication may be said to emerge from speakers' desire to convey an attitude or intention. On that basis, as Alcón, Safont Jordà, and Martínez-Flor (2005) precisely signalled, a deep examination of speakers' process of speech acts routines is in order, as these are part of social interaction. Indeed, when communication occurs, a reason, whether explicit or implicit, is required to utter a message. A Trosborg (1995, 187) put it:

> A request is an illocutionary act whereby a speaker (requester) conveys to a hearer (requestee) that he/she wants the requestee to perform an act which is for the benefit of the speaker.

In Safont-Jordà's (2008) words, the main function of requests is to force the hearer to conduct the action demanded by the speaker. Hence, as their nature is generally to push the hearer to perform an action, requests are catalogued as FTAs, since they attack hearer's negative face, risking him or her to lose it.

In the same fashion, Sifianou (1999) claimed that the social relationship between participants clearly shaped the choice of requests, and thus, the prominence given to each participant in communication. Indeed, he distinguished between four entities, depending on whom the force of the request was placed: a) the speaker: 'Can I...?'; b) the addressee: 'Can you...?'; c) both the speaker and the addressee: 'Can we...?'; d) the action: 'Would it be possible...?' (Safont-Jordà 2008).

Regarding its components, according to research conducted by Trosborg (1995) and Sifianou (1999), requests are formed by two main elements: the head act and its peripheral elements. The former term designates the action of requesting itself, whereas the last refers to the elements mitigating or modifying the intensity of the request.

Trosborg (1995, 192-204) further proposed a taxonomy of requests' strategies depending on the level of directness, distinguishing between direct, conventionally indirect, and indirect. Direct requests are made by using performatives or imperatives, and considered more impolite. Conventionally indirect requests may be hearer-oriented or speaker-oriented depending on who receives the request. Finally, the latter category is indirect requests and basically, these refer to acts in which the intention is not made explicit in an attempt to demonstrate a higher level of politeness (see figure 1).

Type	**Strategy**	***Example***
Indirect	1. Hint	*I have to be at the airport in half an hour.*
Conventionally indirect (hearer-oriented)	1. Ability	*Could you lend me your car?*
	2. Willingness	*Would you lend me your car?*
	3. Permission	*May I borrow your car?*
	4. Suggestory formulae	*How about lending me your car?*
Conventionally indirect (speaker-oriented)	1. Wishes	*I would like to borrow your car.*
	2. Desires/needs	*I want to borrow your car.*
Direct	1. Obligation	*I would like to ask you to lend me your car.*
	2. Performatives	*I ask/require you to lend me your car.*
	3. Imperatives, elliptical phrases	*Lend me your car.* *Your car (please).*

Figure 1. Request realisation strategies (based on Trosborg, 1995: 205)

With a view to providing a more comprehensible classification of requests, apart from the taxonomy of request realisation strategies, Trosborg (1995) also suggested a classification considering the peripheral elements contributing to requests' modification, which was subdivided into two categories: internal and external modification.

Firstly, internal modification responds to the indirect manners to address requests politely. Within this category, it can be differentiated three subtypes: syntactic downgraders, lexical or phrasal downgraders, and upgraders. Briefly, downgraders reduce the illocutionary impact of the request. The former subtype decreases the possibility of accomplishing the request, and the second one increases the chances. Lastly, upgraders consist of boosting the illocutionary impact of the request (see figure 2).

Secondly, external modification refers to the elements whose function consists of adapting requests' «illocutionary force by means of mitigating or aggravating them» (Halupka-Rešetar 2014, 34). Its main subtype is disarmers, which are phrases basically intended to reduce the imposition of the request and convince the hearer (see figure 2).

Type	**Strategy**	***Example***
External modification	Disarmers	*I'm sorry to trouble you unnecessarily but...*
Internal modification	Syntactic downgraders	*Can you do the cooking tonight?*
	Lexical downgraders	*Hand me the paper, please.*
	Upgraders	*You really must come and see me.*

Figure 2. Request acts modification (based on Trosborg, 1995: 209-219)

Altogether, requests constitute one of the most widely-used speech acts, as well as one of the most largely researched (Halupka-Rešetar 2014). Despite its impositive nature, authors such as Trosborg (1995) and Sifianou (1999) have developed taxonomies and theories to foster the appropriate employment of requests by means of strategies and modifiers. Additionally, when analysing requests, the social variables proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987, 2011) must be accounted for. Thus, whenever a request is formulated, the power, distance, and ranking of imposition it has on the hearer must be taken into consideration.

3.3 The role of textbooks in the instruction of pragmatic competence in the EFL classroom

Pragmatic competence is held as one of the main components of language learning, as Celce-Murcia's (2007) signalled in her communicative competence model. Despite the relevance attributed to such competence in SLA and learning processes, paradoxically, it has an incomprehensible modest role in teaching manuals.

