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*Editors*

# Intercultural Language Use and Language Learning

 Springer

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Edited by

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## Introduction

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The main purpose of the present book is to broaden the scope of research on the development of intercultural communicative competence. Bearing this purpose in mind, English learners are considered as intercultural speakers who share their interest for engaging in real life communication. According to Byram and Fleming (1998), the intercultural speaker is someone with knowledge of one or more cultures and social identities, and who enjoys discovering and maintaining relationships with people from other cultural backgrounds, although s/he has not been formally trained for that purpose.

Besides, possessing knowledge of at least two cultures is the case of many learners in bilingual or multilingual communities. In these contexts, the objective of language learning should then focus on developing intercultural competence, which in turn may involve promoting language diversity while encouraging English as both a means and an end of instruction (see Alcón, this volume). This is the idea underlying the volume, which further sustains Kramersch's argument (1998) against the native/ non-native dichotomy. Following that author, we also believe that in a multilingual world where learners may belong to more than one speech community, their main goal is not to become a native speaker of English, but to use this language as a tool for interaction among many other languages and cultures. Hence, pedagogical norms should adjust to that reality (Kramersch 2002) by accounting for diversity and variation in the English classroom (Valdman 1992). In this respect the establishment of such norms should be research-based (Bardovi-Harlig and Gass 2002), and it should also account for existing and ongoing studies in applied linguistics. From this perspective, the present book deals with research on English acquisition and use with a special focus on the development of communicative competence by intercultural speakers. Proposals deriving from the theoretical accounts and studies presented here may help cover the need for establishing variable pedagogical norms in English language teaching and learning. Furthermore, we believe that revisions of key notions



like those of communicative competence and intercultural speakers (see chapters 1 and 3) may facilitate the adoption of a more realistic perspective in the study of language learning and teaching, that of multilingualism.

As the title suggests, our focus will be that of the intercultural language use and language learning. In so doing, the volume may be subdivided into three main parts. First, we deal with the theoretical tenets that support our view of the intercultural speaker. This first part includes chapters 1 to 3 with references to the notion of the intercultural speaker, an account of the multilingual reality in European countries, and an updated revision of the construct of communicative competence. Drawing on these ideas, the second part of the volume includes the issue of English as lingua franca (henceforth ELF) as described in chapter 4 to 7 by referring to particular learning settings. Within the global context of ELF, each chapter includes a state-of-the-art revision of the following aspects: (i) materials for the teaching of English as a lingua franca, (ii) benefits deriving from such teaching, (iii) the issue of text creation, and (iv) pragmatic development in the classroom. Finally, the third part of the book comprises empirical research conducted in instructed settings where English is the target language. These studies may be distributed into two subgroups: those dealing with multilingual and multicultural issues, and those focusing on pragmatic input in EFL settings. On the one hand, chapters 8 to 10 focus on individual variation in oral production of language learners, the role of bilingualism in the use of request acts, and identity in the teaching of English. On the other hand, chapters 11 to 13 focus on the presence of request mitigation devices in three different sources of pragmatic input that are available to language learners, namely those of oral transcripts, EFL textbooks and films. Pragmatic competence is regarded in these studies as a key issue when dealing with the development of communicative competence in English language learning contexts.

Although the whole volume is devoted to the issue of communication in intercultural encounters, the concepts of intercultural language use and language learning are tackled from different perspectives in each chapter. As has been previously mentioned, the first three chapters (see House, Alcón and Celce-Murcia, this volume) provide the theoretical framework for the volume. They present and develop the three main notions that arise in subsequent chapters, and that also constitute our proposal for the study of English acquisition and use in intercultural settings. These are the notions of the intercultural speaker, the construct of intercultural communicative competence, and the use of English as a lingua franca. House argues for a description of the term intercultural speaker which may differ from the notion adopted in publications following an educational perspective. In this first chapter, the author provides us with an in-depth

analysis of the term intercultural and its use in education and in applied linguistics literature. Her analysis involves deconstructing the term intercultural by pointing to the notion of culture and the meaning of *inter*. In so doing, the author sets the basis for the idea of intercultural speaker that underlies the whole volume, and suggests that one of the various languages of that intercultural speaker will be English, given its international scope as means of communication. In the second chapter, Alcón discusses the spread of English in continental Europe as a controversial issue that needs to be clarified if a language policy towards plurilingualism is to be accomplished. The author also proposes a research agenda on English in Europe, taking into account that the notion of communicative competence is the objective of language learning. In this line, Celce-Murcia revises previous models of communicative competence and justifies her new proposal of the construct of communicative competence on the basis of previous research in the third chapter.

Chapters 4 to 6 (see Coperías, Ife and Machón and Roca, this volume) specifically deal with the idea of English as a lingua franca by pointing to various language learning settings. In chapter 4 Coperías presents an overview of existing foreign language teaching material by raising the need to consider intercultural competence as a teaching goal. The author also points to recent proposals that include intercultural communicative competence as part of the foreign language teaching and learning process. In chapter 5 Ife focuses on the benefits of the lingua franca in language learning. The author particularly refers to added L2 benefits in a context where both first (henceforth L1) and second language (henceforth L2) speakers find themselves on neutral territory. Written communication is the focus of chapter 6. Manchón and Roca refer to the process of text creation by users of English as a lingua franca in an instructed context. The authors present an extensive overview of research dealing with the writing process. They also include a research agenda and some pedagogical implications deriving from existing studies.

One aspect that has traditionally received less attention in language learning contexts has been that of pragmatic development. Chapter 7 focuses on one particular aspect of pragmatic development, that of pragmatic acquisition from a multilingual perspective. Cenoz deals with the multicompetence model in describing pragmatic competence of foreign language learners. In so doing, we are provided with a different view of pragmatic development to that presented by other scholars (Kasper and Rose 2002; Barron 2003), who have mainly considered second language learning contexts or who have not paid much attention to individual variables, like those of the learners' mother tongue or bilingualism. Some of these variables like the typological distance between the learners' L1

and their L2, or the age of onset of acquisition are considered in the following chapter (see Dewaele) which introduces the final part of the volume devoted to empirical findings.

Chapters 8 to 13 present results from five empirical studies conducted in multilingual and multicultural settings. As stated above, chapter 8 deals with the role of specific individual variables in the oral production of language learners. Dewaele examines 475 adult English users of various linguistic backgrounds. The results suggest that age of onset of acquisition, context of acquisition, frequency of use and typological distance have a significant effect on self-perceived communicative competence. Also related to the analysis of English users' communicative competence is the study of their pragmatic production. Chapter 9 aims to bridge the gap between two areas of research, those of interlanguage pragmatics and third language acquisition. From this perspective, Safont's study is devoted to examine the role of bilingualism in English learners' use of request modification items. The study analyses pragmatic production of 40 monolingual and 40 bilingual learners of English in a particular sociolinguistic situation, that of the Valencian Community in Spain. Results seem to point out the advantage of bilingual over monolingual students in terms of their use of request modification items.

The study of English as a third language is also considered in chapter 10. Here, the author deals with the notion of identity and cultural background in instructed contexts where English is the third language. More specifically, chapter 10 focuses on how Korean as a heritage language is used to teach English as a foreign language in Korean schools operated by the Chosen Soren in Japan. Fouser's analysis focuses on the quantity and quality of teacher talk in Korean and English (and rarely Japanese) and on the patterns of interaction between teacher and students. Results from the study show that the teachers used Korean as a means of instruction in the English class. The author concludes with a discussion of broader issues related to the use of Korean as a heritage language in Korean schools in Japan, and the teaching of foreign languages through a non-native heritage language in general.

Related to the teaching of foreign languages and to intercultural language use is the issue of pragmatics. The development of pragmatic competence in instructed settings is further accounted for in the following three chapters which examine the type of pragmatic input that learners in instructed settings may be exposed to, as a necessary condition for acquisition to take place (Pica 2000). Like chapter 9, the last three chapters in the book focus on the speech act of requesting, as it occurs most frequently in the language classroom. Yet they consider one particular part of the request act, that of peripheral modification items. As raised by

recent interlanguage pragmatics research (Martínez-Flor et al. 2003; Safont 2005), English language learners differ from native speakers of English in their misuse of these peripheral items, which constitute one of the two main parts of the speech act of requesting.

Chapter 11 focuses on analysing how requests are mitigated in a number of oral transcripts in English. Drawing on a previous study (Usó-Juan and Salazar 2002), it was found that Trosborg's (1995) Category II (Conventionally indirect – hearer-oriented conditions) was the most common manifestation of requestive behaviour. Based on those findings, Salazar sets up the present study in order to examine mitigation devices in the same texts. Focusing on the same speech act, that of requesting, chapter 12 focuses on textbooks as an essential source of language input in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms. Usó-Juan examines whether this source is adequate for the teaching/learning of speech acts in the classroom. For that purpose, a detailed analysis of how requests are presented in several EFL textbooks will be carried out with a focus on the peripheral modification devices that accompany such a speech act. In addition, chapter 13 analyses the occurrence of request modification items in several films in an attempt to ascertain whether their use in this sort of audiovisual input promotes learners' pragmatic learning in the foreign language context. Martínez-Flor reports that the use of this type of audiovisual material allows learners to be exposed to authentic samples of appropriate language use in a variety of contexts, and it also prepares them for communication in different cultural settings.

To sum up, *Intercultural Language Use and Language Learning* aims to contribute to research on the teaching and acquisition of communicative competence thereby focusing on English learners in various sociolinguistic situations. On the one hand, our purpose involves the provision of a theoretical framework that sustains the view of learners as intercultural speakers of the target language. On the other hand, specific pedagogical implications deriving from current research conducted in the English language learning contexts are described. In short, this edited volume includes various proposals for the development of intercultural communicative competence in instructed language learning contexts, and it also tackles the acquisition of English by intercultural speakers.

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## What Is an ‘Intercultural Speaker’?

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### 1.1 ‘Deconstructing’ the Term ‘Intercultural’: A First Attempt

I will first of all look more closely at the form ‘*inter*’. In my source, the New Shorter English Dictionary (NSOED), the first entry reads ‘an abbreviation of ‘intermediate’, i.e., being in the middle of two other entities as well as ‘mediating’, dividing something into two equal parts, settle or soothe a dispute etc., intervening and reconciling opposing positions; bring about an agreement etc., occupy an intermediate position, be ‘between, i.e., form a connecting link between one thing and another. The second entry gives me a similar sense, i.e., ‘situated or occurring between or among persons or things, often expressing mutual or reciprocal action or relation, often in contrast to words with ‘intra’. According to these two entries, then, ‘inter’ denotes a position in-between two entities, and this ‘in-betweenness’ serves to link, or mediate between these two entities.

Turning to the entry ‘*cultural*’ - a derivation of ‘culture’ - I found the following wording: ‘of or pertaining to cultivation, especially of the mind, of manners etc. and, of or pertaining to culture in a society or civilization’. And under ‘culture’, I found the same connotations of cultivation or development of the mind, refinement of mind, tastes, manners, the artistic and intellectual side of civilization, and a society’s or group’s distinctive customs, achievements, products, outlook etc. and the way of life of a society or group.

Under the entry for ‘*intercultural*’, the NSOED gives me the following information: ‘taking place or forming a communication between cultures, belonging to or derived from different cultures.

Finally, from the NSOED’s entry for ‘*speaker*’ I extracted the following: ‘a person who speaks or talks’. And: ‘a person who speaks formally in public, a person who speaks on behalf of other(s), and a person who speaks a specified language’. (We can ignore for our purpose here other meanings

such as the one relating to public office of various kinds). We also find a link to 'native speaker' and an indication that 'speaker' can substitute for 'native speaker.'

Given these plausible common sense definitions for the three components of the collocation 'intercultural speaker', one might be led to assume that the notion of 'the intercultural speaker' is not in any sense a problematic one. However, if we examine the relevant specialist academic literature in the fields of (applied) linguistics, pragmatics and socio-linguistics, we are immediately faced with a number of problems regarding the three components 'inter', 'cultural/culture', and 'speaker'. We must therefore now look again at these components with different eyes, so to speak, but keeping the basic meanings extracted from the dictionary in mind.

So let us now look at the manner in which, in the opinions of scholars working in the relevant scientific communities, the notions and terms we described above have acquired in the course of emerging research different, often conflicting 'shadow meanings' (Chafe 2000). I want to start with the most complex concept: 'culture'.

## **1.2 Another Look at 'Culture'**

In several linguistic schools of thought, 'culture' has been seen as intimately linked with language. Thus, for instance, scholars operating in the Prague school of linguistics or inside Firthian-Hallidayan functional-systemic British Contextualism described and explained language as primarily a social phenomenon, which is naturally and inextricably intertwined with culture. In these two as well as other socio-linguistically and contextually oriented approaches, language is viewed as embedded in culture such that the meaning of any linguistic item can only be properly understood with reference to the cultural context enveloping it.

The concept of 'culture' has been the concern of many different disciplines such as philosophy, sociology, anthropology, literature and cultural studies, and the definitions offered in these fields vary according to the particular frame of reference invoked. Two basic views of culture have emerged: the humanistic concept of culture and the anthropological concept of culture. The humanistic concept of culture captures the 'cultural heritage' as a model of refinement, an exclusive collection of a community's masterpieces in literature, fine arts, music etc. The anthropological concept of culture refers to the overall way of life of a community or society, i.e., all those traditional, explicit and implicit designs for living which act as potential guides for the behaviour of

members of the culture. Culture in the anthropological sense captures a group's dominant and learned set of habits, as the totality of its non-biological inheritance involves presuppositions, preferences and values – all of which are, of course, neither easily accessible nor verifiable. In what follows, the broad anthropological sense of culture will be pursued.

Four analytical levels on which culture has been characterized can be differentiated (House 2005): the first one is the general human level, along which human beings differ from animals. Human beings unlike animals are capable of reflexion, and they are able to creatively shape and change their environment. The second level is the societal, national level, culture being the unifying, binding force which enables human beings to position themselves vis a vis systems of government, domains of activities, religious beliefs and values in which human thinking expresses itself. The third level corresponds to the second level but captures various societal and national subgroups according to geographical region, social class, age, sex, professional activity and topic. The fourth level is the personal, individual one relating to the individual's guidelines of thinking and acting. This is the level of cultural consciousness (Huizinga 1938: 14), which enables a human being to be aware of what characterizes his or her own culture and makes it distinct from others.

In line with these different levels integrating human, social and individual views of culture, the concept of culture has been variously defined, most succinctly by Hofstede (1984) as a type of "collective programming of the human mind". Other, like for instance Goodenough proposed a more elaborate formulation:

whatever it is one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to its (i.e. a society's, J.H.) members, and do so in any role that they accept for any one of themselves [...] culture is not a material phenomenon; it does not consist of things, people, behavior, or emotions. It is rather an organization of these things. It is the forms of things that people have in mind, their model of perceiving, relating, and otherwise interpreting them (Goodenough 1964: 36).

In these two definitions the important and recurrent aspects of culture are emphasized: the cognitive one guiding and monitoring human actions and the social one emphasizing traditional features shared by members of a society (Kroeber and Kluckhohn 1952; Geertz 1973).

However, along with the rise of post-modernist thinking in the humanities, the whole notion of culture has come under attack (for example Holliday 1999). The critique formulated in post-modernist circles can be summarized as follows: the very idea of 'culture' is an unacceptable



abstraction, there are never 'pure cultures' and there are no such things as 'social groups', because these groups are constantly destabilized by external influences, internal restructuring, and individual idiosyncrasies and actions. Cultures themselves are, on this view, mere ideologies, idealized systems simply serving to reduce real differences that always exist between human beings in particular socially and geographically delimited areas. Is the very concept of a 'culture' therefore useless, in particular for an eminently practice-oriented field such as translation? Surely not. In the empirical social sciences, attempts to 'problematize' and 'relativize' the concept of 'culture' to the point of denying its usefulness altogether have as yet not prevented solid ethnographic descriptions. Moreover, if such criticism were taken to its logical conclusion by social scientists, they would no longer exist.

One recent approach which seems to be particularly well suited to resolve the hotly debated issue of generalization vs. diversification and individualization of cultures is the one by Sperber (1996). Sperber views culture in terms of different types of 'representations' (which may be representations of ideas, behaviours, attitudes etc.). Within any group there exists a multitude of individual 'mental representations', most of which are fleeting and individual. A subset of these representations, however, can be overtly expressed in language and artefacts. They then become 'public representations', which are communicated to others in the social group. This communication gives rise to similar mental representations in others, which, in turn, may be communicated as public representations to others, which may again be communicated to different persons involving mental representations and so on. If a subset of public representations is communicated frequently enough within a particular social group, these representations may become firmly entrenched and turn into 'cultural representations'. The point at which a mental representation becomes sufficiently widespread to be called 'cultural' is, however, still a matter of degree and interpretation, as there is no clear division between mental, public, and cultural representations, which may be taken as a rational argument against those facile and stereotypical statements that make up pre-judgments, or prejudice.

Members of a particular culture are constantly being influenced by their society's (and/or some of the society's cultural subgroup's) public and cultural representations (with regards to values, norms, traditions etc.). This influence is exerted most prominently through language used by members of the society in communication with other members of the same and different sociocultural groups. Language as the most important means of communicating, of transmitting information and providing human bonding has therefore an overridingly important position inside any

culture. Language is the prime means of an individual's acquiring knowledge of the world, of transmitting mental representations and making them public and intersubjectively accessible. Language is thus the prime instrument of a 'collective knowledge reservoir' to be passed on from generation to generation. But language also acts as a means of categorizing cultural experience, thought and behaviour for its speakers. Language and Culture are therefore most intimately (and obviously) interrelated on the levels of semantics, where the vocabulary of a language reflects the culture shared by its speakers.

As opposed to the view that language 'reflects' the culture of a social group, the ideas that came to be known as 'linguistic relativity' imply the very opposite: language in its lexicon and structure has an influence on its speakers' thinking, their 'worldview' and behaviour. The idea that an individual's mother tongue is an important source of cognitive and behavioural conditioning goes back to German idealistic philosophy and was most prominently formulated by Wilhelm von Humboldt, who propagated the view that every language as an a priori framework of cognition determines the 'Weltanschauung' of its speakers (Humboldt also looked upon language as a self-contained creative symbolic organization, as *energeia*— an idea taken over in the twentieth century most prominently by Noam Chomsky). The spiritual structure that language possesses is assumed to correspond to the thought processes of its users, language being situated at the interface between objective reality and man's conceptualization of it. The relativity postulate put forward in the first half of the twentieth century by Edward Sapir and his disciple Benjamin Lee Whorf advanced basically similar ideas. Whorf in particular inferred mental and behavioral differences from differences between languages on the levels of lexis and, in particular, syntax.

But linguistic diversity must of course also take account of external differences of historical, social and cultural background rather than one-sidedly insisting on the overriding importance of a link between cognitive and linguistic differences. If languages are seen to be structured in divergent ways because they embody different conventions, experiences and values, then the importance of what may be called *linguistic-cultural* relativity emerges (House 2000).

While differences in the 'worldview' of speakers of different languages resulting in different concepts in their minds may not be accessible to the translator, the intersubjectively experienceable application of linguistic units in a particular cultural situation can. And even if cultural distances between languages are great, cultural gaps can, in theory, always be bridged via ethnographic knowledge. Conceptions of language within the broader context of culture, whereby meaning is seen as contextually

determined and constructed, are not recent developments, but have a venerable tradition in Russian Formalism, Prague School and Firthian linguistics, as well as American sociology of language, speech act theory and discourse analysis. In particular Firth and Halliday, both strongly influenced by the ethnographer Malinowski, regard language as 'language events' with meanings of utterances being defined in terms of their use and function in the context of a socio-cultural situation.

As opposed to the above traditional views and definitions of culture as a community's way of life and its mental and material achievements, more recent widespread postmodernist critiques of the concept of 'culture' as an untenable generalization, we must ask whether it is possible to talk of the 'culture' of a speech community as though it were a static, monolithic, homogeneous entity. Has not the extension of "culture" beyond the traditional ethnographic concern with "the way of life" of indigenous peoples to complex modern societies brought about a complexification and problematization of the concept of 'culture' which renders it useless as a methodological and conceptual entity? (for example Holliday's 1999 suggestion to substitute 'non-essentialist', 'non-reified', 'small culture' for 'culture'). Obviously there is no such thing as a stable social group uninfluenced by outside influences and personal idiosyncrasies, and obviously it is wrong to assume a unified culture out of which all differences between people are idealized and cancelled out. Nevertheless, post-modern relativisation and problematization has, in practice, never led to its logical conclusion, i.e., the annihilation of research concerned with 'culture', nor has it prevented ethnographers (and applied linguists like myself) from describing cultures as interpretive devices for understanding emergent behavior. Further, we cannot (and should not) ignore the experiences reported by many individual observers (such as, for instance, the participants in the above stretches of discourse and their metapragmatic comments) when they perceive members of different groups or speech communities to be "different" in terms of talking and behaving in particular situated discourse events. Given such a socio-cognitive approach to 'culture', there may be some justification in trying to describe culturally conditioned discourse phenomena from the dialectically linked etic (culturally distant) and an emic (culturally intrinsic) perspectives (see Hymes 1996 for further argumentation). Further, as Ramathan and Atkinson (1999: 51) have pointed out, the linking of 'culture' to concepts like 'discourse' clearly reduces the risk of ethnic and national stereotyping through prescribed difference because the focus in a pragmatic-discourse approach is on social groups displaying patterned, cohesive verbal actions.

In the light of the relevant linguistic literature, applied linguistics, second language acquisition and related fields, the concept of 'speaker',

too - seemingly simple and unambiguous- has been problematized in the last few decades. Famously known as 'the ideal speaker-hearer' from the early days of Chomskyan generative linguistics, the notion of the speaker was, as the terms suggests, 'extended' to simultaneously capture the speaker's opposite number 'the hearer' and thus at the same time removed from the concrete entity of a living, breathing and talking person in the flesh to become an abstract entity endowed with an equally abstract 'competence', i.e., an innate endowment with a language acquisition device and a knowledge characterising a native speaker of a particular language. Such a concept of 'speaker' (and 'hearer') is not conceptually useful for applying it to an 'intercultural speaker'. Another concept of the communicatively competent speaker, who is alternately a hearer and a listener, and – in certain contexts- an overhearer, or a writer and a reader respectively, is more adequate here, because the embeddedness in real, culturally distinct situations is part and parcel of the conceptualisation of 'the speaker'.

### 1.3 Some Associations Regarding 'Inter'

Turning now to the form 'inter', we can see that 'inter' has become prominent in the literature in linguistics, applied linguistics and second and foreign language acquisition over the last decades through Selinker's (1969, 1972, 1992) choice of the term 'interlanguage' for 'learner language'. The interlanguage research agenda which Selinker and other scholars before and after him had initiated in the late sixties of the last century marked an important paradigm shift from viewing learners of a second or foreign language negatively as error committers who disqualified themselves from belonging to the native speakers of a language through deviating from their norms of usage to looking upon those learners as interim persons moving from their respective L1s towards the L2. Let us look a bit more closely at how this key term 'interlanguage' has come to be understood:

An 'interlanguage' may be linguistically described using as data the observable output resulting from a speaker's attempt to produce a foreign norm, i.e., both his errors and non-errors. It is assumed that such behaviour is highly structured. In comprehensive language transfer work, it seem to me that recognition of the existence dealt with as that of an interlanguage cannot be avoided and that it must be dealt with as a system, not as an isolated collection of errors (Selinker 1969: 5).

Taken together, in this psycholinguistic learner-oriented perspective on interlanguage, the salient concepts are ‘foreign norm’, ‘errors’, ‘non-errors’, ‘system’, and – implicitly - “the native speaker” and his/her innate abilities, which the interlanguage speaker will never be able to reach and its innate competence. For the concept “intercultural” such a basically deficit-oriented conceptualisation as it is implied by the notion ‘interlanguage’ is not a fruitful one, and we would do well to reject outright any suspicion of deficit and incompleteness, which the concept ‘intercultural’ may have acquired through association with the venerable notion ‘interlanguage’.

#### **1.4 Shadow Meanings of ‘Intercultural’ and Other Side-Effects**

We must now ask whether the notion ‘inter-cultural’ which primarily interests us here is also laden with such associations- associations it would have acquired through linkage with the interlanguage frame of reference, or whether, having been born much later during the “intercultural turn” in the late eighties and nineties of the last century, it has not stayed with the meanings and connotations we have filtered out from the dictionary entries, i.e., a linking, mediating, opposition reconciling position and action. I think the latter has occurred, and it is probably fair to say that in the case of the meaning of ‘intercultural’, associations from the neighbouring fields of research into the bilingual or multilingual speaker and the perspective of sociolinguistics, bilingualism, multilingualism and third language research are much more established. The focus is here on the possession of more than one set of linguistic and socio-cultural knowledge in one and the same individual, and these individual’s knowledge sources are used in interaction with other speakers who are members of different speech communities. And in my understanding, the focus is here on language use rather than on language development and acquisition and on the socio-pragmatic and socio-cultural functions of language choice.

To be fair, Selinker (1992) when he rediscovered interlanguage some thirteen years ago, broadened his psycholinguistic, native speaker focussed view of interlanguage locating his notion of ‘fossilization’ on a cline to nativisation, and in terms of cultural and contextual transfer.

To sum up, for the concept “inter-cultural” and for research into matters intercultural, I would plead for a framework that leaves behind the “old” learner centered interlanguage paradigm. Intercultural actants need to be conceived as independent of both their native culture (and language) and the new culture (and language) which they are trying to

link, mediate, reconcile. They are creating something new and autonomous in-between, hybrid, third way. What is seemingly deficient can thus be turned to advantage. The notion 'intercultural' would thus be liberated from a link with what was described above as potentially deficient and norm-deviant learner. Being a learner, as one role a person can assume, has hitherto been all too frequently over-emphasized such that non-native speaker use was exclusively viewed with an eye to native speaker norms (House and Kasper 2000). This type of reductionism has also (unfortunately) influenced pragmatic and cultural domains inside second language acquisition research (what we have called interlanguage pragmatics) such as speech acts and speech act sequences, discourse management and communication strategies, where the interlanguage pragmatics literature still abounds in rather simplistic claims in the "negative transfer equals pragmatic failure" vein – a convention that also derives from a fixation on native speaker norms as unquestionable permanently installed measures of pragmatic competence and communicative success – in analogy, of course, to conceptions of other interlanguage knowledge types where native speaker judgments and performance are the one and only yardstick for assessing language users' L2 competence. So in order to prevent that such a tunnel vision also infects intercultural research, I suggest looking at intercultural competence and performance in its own right, and viewing intercultural actants as active agents organizing and managing their discourse creatively and independently, as far as possible, and if they so wish, from where they come from, and where they want to go.

In conceptualizing 'the intercultural', particular attention has been paid to actants' strategic competence – it is their fully developed and accessible strategic competence that enables intercultural actants to engage in negotiations of meaning or in communication expressly designed to improve their intercultural competence and performance.

An important field connected with strategic competence will be communication strategies – well known from Larry Selinker's initial interlanguage proposal, where his hypothesized psycholinguistic processes driving and informing the emerging competence of interlanguage speakers included communication strategies along with learning strategies, transfer from L1, transfer of training and overgeneralisation. But in an intercultural context, I hasten to say, the motivation to study communication strategies will have to be very different: Communication strategy research will be motivated by an interest in what intercultural actants actually do, it will need to focus on output strategies, on the cultural equivalents of code-switching, code-mixing and borrowing, i.e., culture-switching, culture-mixing, borrowing

items from culture 1 and inserting them into culture 2 (deliberately or strategically, not necessitated by incompetence). In the interlanguage literature these phenomena of language alternation were often regarded as evidence of learners' inadequate competence in L2. But: bicultural/Multicultural and intercultural actants should be looked upon as belonging to a privileged group whose members can achieve a wide range of important and interesting things by means of having more than one language and culture at their disposal and showing it. They show it by their specific ways of marking identity, attitudes and alliances, signalling discourse functions, conveying politeness, creating aesthetic and humorous effects, or pragmatic ambiguity and so on. Such enriched behaviour is well-known from the rich bilingualism literature. But it is necessary to emphasize here that in the dominant 'Inter' (language) research strand, mostly the narrow compensatory functions of such transgressive actions were looked at. And in much of the intercultural literature in applied linguistics a focus on actants' deficits and how to overcome them witness the rich literature on so-called "intercultural misunderstandings" (Coupland et al. 1991; House 1993, 1996a, 1999, 2000; House et al. 2003). Such an emphasis on the deficit side of intercultural speakers' performance – which I interpret as an import from the interlanguage paradigm - should not dominate intercultural concerns.

In particular intercultural speakers' deliberate cultural alternation needs to be regarded as evincing not cultural "transfer" or ignorance of a second culture but as a clear sign of the intercultural competence they possess. While in the past many studies have examined "cross-cultural pragmatic failure" (see the seminal paper by Jenny Thomas in 1983 and see the studies described in Blum-Kulka et al. 1989; Kasper and Blum-Kulka 1993; but see also Sarangi 1994 and Clyne 1994 who went beyond exclusively focussing on cultural differences or misunderstandings resulting from them), we need more research on divergent but successful intercultural communication.

Recent examples of a shift of interest on the success of intercultural communication is given by Koole and ten Thije (2001), Clyne (2004), Bührig and ten Thije (2006) and Bührig et al. (in press).

A question often asked, particularly in applied fields in connection with the notion "intercultural" and its collocation "intercultural teaching" and "intercultural learning" is whether we really need these terms and concepts and how they differ from "communicative" language teaching. The position I have taken (House 1998) is that as far as a teaching and learning context is concerned, the two terms 'intercultural' and 'communicative' are very close in meaning, because the term "communicative" in the broad Hymesian sense is so all encompassing that it would, if applied to culture-

crossing communication, be appropriate too. However, the term 'communicative' implies a different emphasis on the linguistic side of the communicative process, whereas the term 'intercultural' emphasises the more genuinely 'cultural' capturing 'cultural elements' such as realia, artefacts, non-verbal phenomena, customs and mores. I would therefore concede that there is some justification for making a difference between the two terms.

What we need for intercultural research is a radical rethinking of the norms against which intercultural speakers' cultural knowledge and behaviour should be matched. This norm should not be the mono-cultural speaker because an intercultural speaker is by definition no mono-cultural speaker, rather s/he is a bi- tri- or multilingual speaker whose intercultural knowledge and skills are, as it were, under construction. Consequently, the yardstick by which a –let us call him – 'still unstable' intercultural speaker should be measured is the relatively more stable bi-, tri-, or multicultural speaker under comparable social, cultural, and historical conditions of language use, and with comparable goals for interaction in different intracultural discourse domains.

There is growing empirical support for this stance for instance from studies of the pragmatic behavior of bilinguals. Thus, Japanese-English bilinguals were found to backchannel less than Japanese monolinguals, but more than monolingual speakers of American English. (Kubota 1991). And with regards to speech act realization, studies of requests and compliments realized by bilingual speakers point to a decidedly 'intercultural style'. A third, hybrid way was for instance developed by Korean-English bicultural speakers (Yoon 1991) as well as Hebrew-English bicultural speakers (Blum-Kulka 1990), who realized their requests and compliments respectively in a different way in each language, and they also differed from monocultural speakers' speech act performance –the reason being not lack of competence– especially when the language in question is the L1 regularly used such that attrition can be ruled out. Rather than looking at intercultural speakers' talk as an instance of deviation from mainstream culture bearers' behaviour, one might rather consider their performance as a 'third way', as a crossing of borders, as a sign of a hybrid culture in operation –hybrid in the sense of Latin 'hibrida' (the mongrel offspring of parents from different races)– a concept that was later to play an important role in genetics signifying in this context "the offspring of two animals or plants, a half-breed". In metaphorical use, "hybrid" refers to "anything derived from heterogeneous sources, or composed of different incongruous elements". In literary and cultural studies "hybridity" has for some time now assumed importance through the writing of Homi Bhabha (1994), who sees hybridity as something



distinctly positive, as a deliberate crossing of borders, whereby alien items are taken into one's own language and culture, with the result that the hybrid 'intercultural speaker' deliberately goes against conventional rules and standards. A similarly positive view of hybridity and with it interculturality has been propagated by Michail Bakhtin (1981), who links hybridity to narrative construction and dialogicity and looks upon them as essential elements of these interpersonal processes of the production of coherence.

Hybridisation can thus be taken to be an important concept with which to explain the creation of multiphonic linguistic-cultural text and discourse made up of multiple voices and showing an 'inner dialogicity' although they are overtly realized in one language. All these ideas which have a long tradition in literary and cultural studies can, in my opinion, be fruitfully applied to conceptualising 'The intercultural speaker'. We might want to further differentiate between phenotypically hybrid phenomena, where the foreign admixture is manifest on the surface (transfer, interference, "strangeness" is clearly isolable) and genotypically hybrid phenomena, where this is not the case, but where different mental lexical or, in a Whorfian framework, different underlying language and culture specific conceptual sets and entire "Weltanschauungen" may be assumed to be operative in intercultural speakers. One might say that while the conventional perspective on intercultural speakers is characterized by an appropriation of the new culture with the possession of their L1s or other previously acquired languages being suppressed and subjected to the new culture, the perspective on hybrid procedures favoured here aims at recognizing and making or leaving recognizable those other cultures in the new culture.