The presence of pragmatic competence in textbooks, as well as the way it is addressed in the EFL classroom, has been an issue deeply explored and criticized in multiple research in applied linguistics (e.g. Vellenga 2004, Diepenbroek and Derwing 2013 among others). The idea sustained by several authors is that textbooks represent the major part of the syllabus of an EFL course, and also the main source of input together with the teacher (Vellenga 2004). However, the exam-oriented nature of these courses clearly undermines the importance of pragmatics for a student to be fully communicative competent in any language, and in this specific study, in English.

Due to the interdisciplinary relationship existing between culture and pragmatics, an attempt to include both in the teaching must be achieved. As a matter of fact, not addressing the target culture in the classroom induces learners to consider their own culture as the standard, and the foreign one as an exception (Roberts 1998).

On the basis of the aforementioned literature, and assuming the restricted presence of pragmatic competence in the EFL classroom, the five major aspects which have been reported to be indispensable in textbooks but actually miss are: i) a more significant presence of speech acts (Soozandehfar-Ali and Sahragard 2011), ii) input's authenticity and usefulness (Vellenga 2004), iii) a major presence of contextual variables (Cohen 2005), iv) a need for developing pragmatic awareness (Takahashi 2013), and ultimately, and v) the importance of instruction on pragmatics in the EFL context (Martínez-Flor 2008, Usó-Juan 2010).

A general consensus upholding the idea that textbooks stand for the chief source of input in the EFL classroom is derived from the abovementioned contributions. Research has challenged textbooks' reliability since they are neither enough for an EFL curriculum, nor for instructing pragmatic competence properly, especially requests (Diepenbroek and Derwing 2013). Hence, the most obvious outcome of this situation is grammatically prepared students, but few pragmatically competent (Bardovi-Harlig and Mahan-Taylor 2003).

Therefore, in the light of this assumption, and following recent research strands, this study focuses on the appropriate instruction of pragmatics, particularly requests, by overcoming the five major problems of textbooks listed in this section.

IV. Teaching proposal

The first premise considered in the elaboration of this proposal has been to include the three theoretical conditions indispensable for learning speech acts: input, output, and feedback (Martínez-Flor and Usó-Juan 2010). Briefly, the former element refers to the language information students receive and, especially, what they are able to process (i.e. intake). Secondly, the output is the direct consequence of input, and is mainly concerned with learners' own language productions after a period of internalisation and comprehension of the input, or intake. Finally, the third element (i.e. feedback), is the condition by which students receive assessment on their performance, not just as a manner of signalling errors, but also as a method to reinforce learners' right performances during the learning journey, assuring this way a truly successful learning (Martínez-Flor and Usó-Juan 2010).

The current approach stresses the strong presence that information and communication technologies (ICTs) have in language teaching and learning (Schmid 2008). Some of ICTs' most outstanding advantages are: i) their powerful motivation nature, ii) their versatility and visual aids, iii) their ability to attract learners' attention and engagement, and iv) their potential to cater for students' individual necessities, among many other reasons. Consequently, this teaching proposal will incorporate ICTs as an essential part.

The proposed lesson plan is intended for students at a B1 level of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFRL) (Council of Europe 2018), which is assumed of first-year baccalaureate students in Spain (i.e. 16-17 years old). Regarding the classroom characteristics, this proposal has been conceived for a small group of participants to enable teachers to focus their attention on individuals and increase efficiency (Jones 2007).

In relation to the class plan, the teaching proposal is constituted of five main stages, three devoted to input, one to output, and another to feedback, following Martínez-Flor's (2010) & Usó-Juan's (2010) respective teaching proposals. Besides, it will be developed in eight lessons of 50 minutes each as displayed below in the table (see Table 1).

Table 1. Lessons' schedule of the teaching proposal

Stages	Number of lessons
1. Input exposure: Comparison between students' L1 and FL	2 lessons
2. Input exposure: Awareness-raising activities	1 lesson
3. Learners' recognition	2 lessons
4. Learners' communicative production	2 lessons
5. Learners' feedback and reflection	1 lesson*

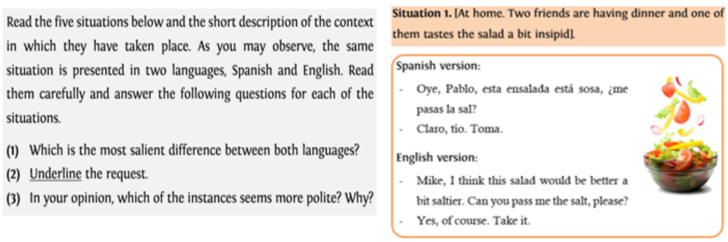
*Although one lesson would be exclusively devoted to providing feedback, students will receive assessment in every lesson.