As to pedagogical implications, the results of empirical intercultural research (House 1993) seems to indicate that learners of a new cultural code need to be equipped first of all with communicative discursive skills so they can reach their communicative goals in collaboration with diverse interlocutors in a wide range of contexts. Intercultural speakers should be empowered to hold their own in interacting with native culture members in realizing their intentions satisfactorily and in counteracting any self-destructive 'reduction of their personality'. While intercultural speakers' knowledge of another culture's code, they often fall short of what I have called 'pragmatic fluency' (House 1996b), comprising the appropriate, and more or less automatic use of pragmatic, culture-specific phenomena such as gambits, discourse strategies, speech act sequencing, internal and external modification of speech acts etc. As mentioned above, intercultural speakers' strategic competence can be regarded as fully intact, and it is this strategic competence which enables intercultural speakers to engage from

the start in meaningful negotiation, and also, at least to a certain degree, in “communicating for learning”. The focus is here not on the intercultural speaker in his role as *learner* but on *learning* as the primary activity. Intercultural speakers should not be prematurely categorized as in principle lacking both knowledge and control of processing with regards to the culture to be acquired. They need to be liberated from the status as “incompetent communicators” whose cultural competence is readily penalized as deficient as soon as it differs from that of native culture members, not least because it has long been recognized that intercultural speakers frequently do not aspire to be accepted as full members of another culture! Indeed, many intercultural speakers may have never intended to cross the bridge completely, leaving their old identity at home as it were in order to be immersed in the new culture. Just as many immigrants may opt for partial divergence from the cultural norms of the target community as a strategy of identity maintenance, so an intercultural speaker may want to remain a bit apart from mainstream speakers. These mainstream speakers, on their part, may perceive intercultural speakers’ total convergence as intrusive and as inconsistent with the outsider role they are often assigned.

## 1.5 Conclusion

To turn back to my initial question ‘What is an intercultural speaker?’ I can answer with some confidence, that it is a person who has managed to settle for the In-between, who knows and can perform in both his and her native culture and in another one acquired at some later date. This is of course an academic statement, as the whole paper is an academic endeavour. In practice one might be more careful, more tentative, more doubtful keeping the possibility of culture shock, identity crisis and other possibilities of maladjustment through culture clashes and conflict mismanagement in mind. One might even ask, as Bratt Paulston (2005) has recently done whether there can be such a thing as being bicultural at all – in a fashion similar to that in which one can be bilingual?

Considering on the other hand the innumerable cases where immigrants have become – subjectively – successful intercultural speakers straddling two cultures, and also the multitude of individuals in the Non-West who have in post-colonial circumstances united in themselves different cultural traditions and linguistic codes, I would suggest there is such a thing as an ‘intercultural speaker’ and he or she is a person who has managed to develop his or her own third way, in between the other cultures he or she is familiar with. This is a precarious position, but ultimately one of

enrichment offering the intercultural speaker deeper insights and understanding.

Dealing with a concept such as ‘the intercultural speaker’ is thus definitely a worth-while undertaking- not least because of the growing need for research into the widening gap between the cultures of the so-called first or developed world and the world that is not yet, for whatever reason, part of it.

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## **Linguistic Unity and Cultural Diversity in Europe: Implications for Research on English Language and Learning**

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### **2.1 Introduction**

During the last two decades the European Commission and the Council of Europe have taken political initiatives to promote multilingualism. The underlying assumption to encourage multilingualism is the need to find a balance between an integrated identity as a European citizen and the necessity of maintaining linguistic and cultural diversity. From this perspective, multilingual education in Europe is open to political influence, which in turn is determined by transnational and national geopolitical visions. From a transnational point of view, in Europe nationalists support national languages, regionalists support regional languages and suggest that all languages get equal status, and there are only a few who hope that automatic translation will be a solution to end up the political issue of languages. Likewise, within the European Union minority languages with larger or smaller numbers of users coexist. Thus, the crucial and most promising point of departure to foster multilingualism in Europe is to contextualize language education within the politics of a country (Canada), region (Basque or Catalonia) or state (California).

Besides, language education decisions towards multilingual education are taken both at national and supranational levels. At national levels, each member of the European Union can take political measures for language maintenance, language revitalization and reversal of language shift in those regions where different languages coexist. Among those measures which have successfully been implemented in European countries where different languages coexist are: using minority languages from pre-school education to adult education, introducing their culture throughout the curriculum, using the minority languages for economic and administrative purposes, and cultural and leisure participation through these languages. In

this case, if the political decisions are based on educational research, we cannot claim that multilingualism guarantees effective schooling, but learners can benefit from the cognitive benefit of developing at least two languages fully and learning English as a third language. Moreover, it is possible that by encouraging multilingual education language education policies may help to develop a broader enculturation and a wider view on merging with different cultures. This, in turn, may foster a viewpoint that is sensitive to cope with differences of traditional minority languages, as well as to accept the new minority languages and cultures of immigrants.

At supranational levels, the aim of the European language policy is to foster the readiness of European citizens to have at their disposal knowledge of different linguistic codes and socio-cultural norms, as well as awareness of socio-pragmatic functions of language choice. Therefore, the main objective of language education is to prepare European citizens to communicate in different cultural and linguistic environments to take on new political and professional responsibilities. Such objective requires understanding the European Union as a multicultural zone where language learning takes place by communicating in other languages and with other cultures. In this sense, Gogolin (2002) claims that the objective of language learning in a multilingual context should be focus on developing plurilingual and intercultural competence, which in turn means promoting language diversity at the same time that the teaching of English and through English are encouraged. However, this objective may not be fully accomplished unless two controversial issues are clarified. These issues, which I will refer below, are the possible threat of the spread of English towards plurilingualism in Europe, and the effect of a homogenisation view of English language use and learning.

## **2.2 The Spread of English in Continental Europe**

The European Union is presented with a challenge of finding a balance between linguistic integration and diversity. On the one hand, internationalisation, co-operation and mobility, within and without Europe, have led to consider English as the preferred option for linguistic unity, allowing people from different first language backgrounds to communicate. As a consequence, nearly all Europeans, irrespectively of social class, are provided with instruction in English (survey published by Euro stat -Euro stat 53- reported that English was taught to more than 90% of Europe's lower secondary students), and English is accepted as an international or global language (according to Euro barometer -2001- English was considered the most useful and prestigious language). On the

other hand, for many people in Europe, linguistic diversity means the diversity of national languages in Europe, the co-existence of language territories in a nation state (like Belgium or Switzerland) or the co-existence of national and minority languages (Basque and Catalan in Spain, Welsh in Great Britain or the Sorbs in Germany). Besides, the European Union, sooner or later, will have to face linguistic reality in Europe. Additionally, in a globalising world where technology permits commercial, cultural and financial information exchange, the following statements are not questioned:

- English is the language spoken by more non-native speakers than native speakers.
- English is the language to have access to journals and conferences.
- English is the dominant language in publishing.
- English language education is compulsory in most schools. In other words, when education is given in a language from outside the nation/region, this is done in English.
- English is used when the content of courses, manuals and software have a bilingual or trilingual pattern (in the case of regional autonomies).
- Multinationals are set up in Europe and, not matter its location, English is the working language.

The problem is that while economic policy within the European Union is seen as a unifying element, the language policy reflecting linguistic diversity seems to be a dividing element. In this sense, pessimists link the massive use of English to globalisation and Americanisation processes (Mühlhäusler 1996; Swales 1997), and optimists claim that English should be understood as a lingua franca with no threat for linguistic and cultural diversity (House 2003 and this volume; Seidlhofer 2004). In our opinion, if the expansion of English is at the cost of other languages, there is no doubt that this might result in a threat towards plurilingualism in Europe. However, before making any further generalisation, it seems relevant to analyse if, as reported by Phillipson (1992), the spread of English points towards linguistic imperialism. Singh and Doherty's (2004) review of cultural processes under conditions of globalisation might be useful to answer this question. The authors suggest three hypotheses in relation to cultural processes under conditions of globalisation: homogenisation, polarization and hybridity. The first one claims that the worldwide spread of a neoliberal market economy is likely to homogenise or standardise local cultures. This spread of global culture is what is frequently known as Americanisation, Coca-Colonisation or McDonaldisation (Holton 2000;

Porter and Vidovich 2000). The second hypothesis dealing with the cultural consequences of globalisation relates to the fact that the homogenisation of an American consumer culture is likely to be resisted and challenged by various antiglobalisation movements around the world. The third hypothesis, the hybridity hypothesis, is based on the thesis that there is no pure or authentic culture distinct from others and claims the need for a synthesis of diverse cultural forms.

The unresolved argument between these theoretical positions applies to how the spread of English is perceived in Europe. On the one hand, the recognition of English as a threat to other languages has resulted in considering English as a killer language (Mühlhäusler 1996) and “tyrannousaurus rex” (Swales 1997), claiming that linguistic unity in Europe, that is to say the use of English in Europe, will strength the forces of globalisation and Americanisation rather than constraining them. Likewise the level of resistance to English language use can be observed in measures taken both at supranational and national levels. At supranational level, the Commission document promoting language learning and linguistic diversity: An action plan 2004–2006, August 2003 is designed to indicate that English alone is not enough and encourages multilingualism in Europe. At national level, many activities, such as the book “Deutsch nix wichtig” appealing German elites to stop the Americanisation culture in Germany, or the Belgian government complaining about the announcements discriminating native speakers of English, can be understood as a resistance to accept the spread of English in Europe. On the contrary, the hybridisation process understands the spread of English as an opportunity for accepting new cultural forms and identities, and as an ideal opportunity to insist on the official status of regional languages. From a hybridity theory it is possible to explain the spread of English within a mosaic of languages and cultures where diversity represents its source of cultural development. In this sense, the spread of English can be explained as a result of developments in information and communication technologies and by economic globalisation. However, its main function is not to kill other European languages, but to facilitate communication when other communicative means are absent. According to House (2002a, 2002b), if we accept the distinction between language for communication and language for identification (Hüllen 1992), an increasing linguistic unity is not a threat for cultural diversity because English functions as a direct mediator between participants in a discourse who would otherwise have to rely on translation. In the same vein, Breidbach (2003) claims that linguistic diversity and the use of English as a lingua franca (ELF) are not mutually exclusive, but they rely on each other.



In our opinion, different reasons speak in favour of English as a *lingua franca*. Firstly, the virtual absence of a debate within the general public that English is a world language. Kachru (1985, 1992) explains its expansion in terms of three concentric circles. The inner circle includes countries such as Australia, Canada, United Kingdom, Ireland, United States of America, and New Zealand, where English is the first language for the majority of the population. The second circle includes countries where English is used at an institutional level as a result of colonisation, such as Nigeria, Philippines, and India. Finally, the expanding circle includes, among others, Continental Europe where English has not official status and it is taught as a foreign language. From a quantitative point of view, Crystal (1997) claims that there are approximately 320–380 millions speakers of English in the inner-circle countries. In outer-circle countries there are roughly 150–300 million second language speakers of English, and 100 to 1,000 millions of learners of English in the expanding circle. Besides, the degree of contact between languages in the three circles can also explain that the number of English non-native speakers is substantially larger than its native speakers (the relationship is about four to one).

Secondly, descriptive studies on English as a *lingua franca* from a formal perspective show that interlocutors use it as a language for communication not as a language for identification. Research such as the one conducted by Firth (1996), Meierkord (1996), Wanger and Firth (1997) have pointed out participants' mutual engagement in achieving understanding as the most outstanding feature of ELF interaction. In other words, it is a meaning oriented interaction where topic development gains importance over form-related or context-related issues. As a matter of fact, examples of form-focused interaction, typically found in NS-NNS or NNNs-NNNS classroom interaction or task based pedagogical investigations are absent, and potential troubles are not explicitly attended. Similarly, research has shown that, although interlocutors do not share single speech norms and as a consequence they probably have different forms of participation, a consensus-oriented conversational behaviour characterizes ELF interaction. This behaviour may be explained because interlocutors use English for transactional purposes. In this line, the notion of a speech community or native speaker's norms is inappropriate to explain the use of English in Europe. In this vein, House (2003) suggests Wenger's (1998) concept of community of practice for describing ELF communication. According to House (2003), the three dimensions characterizing a community of practice —mutual engagement, a joint negotiated enterprise, and a shared repertoire of negotiated resources— are appropriate for describing ELF communication:

The activity-based concept of community of practice with its diffuse alliances and communities of imagination and alignment fits ELF interactions well because ELF participants have heterogeneous backgrounds and diverse social and linguistic expectations. Rather than being characterized by fixed social categories and stable identities, ELF users are agentively involved in the construction of event-specific, interactional styles and frameworks.

The concept of speech community and community of practice leads back to the question of unity and diversity in Europe. European citizens may have common goals for interaction but different socio-cultural conditions. Besides, they may wish to achieve a delicate balance between linguistic unity and linguistic diversity. Following the argument that languages express cultures and hence cultural and linguistic diversity are key issues of a European identity, the question is if accepting the communicative value of English at a supranational level will not foster plurilingualism as a part of a European identity. From our point of view, this should not be the case. On the one hand, in using English as an international means of communication at supranational level, speakers are unlikely to use language as a symbol of identification. As a matter of fact, the idea that English belongs to everyone who speak it has been gaining ground and, as pointed out by Widdowson (1994), the question of the ownership of English is a problematic one:

It is a matter of considerable pride and satisfaction for native speakers of English that their language is an international means of communication. But the point is that it is only international to the extent that it is not their language (Widdowson 1994: 385).

Likewise, since there is not a definable group of English as lingua franca speakers, it may be difficult to have a disposition towards accepting the cultural norms of the members of this ELF community. Therefore it would be more appropriate to describe the European Union as a contact zone where people with different cultural identities meet with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination, and as a space of intercultural exchange. This means that a mutual entanglement of cultural practice will take place through intercultural exchanges. The major advantage to use English as a medium of communication in those intercultural exchanges is to open one space within which people meet and produce new cultural forms and identities. In this vein, English in Europe cannot be understood as a threat to multilingualism, rather it may provide conditions for developing plurilingual citizens and an opportunity to establish a sphere of interculturality, where one national culture is

considered in relation to other cultures. Besides, accepting English as a lingua franca may stimulate the language maintenance and revitalization of languages at national level. At least there are two reasons to claim that English as a lingua franca may present hope for minorities languages. First, languages are used for affective and identification purposes, which cannot be achieved through English as a lingua franca. Secondly, as it happened in the process of elaborating the European Constitution, it can be the case that Europe is more likely to tolerate regionalism than the nation state.

In line with Cenoz and Jessner (2000) and Hoffmann (2000), we believe that the spread of English in Europe will not be a threat towards plurilingualism, if it is understood within the framework of the hybridity hypothesis. This means that in communicative situations what we have is a process of language choice at different levels which enable speakers to maintain their native language and cultural identity, but at the same time being able to use different languages as an instrument to understand each other. This approach entails accepting the use of English as a lingua franca while training in minority languages and through those languages are encouraged. The question is how we can meet the requirement of linguistic unity and diversity. It seems that in order to get a European language planning under control it will be necessary a revision of the traditional curricula in languages because of their implicit presupposition of monolingualism. However, this will be difficult to achieve unless language education objectives and strategies are set up within a hybridity hypothesis of language use and learning.

### **2.3 English Language Use and Learning: Towards a Hybridity Hypothesis**

Taking into account the spread of English in Continental Europe and the aim of the European Commission to prepare European citizens to communicate in different cultural and linguistic environments, a new hypothesis of English language use and learning is clearly needed. So far, English language teaching has been informed by linguistic research on the nature of English language and by insights on second language acquisition research. With regard to the nature of language, describing language in use in naturally occurring contexts has been applied to the different levels of linguistic analysis. For instance, the analysis of grammar and vocabulary as an aspect of discourse has influenced current approaches to the teaching of grammar (see Edmondson and House 1981; Batstone 1996; Hughes and

McCarthy 1998) and has shed light on the relationship between context grammar and vocabulary (McCarthy 1990; McCarthy and Carter 1994), offering the teaching profession insights into issues such as lexical cohesion (Halliday and Hasan 1976), the role of vocabulary in signalling textual patterns (Hoey 1991), or the relationship between lexical selection and register. Moreover the increasing understanding of language use in speech and writing has influenced the teaching of oral and written skills. As far as the teaching of oral skills, observations of how people behave in spoken discourse have contributed to increasing our understanding of native/non-native and non-native/non-native communication. Likewise, the main concern of speech act research has been to identify similarities and differences between NSs and NNSs, explaining these differences as a source of misunderstanding. With regard to the teaching of writing skills, the analysis of written language has contributed to a better understanding of the texture and structure of texts and how they contribute to the interactive nature of reading and writing (see Wallace 1992; Hudson 1998; Grabe 2002; for a review on teaching reading and Tribble 1996; Cumming 1998; Raimes 1998; Manchón 2001; Hyland 2002; for a review on teaching writing). In this sense, we can claim that research on discourse analysis has helped to identify the linguistic content of English language teaching. The problem seems to be that, although attention has been paid to the analysis of naturally occurring spoken and written discourse, as well as the devices used to achieve communicative purposes, the link between discourse analysis and English language in use needs to be reviewed. In other words, we can claim that, in spite of the contributions of discourse analysis to language teaching, this line of research has focused on describing native speakers' language use, which is an incomplete description of the English language use in continental Europe. Besides, it is unrealistic to base our description of English language use only on native speaker's models, since there are more people using English as a lingua franca than native speakers by birth. Consequently, although there is no doubt that language education goals should be influenced by linguistic description of English language use, it seems that the linguistic content cannot longer be based on a homogenisation view of English language and culture, and on the ideal native speaker.

In the same vein, a revision of the underlying assumptions in most pedagogical models is needed. In fact, most pedagogical models accept a homogenisation hypothesis of language use. More specifically, based on native speakers' notion of communicative competence four main competences are suggested as language learning goals: grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic (Canale and Swain 1980; Canale 1983; Bachman 1990; Celce-Murcia et al. 1995; Alcón 2000). Firstly,

grammatical competence provides the linguistic rules of usage and aims to foster accuracy in performance. Secondly, while sociolinguistic competence deals with the social rules of language use, and involves an understanding of the social context in which language is used, discourse competence deals with how language is used in text and discourse. Finally, strategic competence refers to the different communication strategies that enable one to get by when faced with communicative difficulties, and make it possible to keep the communicative channel open. However, in these pedagogical models, although they accept that the communicative features underlying the sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competencies in the target language culture are different from those in the learners' own culture, emphasis is made to acquire the conventions of the target culture. From this perspective, language learning could also mean particular cultural values and beliefs. The problem would be to decide which culture and which values are accepted in a context where different languages and cultures are in contact, and English is used as a means of communication among people. Thus, it seems that the concept of communicative competence, based on native speakers' models and taken as a reference to set the language learning objectives, may not be adequate to develop plurilingual and pluricultural European citizens. In this sense, Alptekin (2002) and Coperías (2002) also question the validity of those pedagogical models whose focus is on native speaker competence in the target language setting. According to Alptekin (2002), the traditional notion of communicative competence, based on the native speaker, is a utopian concept because inner, outer, and expanding circles co-exist in a globalised globe, and if one of these varieties is preferred over others this is done according to social values not according to linguistic criteria. Besides, Coperías (2002) warns us about the pedagogical consequences of accepting the native speaker model since it means creating an impossible target to attain.

In our opinion, a hybridity hypothesis of English language use could resolve some of the problems mentioned above. By a hybridity hypothesis we mean accepting different types of English that have emerged around the world, as well as the need to analyse the discourse constructed through intercultural communication. In other words, as suggested by Sifakis (2004) a new perspective that prioritises the nature of cross-cultural comprehension rather than regularity patterns or standards is needed. Firstly, this will imply a replacement of the native speaker as a reference point by that of the mediator between cultures. Secondly, the same components that are included in the pedagogical models of communicative competence described above will be considered, but they will be understood from a different point of view: That of the mediator. By doing

that, the focus of discourse analysis should also include the discourse of those mediators who do not aim to become monolingual speakers but plurilingual individuals, and whose level of communicative competence may vary in their knowledge of languages. Thirdly, individuals' knowledge of more than one language presents the challenge of analysing how this knowledge is used in interaction with different patterns and in different contexts. From this perspective, NNS's performance does not need to be measured by native speakers' pragmatic norms, but by the notion of language users' expertise. This, in turn, will also allow language teachers to present pedagogical models which take into account the notion of communicative competence from a developmental perspective. Finally, measuring language learning in relation to the concept of expertise must result in setting realistic objectives for learners.

Similar to the growing acceptance of the native speaker model in language curricula and the educational market (see Pennycook 1999), English language learning has been influenced by insights on second language acquisition (SLA), which is characterized by the acceptance of American and British English models. We will illustrate it by referring to research dealing with language learning through conversational interaction. Since Hatch (1978) illustrated how learners' participation in conversations provided them with opportunities for language learning, studies carried out within the interaction hypothesis to date have focused on the nature of conversational interaction, whether or not opportunities are present for the conditions and processes that are claimed to facilitate learning, and the nature of the development that takes place. More recently SLA research has focused on the role of interaction in instructed language learning contexts in contrast to research on conversational interaction in naturalistic settings (García Mayo and Alcón 2002). However, whenever the conditions that are claimed to facilitate language learning are examined, both in naturalistic and instructional settings, the reference has been the native speaker. In this line, the input learners are exposed to, and their output have been compared taking into account native speakers norms of interaction, and all aspects of NNSs L1 (phonological, grammatical or pragmatic features) are considered obstacles that may hinder communication. The problem with this line of research is that it seems to forget that the English language is owned by native and non-native speakers alike, since according to Crystal (2003) it is the first language chosen in communication between different non-native speakers who manage to overcome potential misunderstanding in specific contexts. From this perspective, and following Hatch's hypothesis of language learning through conversational interaction, the effect of conversational interaction in naturalistic and instruction language learning seems to be

incomplete. From our point of view, there is also a need to account for language learning in an educational globalised world where the English language functions as a means of communication and makes it possible that people with disparate historical and cultural trajectories meet and interact with each other. Out of this interaction, our hybridity hypothesis of language learning claims that opportunities for input, output, and feedback will also take place in what Singh and Doherty (2004) call contact zones. According to the authors, sites of internationalised education are the result of, and in turn contribute to the cultural processes of globalisation, as well as they create new educational contact zones. In our opinion, the challenge of research on language education is to conduct research on those contact zones where English is a language for communication and indirectly for language learning. However, before generalizing the effect of interaction in ELF contexts, it is necessary to carry out further descriptive studies with the aim to compare conversational interaction in different ELF situations. These situations, which are likely to differ from English native speakers/non-native speakers' conversation in naturalistic or instructional settings, present new challenges for a research agenda on English in Europe.

## **2.4 English in Europe: A Research Agenda**

The use of English in Europe also presents new challenges for research on English language use and learning. As far as research on the use of English in Europe, there are a few studies that have focused on describing English as a *lingua franca* by a range of L1 speakers at a phonological (Jenkins 1998, 2000), lexicogrammatical (Hollander 2002; Kordon 2003; Seidlhofer 2003) and pragmatic level (Firth 1996; House 1999, 2002a; Meierkord 2002; Lesznyák 2002, 2003, 2004). Jenkins' (1998, 2000) research, on the basis of interactions collected between L2 speakers of English has provided core areas that cause intelligible pronunciation when English is spoken in *lingua franca* context. In relation to the scant description undertaken at the lexico-grammatical level, it seems that perceived grammatical errors by language teachers do not seem to be an obstacle for successful communication. However, certain vocabulary items or idiomatic expressions cause misunderstanding, particularly when speakers lack strategic competence to overcome it. Finally, some of the research findings at the pragmatic level point out that there are few misunderstandings and, if they occur, they are overcome by topic changes. It is also reported that interference from L1 interactional norms is almost absent, and ELF speakers lack pragmatic fluency such as gambits,

discourse strategies, appropriate routines, or appropriate uptaking (House 2002a, 2002b). Although much larger databases will be required before generalizing the results on the use of English in Europe, the descriptive studies mentioned above take a different perspective from the studies on the use of English by native speakers. In other words, these studies question the idea of the non-native speaker as a defective interlocutor and open up the possibility of describing English as it is used in continental Europe. Besides, since intercultural communication is a fact in the European community, the attempt to describe the linguistic reality of English as a lingua franca is justified. From this perspective, corpus based descriptions of ELF provide an opportunity to move English language analysis from native speakers' perspective to that of the intercultural speaker. The Vienna Oxford ELF Corpus (Seidlhofer 2004) and the Hamburg project (House 2002b) are two attempts to further understand the nature of ELF and to move beyond the native speaker as a model for English language learning. However, further descriptive studies need to be conducted on this line in order to answer the following questions:

- Is Euro English an international variety of ELF? If so, which are its characteristics?
- Does L1 background influence the nature of ELF?
- Do features of ELF vary in a range of settings and domains?
- Do variables such as L1, participants' roles and status influence the nature of ELF interaction?
- Does consensus in lingua franca communication vary on interlocutors' ability to handle communicative situations?

In relation to the changes that are taking place in teaching and learning English as a lingua franca, it is worth mentioning that the aim of those studies focussing on ELF is not to replicate NS language norms. As a matter of fact, nobody would doubt that NNS need rules of language, but they also need models of language use. In the latter case, descriptions of ELF offer language teachers, similarly to the insights they got from analysing native speakers discourse in a range of settings and modes, the possibility of raising learners' awareness of different NNS discourse and strategies, addressing issues such as politeness, face threatening acts, and ways to mitigate them. This, in turn, means combining comprehension in different situations and with different NNS of English with training in intercultural communication. In other words, as reported by McKay (2002), the cross-cultural nature of the use of English must be taken into account. In this sense, the teaching goals in Europe should focus on the teaching of English as a language for supranational communication, with an emphasis in intelligibility and on



textual and strategic competence, together with the teaching of national and regional languages. By doing that, the notion of plurilingualism with English will reinforce the idea that national and European identities are not monolithic. Moreover, it will require finding a place for the teaching of culture.

Following the idea that languages express cultures and thus languages cannot be taught without knowledge of a target culture, English language teaching used to combine the teaching of American or English culture together with the teaching of English. However, with the spread of English the question would be which culture to teach. In this context it seems more adequate to follow Kramsch's (1993: 205) notion of culture. According to the author, culture is "a social construct, the product of self and others' perceptions". This view can also be explained from a hybridity theory of culture. That is to say, culture is constructed by negotiating differences, establishing a third sphere of interculturality among individuals who use language in the interpersonal process of cultural construction. Informed by this view of culture as a social construct, McKay (2002) outlines that teaching is understood as an interpersonal process and teaching culture as difference. The author also points out that knowing a culture does not mean that one has an obligation to behave in accordance with the conventions of that culture. In the same line, Byram (1988) makes a distinction between biculturalism and interculturalism. While biculturalism accepts the beliefs, values and practices of a particular culture, interculturalism assumes knowledge of that culture. In this line, in our opinion, there is a need to inform learners about particular cultures, rather than encouraging them to accept particular cultural values and beliefs. Additionally, there is also a need to include information about the students' own culture. In so doing, students can learn more about their culture and acquire the English to explain their own culture to others.

As mentioned above English language is changing in its forms, uses, as well as its teaching. However, before claiming the pedagogic relevance of these changes, it might be wise to outline a research agenda from a SLA perspective research. Firstly, further empirical research is needed on the effect of training NNS in developing pragmatic fluency as well as textual and strategic competence. Secondly, development studies are also required to test the hypothesis that plurilingualism with English is not only possible but it facilitates language learning. Thirdly, the study on conversational interaction should move from addressing the effect of conversation between NS-NNSs or NNS-NNS in instructed language settings, where learners share the L1, to the effect of conversational interaction among learners from different first language backgrounds in lingua franca settings. Finally, an interesting issue would be to corroborate House's (2003)

statement on the fact that consensus in Lingua franca talk feigns misunderstanding. According to the input hypothesis (Krashen 1985), this will be important to determine an indirect relationship between comprehensible input and acquisition in ELF contexts. Similarly, describing ELF output and type of feedback would allow us to determine if the ELF context provides learners with input, output and feedback, that is to say, if the theoretical conditions for language learning are provided in the context of ELF.

## 2.5 Conclusion

In this paper it is acknowledged that the European Commission and the Council of Europe have taken political initiatives to promote multilingualism. To achieve that, the main objective of language education is directed towards preparing European citizens to communicate in different cultural and linguistic environments. However, in our opinion, such objective will require to understand the European Union as a multicultural zone, where language learning takes place by communicating in other languages and with other cultures. In this sense, it is suggested that the objective of language learning in a multilingual context should be focus on developing plurilingual and intercultural competence, which means promoting language diversity at the same time that the teaching of English and through English are encouraged. Additionally, it is suggested that research on English language use and under different conditions for language learning is required in this European multicultural zone.

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## Rethinking the Role of Communicative Competence in Language Teaching

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### 3.1 Introduction

In the mid-1990s I had many discussions with colleagues concerning the role of ‘communicative competence’ in language teaching and applied linguistics. These discussions resulted in two publications (Celce-Murcia et al. 1995; Celce-Murcia 1995). Then during the late 1990s I co-authored a text on the role of discourse and context in language teaching (Celce-Murcia and Olshtain 2000), which further influenced my thinking about the role of communicative competence in language teaching. In this paper I present a revised and updated model of communicative competence which synthesizes and elaborates on my previous work and which further explores the role that this model of communicative competence could play in language teaching.

The term ‘communicative competence’ has been in circulation for about forty years and has been used extensively in justifications and explications of communicative language teaching. Thus before I discuss my revised model in some detail, I would like to summarize briefly the evolution of the term ‘communicative competence’ starting with its original source (Hymes 1967, 1972) through the contributions of Canale and Swain (1980), Canale (1983), and Celce-Murcia et al. (1995). There have been other models proposed to represent constructs similar to ‘communicative competence’ (e.g., the ‘language ability’ in Bachman (1990); Bachman and Palmer (1996); however, these models have been developed with language assessment in mind—rather than language teaching. For most discussions of language pedagogy per se, the model proposed by Canale and Swain (1980), along with the elaborations proposed by Canale (1983), remain the key sources for discussions of communicative competence and related applications in applied linguistics and language pedagogy.

As mentioned above, ‘communicative competence’ is a term coined by the anthropological linguist Dell Hymes (1967, 1972); he put forward this notion in response to the theories of the formal linguist Noam Chomsky (Chomsky 1957; 1965), who focused on linguistic competence and claimed that any consideration of social factors was outside the domain of linguistics. Hymes (1972) argued that in addition to linguistic competence (the rules for describing sound systems and for combining sounds into morphemes and morphemes into sentences), one also needed notions of sociolinguistic competence (the rules for using language appropriately in context) to account for language acquisition and language use. Hymes thus argued that language structure and its acquisition were not context-free, while Chomsky had claimed they were (i.e. that an innate language mechanism was sufficient to account for first language acquisition).

At about that time applied linguists and language teachers were developing the communicative approach to language teaching in reaction to grammar translation and audiolingual approaches to language pedagogy. Many applied linguists adopted Hymes’ terminology and perspective, and his notion of communicative competence thus became part of the theoretical justification for a new language teaching approach and new teaching materials that were compatible with communication as the goal of second or foreign language teaching.

Among the earliest applied linguists to develop and elaborate a model of communicative competence that course designers and language teachers could apply to teaching and assessment were Canale and Swain (1980), who added strategic competence (i.e. the ability to compensate for problems or deficits in communication and do various types of planning) to the linguistic competence and sociolinguistic competence that Hymes (1972) had proposed; however, they referred to ‘linguistic competence’ as ‘grammatical competence’. A few years later, Canale (1983) added discourse competence (the ability to produce and interpret language beyond the sentence level) to the model.

In the mid nineties Celce-Murcia et al. (1995) proposed that actional competence (the ability to comprehend and produce all significant speech acts and speech act sets) should also be part of communicative competence. These authors made two changes in terminology re: the Canale-Swain model: (1) that sociolinguistic competence be modified to sociocultural competence (the cultural background knowledge needed to interpret and use a language effectively) and (2) that grammatical competence be re-labeled as linguistic competence to explicitly include the sound system and the lexicon as well as the grammar (i.e., morphology and syntax). This historical development of the components included in the various models of communicative competence is summarized in Figure 3.1:

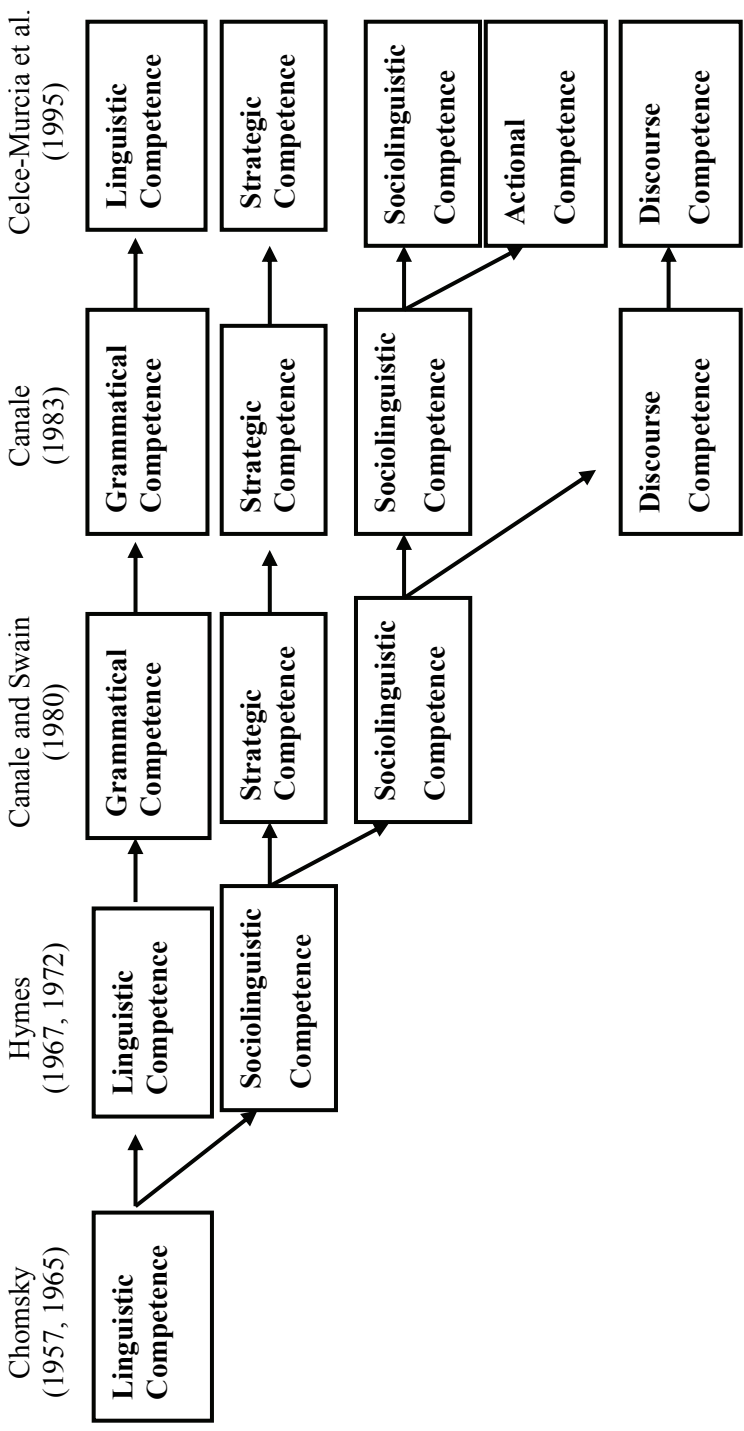
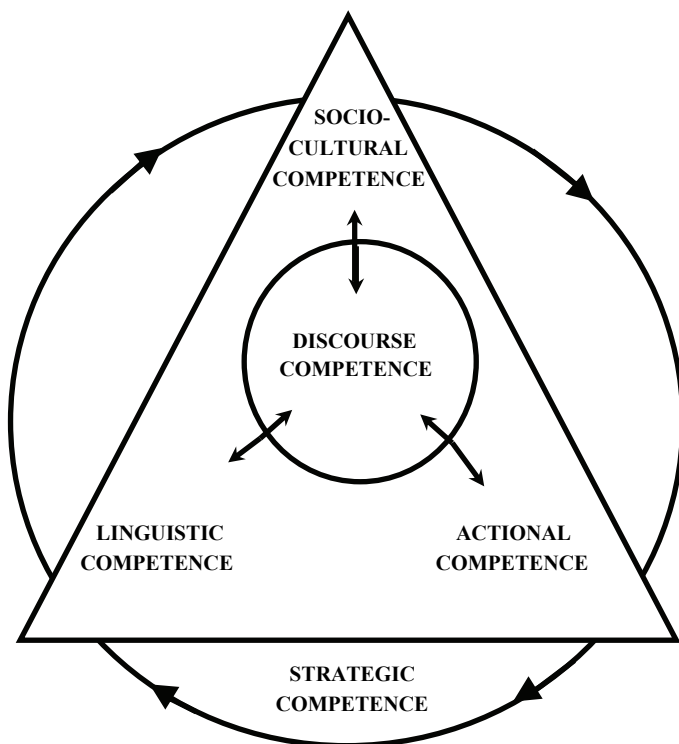


Figure 3.1 Chronological evolution of 'communicative competence'



One of the important contributions of Celce-Murcia et al. (1995) was to specify that the various components of communicative competence were interrelated and that it was important to properly describe the nature of these interrelationships in order to fully understand the construct of communicative competence. To this end they offered Figure 3.2 in their 1995 publication, which made the interrelationships explicit:

This 1995 model is a pyramid enclosing a circle, surrounded by another circle. The circle inside the pyramid is discourse competence, the core or central competence. The three points of the triangle are the top-down sociocultural competence and the bottom-up linguistic competence and actional competence. The arrows indicate that the various components are constantly interacting with each other and the discourse component. This construct thus placed the discourse component in a central position where the lexico-grammatical resources, the actional organizing skills, and the sociocultural context all come together and shape the discourse. The circle surrounding the pyramid is strategic competence, an available inventory of communicative, cognitive, and metacognitive strategies that allow a skilled interlocutor to negotiate meanings, resolve ambiguities, and to compensate for deficiencies in any of the other competencies.



**Figure 3.2** Schematic representation of communicative competence in Celce-Murcia et al. (1995: 10)

While this model and the content specifications provided by Celce-Murcia et al. (1995) were a step forward with respect to Canale and Swain (1980) and Canale (1983), there were still some perceived gaps that Celce-Murcia tried to fill later during the same year (Celce-Murcia 1995) in an attempt to give a more central role to formulaic language (as opposed to language as system) and to the paralinguistic aspects of face-to-face oral communication.

### 3.2 A Proposed Revision of the 1995 Models

With ten years' hindsight and with the benefit of co-authoring a teachers' handbook on the role of discourse and context in language teaching in the interim (Celce-Murcia and Olshtain 2000), I now propose the following model (Figure 3.3) to describe communicative competence for language teachers (this model draws heavily on both Celce-Murcia et al. (1995) and Celce-Murcia (1995)):

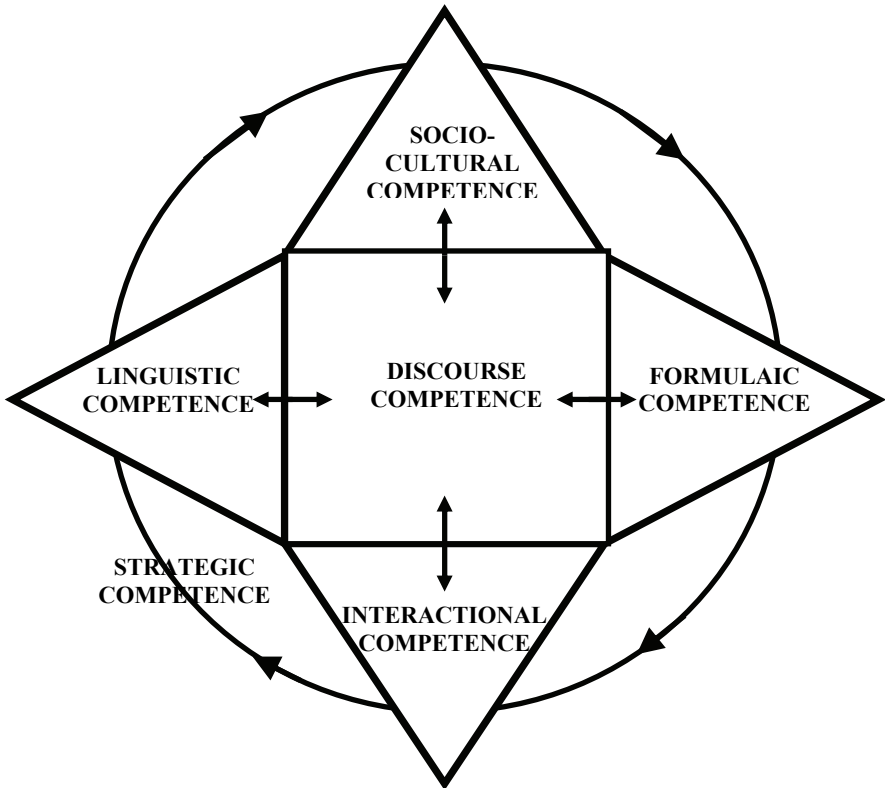


Figure 3.3 Revised schematic representation of ‘communicative competence’

### 3.2.1 Sociocultural Competence

This most recent model maintains the top-down role of sociocultural competence. Sociocultural competence refers to the speaker's pragmatic knowledge, i.e. how to express messages appropriately within the overall social and cultural context of communication. This includes knowledge of language variation with reference to sociocultural norms of the target language. In fact a social or cultural blunder can be far more serious than a linguistic error when one is engaged in oral communication. The pedagogical challenge lies in the fact that second and foreign language teachers typically have far greater awareness and knowledge of linguistic rules than they do of the sociocultural behaviors and expectations that accompany use of the target language. Even when good cultural descriptions are available, it is hard to get learners to change their native verbal behavior based on a new set of assumptions.

Celce-Murcia et al. (1995: 23–24) describe several sociocultural variables, three of which are most crucial in terms of the current model.

- *social contextual factors*: the participants' age, gender, status, social distance and their relations to each other re: power and affect.
- *stylistic appropriateness*: politeness strategies, a sense of genres and registers.
- *cultural factors*: background knowledge of the target language group, major dialects/regional differences, and cross cultural awareness.

The above competencies can be acquired in part through some knowledge of the life and traditions as well as knowledge of the history and literature of the target language community. An extended living experience among members of the target language group is probably the best experience for language acquisition if the learner has adequate basic preparation in both linguistic and sociocultural competence coupled with good powers of observation.

### 3.2.2 Discourse Competence

The proposed model also maintains the central role of discourse competence in any construct of communicative competence. Discourse competence refers to the selection, sequencing, and arrangement of words, structures, and utterances to achieve a unified spoken message. This is where the top-down communicative intent and sociocultural knowledge intersect with the lexical and grammatical resources to express messages and attitudes and to create coherent texts. Celce-Murcia et al. (1995: 13–15) describe several sub-areas of discourse competence, four of which are most important with regard to the current model:

- *cohesion*: conventions regarding use of reference (anaphora/cataphora), substitution/ ellipsis, conjunction, and lexical chains (i.e. Halliday and Hasan 1976).
- *deixis*: situational grounding achieved through use of personal pronouns, spatial terms (*here/there; this/that*), temporal terms (*now/then; before/after*), and textual reference (e.g. *the following table, the figure above*).
- *coherence*: expressing purpose/intent through appropriate content schemata, managing old and new information, maintaining temporal continuity and other organizational schemata through conventionally recognized means.
- *generic structure*: formal schemata that allow the user to identify an oral discourse segment as a conversation, narrative, interview, service encounter, report, lecture, sermon, etc.

### 3.2.3 Linguistic Competence

The left and right triangles of Figure 3.3 refer to linguistic competence and formulaic competence. This distinction is important and will be discussed further as both components are described. Linguistic competence includes four types of knowledge:

- *phonological*: includes both segmentals (vowels, consonants, syllable types) and suprasegmentals (prominence/stress, intonation, and rhythm).
- *lexical*: knowledge of both content words (nouns, verbs, adjectives) and uncontent words (pronouns, determiners, prepositions, verbal auxiliaries, etc.).
- *morphological*: parts of speech, grammatical inflections, productive derivational processes.
- *syntactic*: constituent/phrase structure, word order (both canonical and marked), basic sentence types, modification, coordination, subordination, embedding.

### 3.2.4 Formulaic Competence

Formulaic competence is the counterbalance to linguistic competence. Linguistic competence entails the recursive, open-ended systems listed above. Formulaic competence refers to those fixed and prefabricated chunks of language that speakers use heavily in everyday interactions. It had been largely ignored prior to seminal work by Pawley and Syder

(1983), Pawley (1992), and Nattinger and DeCarrico (1992), whose work brought this domain to general attention.

- routines: fixed phrases like *of course*, *all of a sudden* and formulaic chunks like *How do you do? I'm fine, thanks; how are you?*
- collocations: verb-object: *spend money*, *play the piano* adverb-adjective: *statistically significant*, *mutually intelligible* adjective-noun: *tall building*, *legible handwriting*
- idioms: e.g., *to kick the bucket* = *to die*; *to get the ax* = *to be fired/terminated*
- lexical frames: e.g., *I'm looking for \_\_\_\_\_*. *See you (later/tomorrow/ next week, etc)*

Formulaic competence has grown in importance; it is now acknowledged that fluent speakers of a language draw on formulaic knowledge of the target language as often as they use systematic linguistic knowledge (Hunston, 2002). Much language pedagogy has yet to catch up with this fact.

### 3.2.5 Interactional Competence

The bottom-up counterpart to the more global top-down socio-cultural competence is the hands-on component of interactional competence. Interactional competence has at least three sub-components relevant to the current model:

- *actional competence*: knowledge of how to perform common speech acts and speech act sets in the target language involving interactions such as information exchanges, interpersonal exchanges, expression of opinions and feelings, problems (complaining, blaming, regretting, apologizing, etc.), future scenarios (hopes, goals, promises, predictions, etc.) See Celce-Murcia et al. (1995) for more detailed information regarding actional competence.
- *conversational competence*: inherent to the turn-taking system in conversation described by Sachs et al. (1974) but may be extendable to other dialogic genres:
  - how to open and close conversations
  - how to establish and change topics
  - how to get, hold, and relinquish the floor
  - how to interrupt
  - how to collaborate and backchannel, etc.

- *non-verbal/paralinguistic competence* includes:
  - kinesics (body language), non-verbal turn-taking signals, backchannel behaviors, gestures, affect markers, eye contact.
  - proxemics (use of space by interlocutors)
  - haptic behavior (touching)
  - non-linguistic utterances with interactional import (e.g. *ahhh!* *Uh-oh. Huh?*) the role of silence and pauses

Interactional competence is extremely important; the typical performance of speech acts and speech act sets can differ in important ways from language to language, as Tamanaha (2002) has demonstrated for Japanese and English. It is important, for example, for second and foreign language learners to understand how to manage social introductions, how to complain, how to apologize, and so forth (see Alcón this volume), if they are going to achieve communicative competence in the target language. However, such actional competence must mesh with the more general rules of conversational competence related to the turn-taking system in the target language. Languages also differ on how they open and close conversations and on other conversational conventions: Can speakers interrupt each other? If so, how is this done? Can speakers overlap (i.e., talk simultaneously)? Should speakers backchannel? If so, how often? How long should pauses last? Normal conversational practice in one culture is often construed as rude behavior in another. Thus awareness of the conversational norms of the target language community and of the important differences between the L1 and L2 norms is very important for conversational competence.

The nonverbal or paralinguistic aspects of oral interaction are also crucial and are rarely treated in the language classroom. These conventions can overlap with those for conversational turn-taking; for example, an English speaker's body movements, in breaths, and eye contact can result in a conversational turn for the person displaying such non-verbal signals. Other relevant issues to address in this domain are: What is the normal physical space between speakers? Can speakers touch each other? Do speakers make and sustain direct eye contact with each other? Do speakers greet each other with a bow, a hand-shake, a hug, a kiss on one or both cheeks, or in some other way? What do speakers do when taking leave? These questions raise important issues in intercultural communication yet they are seldom adequately addressed in traditional language courses.

### 3.2.6 Strategic Competence

According to Oxford (2001: 362), strategies for language learning and use are “specific behaviors or thought processes that students use to enhance their own L2 learning.” Such behaviors are either (1) learning strategies or (2) communication strategies. We know that learners who can make effective use of strategies (i.e. who have strategic competence) tend to learn languages better and faster than those who are strategically inept.

Of Oxford’s learning strategies, three are most important for our purposes:

- *cognitive*: these are strategies making use of logic and analysis to help oneself learn a new language through outlining, summarizing, notetaking, organizing and reviewing material, etc.
- *metacognitive*: these strategies involve planning one’s learning by making time for homework or for preparation, and engaging in self-evaluation of one’s success on a given task or on one’s overall progress. This is achieved in part by monitoring and noting one’s errors, learning from teacher and peer feedback, etc. Compensating for missing or partial knowledge by guessing the meanings of words from context or the grammatical function of words from formal clues are also aspect of metacognition.
- *memory-related*: these are strategies that help learners recall or retrieve words through the use of acronyms, images, sounds (rhymes), or other clues.

The other crucial strategies, which are the ones we highlighted in Celce-Murcia et al. 1995: 26–29), are communication strategies; they include the following:

- *achievement*: strategies of approximation, circumlocution, code-switching, miming, etc.
- *stalling* or time gaining: using phrases like *Where was I? Could you repeat that?*
- *self-monitoring*: using phrases that allow for self repair like *I mean....*
- *interacting*: these are strategies that include appeals for help/clarification, that involve meaning negotiation, or that involve comprehension and confirmation checks, etc.
- *social*: these strategies involve seeking out native speakers to practice with, actively looking for opportunities to use the target language.

### **3.3 What the Model Implies for Language Pedagogy**

Assuming that the revised model proposed above is comprehensive and accurate, it suggests a number of principles for the design and implementation of language courses that aim at giving learners the knowledge and skills they need to be linguistically and culturally competent in a second or foreign language.

#### **3.3.1 The Importance of Culture**

If the goal of language instruction is communicative competence, language instruction must be integrated with cultural and cross-cultural instruction. General knowledge of the literature and other arts that are integral to the target culture should be part of language instruction as should basic knowledge of the history and geography associated with the target language community. The social structure of the culture should also be covered (e.g. family, kinship relations, child-rearing, courtship and marriage, gender roles) especially if the target culture differs in important ways from the learner's culture. Political and educational systems should be introduced as should the major religion(s) and holidays, celebrations, and important customs. These topics can all serve as content for language instruction—with special focus on areas of cultural and interactional difference. Brinton et al. (2003), among others, have shown that teaching language through content is one of the most effective means available for achieving communicative competence in a second or foreign language.