4.1 Input exposure: A comparison between students' L1 and FL

Before addressing the instruction process, learners need to become familiar with the topic. This will allow them to establish an initial contact with the subject matter, i.e. requests. To meet this purpose, students will be exposed to basic notions of input on requests, and simultaneously, they will compare pragmatically Spanish (L1) and English (FL).

After completing both activities some time for reflection will be allocated. Students must process the information and understand the key assumption behind the tasks. The cases may be easily faced in their everyday life. With this in mind, and without introducing much new information, the instructor should encourage students to reflect upon the activities, by means of questions or games (see figure 3).

Considering that everything works as expected, participants will comprehend that even in closer contexts, English is a very polite language, or put it in another way, that Spanish is a pretty direct language. Similarly, these activities will serve as a warm-up before the instruction process and will allow students to expand their cross-cultural perspective. At the same time, they will contribute to breaking learners' stereotypes about languages, and will help them to understand that each language works differently depending on a number of reasons, being socio-contextual factors one of the most significant.


Read the five situations below and the short description of the context in which they have taken place. As you may observe, the same situation is presented in two languages, Spanish and English. Read them carefully and answer the following questions for each of the situations.

(1) Which is the most salient difference between both languages?
(2) Underline the request.
(3) In your opinion, which of the instances seems more polite? Why?

Situation 1. [At home. Two friends are having dinner and one of them tastes the salad a bit insipid].

Spanish version:

- Oye, Pablo, esta ensalada está sosa, ¿me pasas la sal?
- Claro, tio. Toma.

English version:

- Mike, I think this salad would be better a bit saltier. Can you pass me the salt, please?
- Yes, of course. Take it.

Figure 3. Activity 1 (Situation 1): Input exposure

4.2 Input exposure: Awareness-raising activities

With a view to following a logical order, in the upcoming tasks, students will undertake two awareness-raising activities intended to foster their understanding of the sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic knowledge, or put it into another way, the appropriateness of meaning and form respectively (Trosborg 1995).

Taking this into consideration, the two tasks will use fragments from two different American films. By doing so, learners will be offered the possibility of listening to English native speakers using the language naturally in real contexts, and also to establish a contrast between both contexts, which is supposed to be one of the requirements for a proper acquisition of a L2 or FL. In turn, learners will process the input in a more entertaining way and will understand better the sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic knowledge, which is the major goal of the activities.

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Finally, the lecturer will explain in detail what each type of knowledge consists of. As a result, learners will become aware of the relevance socio-contextual variables and linguistic choices have in real language use. As a matter of fact, for a complete and successful learning of requests, it is essential that learners notice the indispensability context and language play in pragmatics. Indeed, pragmatics entails a combination of three elements: language, participants, and context (Trosborg 1995), which in essence are the basis for the pragmalinguistic and the sociopragmatic knowledge (see figure 4).

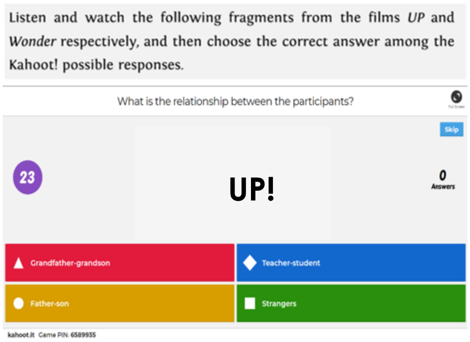

Figure 4. Activity 3: Input exposure (adapted from Martínez-Flor, 2010: 266-267)

4.3 Input exposure: Learners' recognition

By completing the previous activities, and through several input opportunities, students will have been made aware of one of the key factors in pragmatics, i.e. politeness. First, through comparing language use in their L1 and FL, and then, by identifying the pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic elements in an instance of real language use.

A step further consists of instructing learners on the necessary theory about requests (i.e. input); in other words, providing learners with metapragmatic explanations (Martínez-Flor 2004). Bearing this in mind, the following activities are thought to be undertaken after participants have received instruction on Trosborg's (1995) taxonomies and Brown and Levinson's (1987, 2011) politeness theory, especially regarding the socio-contextual variables.

Firstly, the teacher will explain the notion of 'request' in detail, focusing especially on its face-threatening nature, since these speech acts tend to address the hearer too directly. Thus, this will serve as a link to the following part of the explanation. For that purpose, the instructor will first focus on the parts of requests and their peripheral elements or modifiers, and finally on the aforementioned request's taxonomies provided by Trosborg (1995).

Afterwards, the focus will be put directly on the issue of politeness in pragmatics. In this part, the teacher will examine Brown and Levinson's (1987, 2011) politeness theory. Particularly, they will deepen in the three socio-contextual variables, (i.e. distance, power, and ranking of imposition), and their meanings. Once again, the explanations must be also accompanied by instances (see figure 5).