#### **3.3.2 The Importance of Discourse and Context**

Much foreign language instruction is still done with word lists to be memorized and sentence patterns to be practiced using meaningless exercises and drills. In contrast, current cutting-edge pedagogy (Celce-Murcia and Olshtain 2000) argues that language instructors should use materials that are well contextualized and meaningful to learners. In addition, the learning objectives should be grounded in some type of real-world discourse: a story, a dialogue/conversation, a cartoon strip with accompanying language, a radio broadcast, a video/film clip, an e-mail message, a letter, a recipe, etc. The goal should be for learners to interpret and produce meaningful discourse yet also to practice the phonological features, words, formulas, and grammatical structures that are salient in the discourse providing the content. If the discourse and content selected for



language instruction are accurate and authentic with respect to the target language and culture, then criticisms of artificiality can be avoided and language learning has the potential to become a genuine exercise in communication. Of course, the social contexts that are simulated in learning activities must also be realistic, and the learning activities should include authentic tasks.

### **3.3.3 The Need to Balance Language as System and Language as Formula**

Traditionally, language instruction has focused on language as system and learners have tried to master the grammar and pronunciation of the target language. However, a communicative focus, which includes mastery of systems such as conversational turn-taking and speech-act sets means that many set phrases and other formulaic elements of language use also need attention. Generally, for each social move or function, there is a stock of potential utterances; speakers must know enough about their interlocutors to choose appropriately from among these stock utterances. Many of the notional-functional language syllabuses (for example van Ek and Trim 1991) have attempted to provide inventories of such stock expressions; the learner's task is to choose from such a stock those words/phrases most appropriate for a given situation.

The pedagogical challenge is to maintain a balance: mastering only vocabulary and stock phrases for speech acts without appropriate knowledge of and focus on grammar and pronunciation will result in fluent but inaccurate and therefore limited oral competence. Mastering only grammar and phonology results in linguistically accurate but socially dysfunctional oral communication. Thus the systematic, formulaic, and interactional aspects of language must all be addressed in effective language instruction.

### **3.3.4 The Need to Focus on Dynamic Aspects of Interaction**

There is no way that the traditional teacher-fronted language classroom can help learners practice the dynamic nature of genuine interaction in their target language. The rhythm and intonation, the body and eye movements, and other aspects of face-to-face communication must be practiced in pairs and small groups. Teachers and learners need to have access to videotapes or film clips that realistically demonstrate interlocutors' total behavior (not just speech) during oral communication.

Such videotapes or film clips can be used in many ways to sensitize learners to target language use:

- watch the segment without sound to observe, describe, and imitate non-verbal behaviors;
- listen to the segment (sound only) to focus on the language: rhythm, intonation, pitch, timing, and volume—as well as grammar and vocabulary;
- watch and listen to the intact segment several times in order to role-play the segment or to perform a similar interaction.

Finally, teachers should videotape learner performances so the learners can observe themselves and see where they need to improve (feedback from teacher and peers is very useful here as well).

### **3.3.5 The Need to Focus on Strategies From Time to Time**

Oxford (2001) cites a wide array of research indicating that learners who make effective use of a range of language strategies learn more and learn faster than learners who do not use a variety of language learning strategies. Thus teachers should regularly integrate some strategy training and some discussion of strategies into their language classes. When teaching vocabulary, ways to memorize words and phrases can be covered. When working with a reading passage, ways of guessing the meaning of words in context can be discussed. The best students can explain to others what they are doing to master the language. There are now many published articles and handbooks for language teachers on how to integrate strategy instruction into their teaching (for example Rubin 1975; Oxford 1990; and Cohen 1998; to mention just a few).

Given the five principles above, what might a language lesson look like if it tried to use these principles as guidelines? The sample lesson outline that follows provides one such example.

### **3.3.6 A Sample Lesson Outline**

- General topic: raising awareness of cross-cultural problems with gestures.
- Content focus: the American “OK” sign (i.e. thumb and index finger forming a circle with the other 3 fingers up and the palm open toward interlocutor(s)).

- Grammatical focus: use of *should/shouldn't* in giving and getting advice (i.e. statements and questions).
- Lexical focus: any new vocabulary in the recorded discourse/text; this depends on the learners but a likely candidate here is *obscene*; also any new phrases the learners might need to do the activities should be discussed and practiced.
- Material/text: “Gestures around the world” (text adapted from Jill Korey O’Sullivan (to appear) ideally on videotape with the speaker demonstrating the gesture). Gestures have different meanings in different countries. For example, the American ‘OK’ sign is a common gesture in the United States; it signals that things are okay or that something specific is okay. But you shouldn’t use it in most other countries. The gesture is rude or obscene in Russia, in many Latin American countries, and in most of the Middle East. In Japan it means ‘money’. In France it means ‘zero’.
- Activities: Comprehension check: students match meanings of the gesture with countries/regions.
- Presentation: replay tape and practice any new vocabulary; review how to ask for and give advice using *should/shouldn't* in questions and answers.
- Role-Play 1: students work in pairs pretending they are Americans; the objective is to use the ‘OK’ gesture appropriately in a short exchange, e.g.:
  - A: Can you come to dinner party at our place on Saturday?
  - B: Yes, great! (making ‘OK’ sign). What should/can I bring?
- Role-Play 2: students work in small groups to prepare a conflict role-play where an American uses the OK gesture inappropriately in country X, and some friends there give him/her advice with *You should..../You shouldn't...* The American asks for advice at least once using *Should I.....?* (If possible, both role-plays should be videotaped and played back for feedback sessions.)
- Discussion: Teacher leads class in a discussion of other gestures that can differ from culture to culture, e.g. pointing, indicating ‘yes’ or ‘no’ with head movements, etc.

### 3.4 Conclusion

The model and the sample lesson outline presented in this paper indicate that the content of a language course with communicative competence as

its objective should be drawn from linguistics, cultural anthropology, sociolinguistics, and other relevant areas of the social sciences and humanities. All discrete learning objectives such as a sound, a word, or a grammatical structure should be presented through richly contextualized discourse that addresses the content objectives in a context that is meaningful to the learners. Teaching materials must be learner-centered and allow for communication while learning tasks need to be interactive whenever possible (pair work, group work, role play, etc.).

Some examples of tasks and activities designed to encourage interaction are:

- eliciting information or opinion via a telephone call (a mock call if necessary) or an e-mail message in the target language;
- getting information by interviewing someone or surveying a group of people in the target language (using one's classmates and teacher, if necessary);
- summarizing the gist of a discourse segment with a partner;
- role-playing a speech act set (e.g. apologizing for losing a book your friend lent you), perhaps developing a script for acting out the situation in class.
- developing/writing an advertisement (as a group task) to sell a given product in the target language; this should be done after a sample of authentic target-language ads have been examined and discussed.
- writing and publishing a class newsletter on cultural differences between the target language community and the first-language community; research would be done with presentation of oral and written drafts of reports/essays followed by feedback and revision prior to publication.

The proposed model obviously has its limitations. The model should be dynamic, but in its present form, it looks static. I ask the reader to imagine an organic version of the model where each component can expand or contract depending on the pedagogical objectives and the needs of the learner. This means that the application of the model is relative rather than absolute. McGroarty (1984) rightly points out that 'communicative competence' can have different meanings depending on the target learners and on the pedagogical objectives in any given context. In the course of a thorough needs analysis and the curriculum development process, a model such as the one proposed should be adapted to the communicative needs of the learners. This, for example, is what Hoekje and Williams (1992) did when they applied the Canale and Swain (1980) framework to the development of their oral skills course for international teaching assistants

at a university in the US. Despite the problems they encountered and the modifications they had to make, they concluded that the Canale and Swain framework had provided an integrated and principled basis for designing their language course. I hope that the up-dated model of ‘communicative competence’ presented in this paper can serve a similar purpose for teachers who are developing language courses for intercultural speakers.

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## Dealing with Intercultural Communicative Competence in the Foreign Language Classroom

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### 4.1 Communicative Competence and the Native Speaker

In the 1970s Hymes (1972) introduced the concept of communicative competence (CC) when he argued that, in order to understand first language acquisition, it was necessary to take into account not only how grammatical competence but also the ability to use language appropriately were acquired, thus placing emphasis on sociolinguistic competence among native speakers. This idea was taken up by Canale and Swain (1980) in North America and Van Ek (1986) in Europe, who applied it to foreign language acquisition and turned it into a fundamental concept in the development of communicative language teaching. The aim of communicative methodology was to acquire the necessary skills to communicate in socially and culturally appropriate ways, and, in the learning process, focus was placed on functions, role playing and real situations, among other aspects.

Canale and Swain (1980) proposed that communicative competence was minimally composed of grammatical, sociolinguistic and strategic competence (1980: 27–31):

- *Grammatical competence* includes the knowledge of lexical items and rules of morphology, syntax, sentence grammar semantics, and phonology.
- *Sociolinguistic competence* is made up of two different sets of rules: sociocultural and discourse. The former focuses on the extent to which certain propositions and communicative functions are appropriate within a given sociocultural context, and the extent to which appropriate attitude and register or style are conveyed by a particular grammatical form within a given sociocultural context. Rules of discourse are concerned with cohesion and coherence of groups of utterances.

- Finally, *strategic competence* is made up of verbal and nonverbal communication strategies that the speaker may resort to when breakdowns in communication take place due to performance variables or to insufficient competence. These strategies may relate to grammatical competence (how to paraphrase, how to simplify, etc.) or to sociolinguistic competence (for instance, how to address strangers when unsure of their social status).

At the same time, they insisted on the need to establish communicative interaction with “highly competent speakers” of the language so that learners would be able to respond to genuine communicative needs in realistic second language situations. On the other hand, they also proposed that learners should be taught about the second language culture in order to provide them with the sociocultural knowledge of the second language necessary to infer the social meanings or values of utterances.

A few years later, Van Ek (1986) suggested that foreign language (FL) teaching was not concerned merely with training in communication skills but should also involve the personal and social development of the learner as an individual, and, therefore, he presented a framework for comprehensive FL objectives which included aspects such as social competence, the promotion of autonomy or the development of social responsibility (1986: 33–65), quoted by Byram (1997: 9). The model he presented contemplated six dimensions of CC, each of them called competence also. In fact, they are six points of view of a complex phenomenon, which overlap and are mutually dependent:

- *Linguistic competence*: The ability to produce and interpret meaningful utterances which are formed in accordance with the rules of the language concerned and bear their conventional meaning ... that meaning which native speakers would normally attach to an utterance when used in isolation.
- *Sociolinguistic competence*: The awareness of ways in which the choice of language forms ... is determined by such conditions as setting, relationship between communication partners, communicative intention, etc. ... [this] competence covers the relation between linguistic signals and their contextual –or situational– meaning.
- *Discourse competence*: The ability to use appropriate strategies in the construction and interpretation of texts.
- *Strategic competence*: When communication is difficult we have to find ways of ‘getting our meaning across’ or ‘finding out what somebody means’; these are communication strategies, such as rephrasing, asking for clarification.



- *Sociocultural competence*: Every language is situated in a sociocultural context and implies the use of a particular reference frame which is partly different from that of the foreign language learner; socio-cultural competence presupposes a certain degree of familiarity with that context.
- *Social competence*: Involves both the will and the skill to interact with others, involving motivation, attitude, self confidence, empathy and the ability to handle social situations.

Both proposals are very similar except for the incorporation by Van Ek (1986) of two<sup>1</sup> more points of view, *sociocultural* and *social competence*, which take into account values and beliefs, on the one hand, and attitudes and behaviours, on the other.

The native speaker (NS) as a model is implicit in both the linguistic and the sociolinguistic competences and the idea that the language presented in the classroom should be as authentic as possible, so as to represent the reality of NS language use, has been one of the tenets of the communicative approach (Alptekin 2002: 61). Even as regards sociocultural competence, the tendency is to consider the learner as an imperfect NS, who does not manage to assume the appropriate body language, intonation or even life view. This dependency on the NS has been precisely one of the reasons given by several authors to challenge the concept of CC. The problem with taking the NS as a model is that he becomes an impossible target for the learner, who will inevitably end up frustrated. As Cook (1999) has put it, “the prominence of the native speaker in language teaching has obscured the distinctive nature of the successful L2 user and created an unattainable goal for L2 learners” (1999: 185). Even in the case that the learner should manage to acquire this degree of perfection, it might not be the correct kind of competence as it would mean that the learner has to abandon one language in order to blend into another linguistic environment, thus becoming linguistically schizophrenic (Byram 1997: 11). It also means that the learner’s native language is completely left aside in the process of learning an FL, when it could be usefully introduced to give confidence to the student and trigger interest in some topics or aspects to be dealt with in the classroom.

Although, as we have said above, Canale and Swain (1980) hinted at the idea of supplementing the students’ instruction with a smattering of the culture attached to the language being learnt in order to provide them with the necessary background to infer social meanings, the fact is that communicative methodology is focused on functional uses of language and the mere acquisition of communication skills. After some years of communicative euphoria, though, some teachers felt the need to introduce

a humanistic and a cultural approach to the teaching of an FL (Aarup Jensen 1995: 30; Kramersch 1995: 83). However, in agreement with the idea of the NS as a model for the linguistic and sociolinguistic competence, the cultural aspects usually taken into account are also those of the target language, leaving the learner's own culture in a peripheral position or even completely ignored (Alptekin 2002: 62), a shortcoming –along with the need to introduce emotional aspects, which are so important in the contact with a foreign language– that has also been pointed out by other authors (Oliveras Vilaseca 2000: 34).

## 4.2 The Intercultural Speaker

We should not forget, though, that on growing up we are all subject to socialization, that is to say, the process of acquiring adult roles, internalizing the beliefs and values of a specific society or group. Socialization is therefore clearly linked to cultural transmission and it mostly takes place through the medium of language; at the same time, we are also socialized into ways of using language (Cortazzi 1990: 56–57). This means we have acquired certain frameworks of assumptions, ideas and beliefs that we use to interpret other people's behaviour and where most of our experiences fit. We are so familiar with our own culture that we do not even realize it is there and, inevitably, it influences our expectations when we establish contact with people belonging to a different culture. This is even more so when it comes to the learning of an FL, where a process of acculturation<sup>2</sup> takes place, leading learners to acquire new cultural frames of reference and probably a new world view in agreement with those of the target culture. Most often, the learners' cultural experience will influence their expectations of the second language and culture as well as the learning process. Driven by ethnocentrism, we tend to take as "normal" what we know, what we are familiar with, and when confronted with new situations we may lose footing. The clash of the two cultures, the learner's own and the one related to the language to be acquired, may range from total acceptance or assimilation to complete rejection. Students may freely accept the new frames of reference or even be already familiar with them if we speak about a language like English and the global cultural domination attached to it by means of the media (basically cinema, music and advertising). On the other hand, they may have developed some stereotypes about the new culture which prevent acceptance or even provoke rejection of the new culture and maybe the language.

At the same time, it has usually been thought that the aim of learning an FL was to be able to communicate with its NSs or to become familiar with some aspects of its culture, for instance, literature but, as experience shows, this is not necessarily the case. Regarding language, we may find several communicative situations: participants with different languages and nationalities where only one of them is an NS; participants with different languages and nationalities where neither of them is an NS, as they are using a specific language as a *lingua franca*; and even participants with the same nationality but different mother tongues where only one of them is an NS of the language used (Byram 1997: 22). As for culture, in our present world learners of an FL will find themselves more and more often in situations where they have to understand the relationships between different cultures and will have to make sense of different behaviours and attitudes, they will have to become mediators trying to interpret and connect two or several ways of understanding the world (Byram 1995: 54). And this is so because we are living in a complex world with new requirements concerning linguistic and cultural qualifications in people: we have to be able to deal with this complexity, both productively and receptively, at local level or in a micro-context –home, the work place or school– and also in global situations or macro-contexts –international meetings or the Internet (Risager 2000: 15; Jæger 2001: 54). Such learners need to function fully in a situation where at least two languages and two cultures, their own and another one, interplay and they may find themselves in a no-man’s-land or, more exactly, in a “third place” from which they must understand and mediate between the home and the target language and culture (Kramsch 1993: 233–259). Learners have to become mediators who have the ability to manage communication and interaction between people of different cultural identities and languages, coming out from their own perspective and taking up another, able to handle different interpretations of reality, persons who have a privileged position between the home and the target culture, that is to say, learners must become intercultural speakers (IS).

Consequently, the NS as a reference point for the FL learner should be replaced by the IS, as was already proposed by Byram and Zarate in 1994. It is true that an IS will most probably be less skilled than an NS regarding the mastery of the language<sup>3</sup>. But it is also true that the former is at a privileged vantage point regarding communication abilities and interaction with people from other cultures and with other languages. Replacing the NS with the IS, though, should not be understood as lowering the standards of achievement expected of the FL learner (Steele 1996: 77). It seems that the IS is in a more relaxed position since it is now allowed to retain one’s social, linguistic and cultural baggage; however, the IS is a

dynamic concept with no specific goal or limits and the learner must always be ready to acquire more knowledge and more abilities (Jæger 2001: 53).

### 4.3 Intercultural Communicative Competence in the Foreign Language Classroom

If the NS is no longer suitable as a model for the FL learner, CC is probably not the most appropriate approach either. According to Byram (1997), when persons from different languages and/or countries interact socially they bring to the situation their knowledge about their own country and that of the others'. Part of the success of such interaction will depend on the establishing and maintenance of human relationships, something which depends on attitudinal factors. At the same time, both aspects, knowledge and attitude, are influenced by the processes of intercultural communication, that is to say, the skills of interpretation and establishing relationships between aspects of the two cultures and the skills of discovery and interaction. Finally, all these factors should be integrated within a philosophy of political education and develop the learners' critical cultural awareness of all the cultures involved (1997: 32–33). Byram presents these factors as *savoirs* to be acquired or developed by the learner, the future IS:

- *savoir être*, which is concerned with attitudes and values and consists in showing curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one's own;
- *savoirs*, which refers to the knowledge of social groups and their products and practices in one's own and in one's interlocutor's country, and of the general processes of societal and individual interaction;
- *savoir comprendre*, related to the skills of interpreting and relating, that is to say, the ability to interpret a document or event from another culture, to explain it and relate it to documents from one's own;
- *savoir apprendre/faire*, connected to the skills of discovery and interaction or the ability to acquire new knowledge of a culture and cultural practices and the ability to operate knowledge, attitudes and skills under the constraints of real-time communication and interaction;
- *savoir s'engager*, in relation to critical cultural awareness and/or political education, which means having the ability to evaluate critically and on the basis of explicit criteria perspectives, practices and products in one's own and other cultures and countries (Byram 1995: 57–66, Byram 1997: 31–54).

In fact, what the learner would be acquiring would be intercultural competence (IC) or intercultural communicative competence (ICC). When defining the different *savoirs*, no linguistic aspects have been mentioned and all the focus has been on culture and the relationship between cultures, that is to say, interculturality. We should not forget, though, that interculturality means interaction, and interaction is communication, that is to say, language of one kind or another. In any case, Byram (1997: 70–71) introduces the possibility of distinguishing between both competences: in IC, individuals have the ability to interact in their own language with people from another country and culture, drawing upon their knowledge about intercultural communication, their attitudes of interest in otherness and their skills in interpreting, relating and discovering; whereas in ICC, interaction takes place between people from different cultures and countries in an FL, the knowledge of the participants of another culture is linked to their language competence through their ability to use language appropriately and their awareness of the specific meaning, values and connotations of the language. Therefore IC can and should be acquired by people from all walks of life and involved in any kind of trade; however, when dealing with FL teaching and learning, it is ICC that we must aim at, as the focus is mostly on linguistic aspects and, in this context, “communicative” is normally identified with “linguistic” (Risager 2000: 14).

### **4.3.1 Implementation of ICC in the Curriculum**

Does ICC mean that we have to use a new methodology in the classroom, as happened when the communicative approach was adopted? Some authors (Byram et al. 2002: 7; Corbett 2003: 14) defend the idea that introducing the intercultural approach in our classrooms does not mean introducing new methods, and we can still use many of the practices well known to many FL teachers such as role-play, projects or co-operative goal-directed activities; the differences will lie in the role given to language in the construction of identities and to the understanding and mediation of cultural differences. However, some other authors have also shown the objections made by some teaching practitioners about the impossibility of introducing new aspects or new contents in an already very busy curriculum (Müller 1995: 61) or the debate about whether IC should be developed as an integral part of the language learning syllabus and into what kind of course it should be integrated: grammar, literature, topic-based or a mixture of them all (Mughan 1999: 63–64). Byram (1997: 64) also echoes some of the objections about making IC compatible with FL classroom work as usually conceived and points out how teachers with

a more literary oriented training would probably be more willing to adopt this approach as they may find analogies in the skills of interpreting and discovering with the traditions of some approaches to literature.

Despite some of these objections, the interest of the educational institutions and authorities of different countries in intercultural aspects to be present in their FL teaching curricula has been evident since the late 1980s. In 1989, the guidelines issued by the Japanese Government for junior secondary school stated that one of the basic aims of its educational policy was “to place importance on deepening international understanding and developing an attitude of respect for our country’s culture and traditions” (quoted by Parmenter and Tomita 2001: 133), although some contradictions have been experienced in their implementation (*ibid.* 134). In 1990, a document called *Modern Foreign Languages for Ages 11–16: Proposals of the Secretary of State for Education and Science and the Secretary of State for Wales*, which applied to England and Wales, established that the purposes of FL teaching were:

- to offer insights into the culture and civilisation of the countries where the language is spoken;
- to encourage positive attitudes to foreign language learning and to speakers of foreign languages and a sympathetic approach to other cultures and civilisations; and
- to develop pupils’ understanding of themselves and their own culture (quoted by Byram et al. 1994: 15).

Another document published in 2000 (*The National Curriculum for Modern Foreign Languages*) continued to stress the importance of learning modern FLs by stating that “through the study of a foreign language, pupils understand and appreciate different countries, cultures, people and communities –and as they do so, begin to think of themselves as citizens of the world as well as of the United Kingdom” (quoted by Dodd 2001: 163), and some of the aspects to be acquired include: knowledge and understanding of the target language, language skills and cultural awareness. The educational law developed by the Spanish authorities between 1990 and 1991 established that students, apart from being able to understand and produce oral and written messages appropriately in their own language as well as in an FL, should also learn to relate with other persons and take part in group activities with tolerant attitudes, overcoming prejudices. This law specifically values the presence of FLs in the curriculum as their knowledge is a necessary condition to facilitate intercultural understanding in a world increasingly open to all kinds of international relationships, and it will

allow students to expand the field of interpersonal relationships, contributing to the students' socialization process.

The Danish education act of 1995 follows very similar lines in the sense that, apart from the teaching of the language skills proper, it establishes that "the teaching shall create a framework for experience, insight and co-operation and shall strengthen pupils' active participation ... [it] shall give pupils insight into cultural and social conditions in English-speaking countries and thus strengthen their international understanding and their understanding of their own culture<sup>4</sup>" (quoted by Aktor and Risager 2001: 220–221). The authors of the report *Standards for Foreign Language Learning* (1996) in the United States opened it by saying that "Language and communication are at the heart of the human experience. The United States must educate students who are equipped linguistically and culturally to communicate successfully in a pluralistic American society and abroad" (quoted by Carel 2001: 146), thus making obvious the aims of FL teaching, although they have been considered unrealistic by some teachers at different levels of education. More recently, other countries have also expressed their concern about these issues, and the Polish Ministry of Education, in a document published in 2002, stated that FL teaching in upper secondary schools should, among other things, enrich the cultural component with issues related to European integration and foster attitudes of curiosity, openness and tolerance towards other cultures in students (Bandura 2003: 1).

As we can observe, the Polish curriculum talks about "European integration", which is the aim towards which the Council of Europe has been working for years. One of the main concerns regarding integration is obviously languages, as a consequence of both diversity and the "monolingual" tendency towards the use of English as a *lingua franca*. After years of debate, in 1996 the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEF) was issued, a guideline to describe achievements of learners of FLs across Europe with the aim to provide a method of assessing and teaching which can be applied to all languages in Europe. The CEF (1996) deals in one of its chapters with the competences the learner must acquire, which are divided into general and communicative. In the former group, intercultural awareness is one of the items included, which is referred to in the following terms: "Knowledge, awareness and understanding of the relation ... between the 'world of origin' and the 'world of the target community' produce an intercultural awareness. ... It is also enriched by awareness of a wider range of cultures than those carried by the learner's L1 and L2" (CEF 1996: 103).

Either impelled by the guidelines issued by their different governments or by their own desire to innovate and improve their teaching practices,

many FL teachers throughout Europe have shown an increasing interest in and a will to introduce an intercultural approach in their classes, as has been proved by two different surveys carried out as part of wider projects<sup>5</sup>. We are not going into the results of these surveys in detail, but we would like to comment broadly on some aspects. In both surveys, the respondents answered in favour of introducing the cultural dimension in FL teaching and recognised the important role of ICC for communication in an FL and that it should be given more emphasis in the language classroom. At the same time, they tried to create as many opportunities as possible for their students to understand and experience other cultures by means of the textbook, videos, films, press articles, inviting native-speaking guests or even promoting exchange programmes. This interest, however, contrasted with another part of the answers: when asked about the curriculum contents, they recognised that, in general, they still attach much more importance to the teaching of the language itself than to the teaching of cultural aspects, reaching results of 80% and 20%, respectively, in many cases. On top of this, when asked about the cultural contents they considered most important in teaching an FL, issues like traditions and customs, history, geography or political conditions appeared in top positions, and other aspects more closely connected to what we should understand as ICC –developing attitudes of openness and tolerance towards other peoples and cultures, promoting the ability to handle intercultural contact situations, promoting reflection on cultural differences or promoting increased understanding of the students’ own culture– came in lower positions. It is evident, then, that a lot remains to be done.

#### **4.3.2 The Changing Role of Teachers and Students**

We said above that ICC did not consist in a new methodology, but it is true that its implementation as the goal of FL teaching will depend on the attitude and the training of the teachers in these aspects. According to the results of the surveys we have just mentioned, it seems that the attitude is there, so maybe there is something wrong with the training. In one of those surveys, teachers were asked if they had received any intercultural communication training and all of them answered that, although some aspects of IC might be implicitly included in subjects dealing with civilisation, sociolinguistics, literature, history, etc., they had not studied IC in a systematic way (Aleksandrowicz-Pędich et al. 2003: 10). As we explained before, ICC goes beyond the concept of language learning as just acquiring skills in a language, accompanied by some factual knowledge about a country where the language is spoken. The teacher now



becomes a mediator that has to give priority not to the amount of knowledge to be acquired but to the development of new attitudes, skills and critical awareness in the student. That is to say, the task of the teacher is not to provide comprehensive information or bring the foreign society into the classroom for learners to observe and experience but to develop in students the competence that will make them relativise their own cultural values, beliefs and behaviours and investigate for themselves the otherness, what is different to their “norm” (Byram et al. 2002: 13–33; Byram et al. 2001: 3). Consequently, in this context non-native teachers become particularly valued for their ability to move between the home and target cultures (Corbett 2003: 12), although, obviously a curious, open-minded native teacher, especially if widely-travelled, can be equally or better valued. In fact, the best teacher will be neither the native nor the non-native speaker, but the person who can make students see the connections between their own and other cultures, as well as awaken their curiosity about difference and otherness.

If in ICC what is important is not the amount of knowledge transmitted, but the attitudes, skills and critical awareness that learners develop, we have to understand that the learners become the centre of the teaching and learning process. In the process of ICC acquisition, Byram (1997: 64–73) distinguishes three locations: classroom, fieldwork and independent learning, each with a different degree of teacher-student interaction; in the classroom the participation of the teacher is higher, although it can also range through different degrees; in fieldwork it is reduced to the role of a mere supervisor and in independent learning<sup>6</sup>, even if the teacher may act as a tutor or guide, the full responsibility is the student’s. The figure of the teacher, however, never disappears completely, as the learning process in order to be more beneficial cannot be a random activity but has to be scheduled, and the achievements, sooner or later, have to be assessed. This idea of “sharing the power” with students is at the heart of Coffey’s (1999) proposal of building cultural community in FL learning curricula. For her, building cultural community means fostering meaningful communication among all group members when they do not share a common worldview. In order to do this, apart from sharing power with our students, we have to encourage them to be tolerant of ambiguity, foster empathy as well as cooperation and build an understanding of cultural values; as we can see, all these aims are completely in agreement with those of ICC. Many other authors (Steele 1996: 79; Jæger 2001: 53; Cesevičiūtė and Minkutė-Henrickson 2002: 55) also share the idea that the primary role of the teacher in ICC is to develop students’ autonomous and independent learning skills and that learner-centred pedagogy is the most effective way of teaching an FL.

Several authors have defended the idea that one of the best ways to develop ICC in general and autonomy in particular in FL learning is by introducing ethnographic skills<sup>7</sup>. Technically speaking, ethnography refers to an anthropologist's description of a community through systematic observation, usually by living among the community as a participant observer over a period of time (Corbett 2003: 9). One of their fields of work is description of language behaviour within the community, but in later years ethnography has widened its scope and includes a variety of research techniques in the media, cultural studies as well as other areas. The idea is not that students become professional anthropologists, but some training in ethnographic techniques –the introduction of discovery skills– can benefit the language learning process as students learn via observation and the gathering of data. The ethnographic approach matches many of the goals of communicative language teaching by seeking:

- an integration of linguistic and cultural learning to facilitate communication and interaction;
- a comparison of others and self to stimulate reflection on and (critical) questioning of the mainstream culture into which learners are socialised;
- a shift in perspective involving psychological processes of socialisation;
- the potential of language teaching to prepare learners to meet and communicate in other cultures and societies than the specific one usually associated with the language they are learning. (Byram and Fleming 1998: 7, as quoted by Corbett 2003: 35).

Of course, the ethnographic activities have to be adapted to the purpose and the level of the FL learning classroom. The book *Developing Intercultural Competence in Practice* (Byram et al. 2001), “a forum for reflection on the experience and practice of learning and teaching languages and intercultural competence” (vii), contains several experiences carried out by teachers in different parts of the world, most of which have an ethnographic component where students have to collect information on a specific topic by means of research, interviews or mere observation of events or social and cultural products. This is what is often referred to as *fieldwork*. The data gathered will be presented and exploited in the classroom in different ways so that the students can improve both their language and intercultural competence. Most experiences presented in the book also prove that ethnographic activities can be used with students belonging to a wide range of ages, from young children to adults; a variety of cultural backgrounds, from barely literate people to university

students; and a diversity of national origins: students from just one country, students from two countries working in partnership or immigrants from different countries working together. Something else these experiences showed is that there is enough material to work on our doorstep as almost any element around us is apt to be used in order to trigger our curiosity and the development of our ICC. In fact, almost all the textbooks and material we are going to deal with in the following section contain activities with an ethnographic approach.

### 4.3.3 Textbooks and Teaching Material

At the beginning of this chapter we expressed some of the problems that taking the NS as a model presented for the FL learner. Part of the problem lies in the fact that this is the model that most teaching material follows. Alptekin (2002: 61) criticizes the fact that corpus descriptions of English<sup>8</sup> contain databases of NS usage, influencing model situations in coursebooks, which involve mostly interactions of NS with NS, excluding almost completely interactions between NS and non-native speaker (NNS) or between NNSs. At the same time, an idealized image of the English-speaking country is portrayed, thus perpetuating a number of stereotypes. And as has been pointed out by some authors (Clarke and Clarke 1990: 35), stereotypical representations in textbooks can be doubly dishonest in the sense that they generally omit aspects such as linguistic and ethnic diversity or class and gender oppositions, thus transmitting the idea of perfect societies to foreign recipients, in contrast with their own, which they experience as imperfect.

As regards teaching materials, it will also be useful to distinguish between what Cortazzi and Jin (1999: 196) have called *cultural content* and *culture of learning*, which refers to a series of dynamic processes, including the very act of teaching and learning: what kinds of interactions are appropriate in class<sup>9</sup>, how texts should be used, etc. In the last decades several checklists have been elaborated in order to measure the cultural contents of textbooks<sup>10</sup>. The most recent and complete one we know about is the result of a pilot study carried out by members of one of the networks of the abovementioned Project 1.2.3. coordinated by the ECML in Graz. Here the evaluators took into account not just the cultural contents of the teaching material, but also aspects like the correspondence between the aims and goals of the materials and the students' conceptual framework, needs and goals and the presentation of the contents through cultural knowledge and attitudinal, intercultural and culture-and-language perspectives. The results of the questionnaires and interviews and their consequent analysis have been

summarized in a series of strengths and weaknesses (Skopinskaja 2003: 52). The positive trends are: an increase in attempts to include, on the one hand, intercultural activities and, on the other, serious social issues; an attempt to personalise the FL learning process by providing opportunities for exchanges of views; and the inclusion of a wider range of both accents and voices and genres and text types. However, still manifest are the subordination of the goal of culture teaching to other goals and the as yet excessive focus on language form with detriment to intercultural communication; the Anglo-centric focus of coursebooks; and the stereotypical representation of both the target and the student's culture.

As pointed out by Cortazzi and Jin (1999: 199–201), the textbook in itself can represent many things ranging from the, in our opinion, most harmful ones: authority or ideology, to others more beneficial as, for instance, a map or a resource. The book is just an object, although often a very useful one, that has to be skilfully used by both the teacher and the students. First of all, textbooks should be challenged: language is always value-laden and therefore texts are never neutral, a “simple” grammar exercise can reinforce prejudice and stereotypes by means, for instance, of the vocabulary used or the pronouns chosen. Critical discourse analysis, which studies the way text and talk may reproduce or resist racism, abuse of social power, dominance and inequality, comes in very handy here, and several authors (Gray 2000: 281; Risager 2000: 17; Byram et al. 2002: 24, 27–28; Corbett 2003: 13) encourage both teachers and learners to apply it to the contents of textbooks. Once the textbook has been challenged and the shortcomings, as well as the advantages, have been spotted, it is the teacher's turn to act as a mediator: parts of the book can be adapted, new material can be supplemented, the account of a personal experience can be presented, and ethnocentric approaches or images can in fact be turned around and used as a pretext for intercultural activities.