B) Answer the following questions:

(1) Describe the social variables (i.e. distance, power, and ranking of imposition) between Louisa and Sharon (the receptionist).

(2) What do you think Louisa is trying to do from line 14 to line 17?

(3) Do you observe any change in Louisa's behaviour along the scene?

(4) Do you think Louisa is being polite considering the pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic values? And Sharon?

Figure 5. Activity 7: Input exposure

4.4 Learners' communicative production

Until this stage, learners have merely been exposed to a wide range of input by means of warm-up activities, awareness-raising tasks and a period of instruction on all the main assumptions about requests. Ultimately, at this stage, participants must be encouraged to generate their own productions (i.e. output). Therefore, as communication is a key factor when dealing with FL acquisition, the current stage incorporates the oral and the written registers (see figure 6).

Finally, it would be significantly positive to include mainstream apps such as Skype, WhatsApp, or Twitter in the activities of this stage. For instance, in Spain, there is a growing tendency at schools and high schools of participating in programs such as *Erasmus+* or *Comenius*, which allow learners to have contact with other students worldwide. Considering that the LF used in these programs is mainly English, thus, a way to take profit of the situation would be fostering students' encounters by means of using these apps. Therefore, through a controlled practice, students will be given the opportunity of using language naturally, after having received the necessary input on the subject matter, which in this specific case would be requests.

Read the following situations and choose two of them. With the information provided, create a dialogue using a scene from Bombay TV that meets the context requirements. Use requests (use the three types and at least four sub-types), but also consider the participants and the three social variables. Invent the information you need.

Figure 6. Activity 8: Output (written practice)

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4.5 Learners' feedback and reflection

Traditionally, feedback has been one of the main assumptions in language teaching (Martínez-Flor and Usó-Juan 2010). Based on this premise, this study considers feedback an essential part of the learning process that assures that both, teacher and student, complete the process, whether successfully or not. Hence, feedback cannot only be conceived as a procedure by which learners are made aware of their errors exclusively but also as a potential technique to reinforce students' positive advances during the learning path.

For this reason, the current teaching proposal suggests two sources of feedback: the teacher and the students. On the one hand, teachers' evaluation will represent 50% of the mark. In this evaluation, the instructor will consider ten different parameters directly related to learners' performance. Nevertheless, students will represent the other half of the mark, by evaluating both, themselves (25%) and their peers' performance (25%) in the production tasks. However, it is worth mentioning that despite the fact that the teaching proposal's schedule includes a lesson exclusively devoted to providing general feedback, learners will receive specific assessment and will reflect upon their performance after completing each activity.

By doing so, students will be given the opportunity to take a more active role in the learning process, and consequently, feel more confident in the classroom. Finally, by detecting and correcting their errors and realising of their progress, they will become actually communicative competent speakers of English, which at the end is the ultimate goal in their learning journey.

V. Conclusion

Communication in language teaching and consequently, learning, is still an unfinished business. Students are provided with countless notions of grammar. However, they are not equally familiarised with language appropriateness according to factors such as context, participants, and language itself (i.e. pragmatics). The bulk of research on pragmatics determines its essential nature in the building of a communicative competent speaker. Nonetheless, unreasonably, this competence still holds a modest position in the EFL instruction context and materials.

Based on existing literature, the current study has been primarily focused on the pragmatic competence, and particularly on the speech act of requesting, which has been regarded as the most extensively used and researched speech act in English. In accordance with this premise, and in an attempt to overcome the aforementioned deficiency, this project has presented a teaching proposal based on the pragmatic problems identified in the literature. It is basically aimed at providing prospective learners with sufficient and real knowledge about requests.

With reference to the structure, the approach has been inspired by the models proposed by Martínez-Flor (2010) and Usó-Juan (2010) and divided into five main stages, accounting for the three theoretical conditions necessary for the acquisition of speech acts, namely input, output, and feedback. Learners will be given the opportunity to become aware of their learning by receiving instruction on significant explanations on requests, such as Trosborg's request taxonomies (1995) or Brown and Levinson's politeness theory (1987, 2011). The shortcomings identified in textbooks will be thus covered.

A remarkable limitation needs to be acknowledged. The proposed teaching approach has not been implemented yet. Thus, due to factors such as time constraints or participants' readiness, data from real practice is lacking. This shortcoming is expected to be solved in a near future. A requirement for its execution is to consider students' personal and academic characteristics to obtain trustful and illustrating outcomes.

Ultimately, this project encourages earnestly extending the investigation on pragmatics, and especially on requests, considering that they are the most face-threatening speech acts. Additionally, modifications on the designing process of EFL textbooks should be furthered in order to include a major presence of real pragmatic situations. By doing so, English language teaching and learning will be a step closer to become real, natural, and complete.

VI. References

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