In the previous paragraphs, we have spoken about the target culture and the “idealized image of the English-speaking country”, but when dealing with the culture associated to a language and more specifically in the case of English, which culture or which English-speaking country do we mean? Traditionally it has been British or American culture but, on the one hand, there are several other English-speaking countries and, on the other, in the last decades English has become an international language or a *lingua franca* which not always represents the mother tongue of either speaker. There are arguments to reject either representation in textbooks: if the textbook only represents the target culture its very strangeness and detachment may provoke rejection in the student, it may create further problems if this representation is on top of everything stereotyped and “ideal”; and when books try to include

representations of several cultures, either related to the target language or not, the result may be unconnected topics and issues that eventually make no sense. A third possibility is to set textbooks in the learner's own country but, as has been shown by Clarke and Clarke (1990: 36), if the target culture is removed or just presented in partial, stereotypical glimpses, the effect can be one of distortion. In fact, an attempt should be made to find a position that takes into account all three stances, that is to say, an intercultural approach. A real representation of the society and an account of some historical and cultural aspects of the countries where the FL is spoken originally can help learners to understand better language structures, predominant vocabulary, idioms or the status of that language in the world. However, it is necessary to introduce elements of the learner's own culture, as well as other cultures, so that by means of contrast and comparison an openness of mind and a reflection on the relativity of their acquired values can be fostered in the learners. At the same time, rather than reflecting a specific culture, textbooks should help to develop discovery skills that will allow students to get the information necessary in each situation, not only during the learning period but also in future. The combination of all these elements should be the development of critical cultural awareness.

The position most strongly defended by experts at the moment is that rather than producing textbooks for the international market, teaching materials should be addressed to particular communities and become more involved with country-specific publishing (Corbett 2003: 212; Pulverness 2004: 7). This also seems to be the position of two important institutions related to the field of FL teaching, the ECML, dependent on the Council of Europe, and the British Council, that have been working along these lines. Due to its inherent characteristics, the Council of Europe or the ECML develop a wide range of activities and studies aimed at the defence of multiculturalism and multilingualism all over Europe. One example of the efforts made to develop understanding would be the publication promoted by the Youth Directorate of the Council of Europe *All different, all equal*, which is an education pack including resources and activities for intercultural education with young people and adults<sup>11</sup>. Well-reputed scholars like Van Ek or the so often quoted in this article Byram have carried out important work to establish guidelines that will help to spread real intercultural communication throughout Europe. Byram's model for ICC is at the basis of the previously mentioned Project 1.2.3. supported by the ECML, one of whose results is the publication of *Mirrors and windows. An intercultural communication textbook*, a book "aimed at teacher trainers, teacher trainees [or] secondary school teachers of any subject" and that "can be used ... as a practical coursebook on intercultural communication, or as supplementary

material in language development” (Huber-Kriegler et al. 2003: 9). Although the book is written in English, it can be adapted for learners and speakers of other languages too and includes elements from different cultures.

The British Council, even though its undeniable aim is to spread English language and British culture, has been working in close collaboration with teachers of mainly Central and Eastern European countries in order to develop materials which show and put in connection both British and these other cultures. Three of the most interesting examples<sup>12</sup> are *Zoom In*, *Branching out* and *Changing Skies*. The first book is focused on Hungarian and British societies and is the result of a study trip to the South West of England by some Hungarian teachers, who used the authentic material (photographs, audio and video recordings) gathered there, as well as their experiences, to write a book to develop knowledge, attitudes, skills and critical awareness in students. *Branching out*, was the result of the experience of about sixty teachers working in Bulgarian secondary schools in a project coordinated by Davcheva and Docheva (1998), with the support of Pulverness (2001). Unlike *Zoom In*, which could not easily be used outside Hungary, *Branching out*, although drawing on Bulgarian culture, has a wider scope and the activities proposed could be transposed to any other country. Even though it can be used as a textbook, we consider it a collection of very interesting activities aimed at developing ICC. Pulverness’s (2001) *Changing Skies* is in our opinion an excellent example of ICC in its broader sense: the improvement of the learner’s proficiency in English language and the development of intercultural skills by means of a series of well devised and organised exercises and activities. As the subtitle indicates, it is a “European course for advanced level learners” and therefore skilfully draws on elements from different European countries.

Although we do not have the time or the space to go into the work of American scholars in favour of the development of ICC, we would like to mention just a couple of books: Seelye’s (1987) *Teaching Culture. Strategies for Intercultural Communication*, a classic originally published in 1984 with many re-editions, and Fantini’s (1997) more recent book *New Ways in Teaching culture*, an anthology of suggested lesson ideas for integrating language and culture.

#### 4.4 Conclusion

Several authors (Mughan 1999: 62; Oliveras Vilaseca 2000: 29–32) have pointed out that the need for IC was actually identified as early as the

1950s, when several international companies and institutions realized that, apart from language competence, their workers also needed some kind of intercultural understanding in order to make their work more effective or simply not to fail in their aims. In recent years, this need, far from disappearing, has spread to more and more areas of interaction. In one of the studies mentioned above (Aleksandrowicz-Pędich et al. 2003: 7–37), when teachers were asked about the potential benefits of including ICC in FL teaching, both pragmatic and idealistic reasons were mentioned: the first included success in business and the tourist industry, working and travelling abroad, and coping with multicultural societies; the latter were connected with values that might contribute to a better world society, such as, acceptance and tolerance of differences, building up the spirit of the European Union and world peace in general, learning how to avoid potential conflicts and internationalism.

We should not forget that FL teaching does not consist in the mere transmission of speaking skills but is part of the whole process of education of a person in the sense of the acquisition of values, attitudes and beliefs. Due to its very nature, FL teaching offers students opportunities to get in touch with real life experience and with other cultures which are denied to other subjects. IC can and must be present in many areas of education and is in fact a life-long process that may help us to become resourceful members of our complex contemporary society; ICC also trains us as language and cultural mediators in an increasing multilingual and multicultural world. There is little to lose and quite a lot to gain with the implementation of ICC in the FL classroom independently of our pragmatic or idealistic reasons for doing so.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> What Canale and Swain call *sociolinguistic competence*, which they split into sociocultural and discourse rules, corresponds in fact to Van Ek's *sociolinguistic* and *discourse competence*.

<sup>2</sup> In the bibliography we have consulted the terms *enculturation* and *acculturation* are sometimes used indistinctly; however, we are following the terms as used by Berry et al., who establish that “enculturation is the process by which the group generally incorporates children into the culture and by which the child acquires the appropriate behaviors. In contrast, *acculturation* refers to cultural and psychological change brought about by contact with other peoples belonging to different cultures and exhibiting different behaviors” (1994: 19).

<sup>3</sup> Corbett (2003: 39–40) observes how few native English speakers entirely conform to “Standard English in their output and how ironic it is that second language learners are often required institutionally to conform to standards that are more rigorous than those applied to native speakers.”

<sup>4</sup> This quotation belongs to the overall aims for the teaching of English, but these are identical for the teaching of French and German.

<sup>5</sup> The first project, “FL teachers’ perceptions of their role as mediators of language-and-culture: a comparative investigation in seven countries,” stemmed from an idea presented by Dr Lies Sercu at a seminar on the intercultural dimension in teaching organised by Professor Michael Byram at the School of Education University of Durham in 2000. An electronic questionnaire with 64 mostly closed questions organized in 11 sections was prepared. It was answered by 409 teachers from Belgium, Sweden, Poland, Mexico, Greece, Spain and Bulgaria; the respondents were secondary school teachers, mostly of English. The results were due to be analysed by the coordinator in each country and later published in book form; so far, we have only managed to have the results and analysis of the Polish questionnaires, which were answered by 49 teachers (Bandura 2003). The second one, Project 1.2.3., originated after a workshop on incorporating ICC in pre- and in-service language teacher training, organised by the European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML) in Graz in April 2001. As a follow-up, four networks were set up in order to work on different areas: perception of teachers, evaluation of teaching materials, design of teaching materials and assessment. The results of the survey among teachers, “The views of teachers of English and French on intercultural communicative competence in language teaching,” was published by Aleksandrowicz-Pędich L et al., in Lázár, I (ed) (2003). 47 teachers of English and 15 teachers of French from Cyprus, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Greece, Malta, Iceland, Hungary, Estonia and the Netherlands answered the questionnaire.

<sup>6</sup> Independent learning can be a life-long activity; however, we are taking it here as simultaneous with classroom and fieldwork, as part of the teaching-learning process while at school or university.

<sup>7</sup> In the United Kingdom the introduction of ethnography into FL learning and teaching has been the result of the work of Byram and his associates, for instance, Byram 1997; Byram et al. 1994; Byram and Fleming 1998; Roberts et al. 2001.

<sup>8</sup> So far, we have referred to the teaching of FLs in general without focusing on any specific language; however, due to our training and area of work, many of the aspects and examples we will deal with in this last part of the chapter are about the teaching and learning of English as an FL.

<sup>9</sup> In the literature on FL teaching and learning, there are numerous examples of unfulfilled expectations in the classroom on the side of either the teacher or the students due to the fact that they come from different cultural backgrounds and ways of socialization.

<sup>10</sup> Cortazzi and Jin (1999: 201–204) and Skopinskaja (2003: 44–46) revise some of the most relevant ones.

<sup>11</sup> A similar recent contribution is Utley’s (2004) *Intercultural Resource Pack*.

<sup>12</sup> Some more examples of textbooks as well as very useful bibliography and notes on materials can be found in “An Intercultural Reader”, at <http://elt.britcoun.org.pl/forum/-intereader.htm>.

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## **A Role for English as Lingua Franca in the Foreign Language Classroom?**

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### **5.1 Introduction**

Intercultural speakers have existed for as long as there has been linguistic and cultural diversity. The difference now is the scale and the visibility of cross-linguistic and cross-cultural communication in the modern world. This may involve interaction between mother tongue (L1) speakers and those using a second or foreign language (L2); or between speakers using different varieties of the same L1, as within the varied English-speaking or Spanish-speaking world, where cultural assumptions are not necessarily shared, in spite of a shared language. Increasingly, though, it involves speakers of English as a lingua franca (ELF), where all parties use a language adopted for the purposes of wider communication.

The contexts for ELF use are many, varied and familiar, ranging from the routine exchanges of travellers the world over, of varying degrees of triviality or sophistication, to the more elevated exchanges of international conferences, or the vital and significant communications of modern international politics and diplomacy. ELF is accepted as a global medium of communication by L2 speakers and L1 speakers alike and its spreading use is now well documented (Crystal 1997; Cenoz and Jessner, 2000; Graddol 1997, 1999; James 2000; Labrie and Quell 1997; among others).

The focus of the current paper is an area of ELF use that is less well known: namely, the use of ELF in mediating the learning of a third language in the foreign language (FL) classroom, as experienced in the UK. We begin with an exploration of the background to this rather new phenomenon, and then provide an analysis of data from a case study of classroom interaction to illustrate the kind of use being made of ELF by learners and by teachers. We discuss the findings in the light both of recent work on lingua franca use and of thinking about input in the FL classroom before suggesting directions for future research.

## 5.2 The Context

As a result of globalisation and the spread of English, UK universities now receive large numbers of international students, many of them ELF-speakers who study all kinds of subjects, including foreign languages. For the foreign language classroom the resulting constituency of learners can be a heterogeneous, international, multilingual mix. Some of these students will start a completely new foreign language, since a particular feature of the UK university system is that foreign languages are offered at beginner level to the linguistically able. As a result, the target language (henceforth TL) is learned not in the TL country, or even in the student's own (L1) country, but in an intermediate, third country, in an international environment.

Such a multi-national classroom offers many virtues for FL teaching. The language teacher no longer has to strive to create an 'international' flavour because it is there, ready-made. Admittedly it is an *international* flavour, rather than a specifically TL flavour. However, to learn a language in an international environment is undoubtedly an improvement on a situation where everyone is of one nationality. The new situation at least transports learners to a slightly 'exotic' psychological state, which is perhaps half the battle of language learning – never easy whilst still held fast in a first-language mind set. Moreover, the new environment allows learners to exchange real information about their lives and cultures, something difficult to achieve when all share a national culture and know a good deal about each other at the national cultural level. Even discussion of daily routines and working weeks takes on a more interesting dimension when you really do not know what your pair-work partner's life style is.

It might be supposed that ELF plays *no* role in this context, since the prevailing pedagogical orthodoxy of recent decades, with its focus on communicative language teaching, has suggested that, in the interests of successful acquisition, TL alone should be used within the classroom, a philosophy that has been widely accepted and followed in the UK (Butzkamm 2003; Caldwell 1990; Cook 2001). Now there would seem to be even better reason for using TL as a lingua franca in the classroom from the very beginning: if students in the group do not share a first language why use any language other than the target language for classroom activities?

However, a method using TL-only input has its disadvantages at beginner and elementary levels, being slow in its requirement for inductive learning and not always well received by older, linguistically experienced learners who have developed a metacognitive awareness about language and who know what they want to know. As a result they seek rules and explanations, presenting language teachers with a dilemma, since metalinguistic knowledge in particular is not easily imparted to beginners in TL, at least not

without a considerable investment of time and ingenuity. The question arises, therefore, of what language should be used for such classroom interaction that requires a language level beyond the learners’ current ability, such as classroom management, learner inquiry, or task instructions. For a homogeneous group of UK learners a pragmatic approach to teaching and learning would lead to some expedient use of L1 (English). For a heterogeneous group, with no shared L1, the answer is less obvious.

Cumulative experience in this context has shown that, contrary to earlier expectations, the use of English has not been banished from the elementary FL classroom (see Coperias this volume). Now, however, the use of English is often initiated by ELF-speaking learners who use ELF to mediate their learning. To understand better what use is being made of ELF, how it is being used, and under what circumstances, we offer below a case study of activity within the FL classroom.

### 5.3 The Case Study

#### 5.3.1 The Subjects

The participants observed in this study were two groups of learners of Spanish at the author’s UK university. The learners were students of varied nationalities, including a few English native speakers. Most ELF-speakers had been in the UK for at least 8 months when recorded observations took place, but some were longer-term residents. The breakdown of nationalities, in Table 5.1, shows that, as has become usual in recent years, ELF-speakers constitute the majority of each group.

**Table 5.1** Group profile according to first languages spoken

<b>First Language (L1)</b>	<b>Group 1 (T1)</b>	<b>Group 2 (T2)</b>
French	3	7
English	5	2
Italian	5	2
Greek	-	2
Turkish	2	1
Arabic	1	1
Albanian	-	1
Polish	-	1
Slovenian	-	1
Czech	1	-
Total	17	18

The teachers of the groups were T1, a native English-speaker, who is an experienced, near-bilingual, L2 Spanish-speaker, and T2, an L1 Spanish-speaker, a near-bilingual in English. The groups were following the same course materials based on a text book and tapes, produced and published entirely in Spanish, including the instructional language. The learners, all beginners, had been studying Spanish for approximately 6 months. T2's group is taught exclusively by the Spanish native-speaker while teaching of T1's group is shared 50:50 with a Spanish native-speaker. The Spanish level of the learners was thus still basic, although classes had reached a point where it was feasible to conduct them entirely in Spanish and to expect learners to be able to understand and respond.

The English level of the ELF participants is good. All have a minimum level equivalent to IELTS 5.5 but in some cases it is higher, 7 or above. For many of the ELF students English is also a subject of study, as well as their medium of instruction in other classes. This means that outside the FL classroom ELF is usually their normal medium of communication unless they count other members of their L1 community among their friends. In these particular groups there are L1 friendships among Italian speakers, French speakers and Arabic speakers.

The teaching aims for both groups are similar, namely to encourage good comprehension of both spoken and written language and to develop both oral and written proficiency. Early emphasis is placed on listening and interaction in classroom, with a focus on meaning and communication. TL is the language of instruction from the beginning as far as possible. However, the target level aimed for and the limited input possibilities mean that anything felt to enhance the learning experience will be permitted. Consequently English is not ruled out, and is responded to if used, but in TL initially.

Classes involve a mixture of teacher-centred and whole-group interaction and group/pair task activity. This is course-book led to provide points of reference and to support follow-up independent learning activity but supplementary materials are also provided.

### **5.3.2 Method**

The data for this study comes from the recording of two two-hour class sessions at a point when both groups were studying similar material. Incidents of interaction involving ELF were transcribed and analysed. Subsequently, learners were asked to give feedback on their use of ELF in their Spanish classes.

Although the groups included a few English native speakers (Table 5.1), our interest was in ELF use among non-natives, hence examples given involve no use of English by native speakers, except for the case of T1. In any case, the English native speakers did not constitute a dominant sub-set of the groups, something which might be thought to influence English use within the classroom. English L1-speakers are not only a minority, but typically are less vocal than their more confident European peers when it comes to language learning.

### **5.3.3 Research Questions**

Our interest here was to find out the extent to which ELF is used, by whom and exactly what use is made of it. We thus examined ELF use in the provision of input, in metalinguistic commentary, in classroom management and in classroom interaction, whether between teachers and learners or among learners themselves. The results are presented in the section that follows.

## **5.4 ELF Use in the Foreign Language Classroom: Findings**

The recordings showed that both teachers, T1 and T2, consistently used TL for classroom management, for presentation of material and for interaction with learners. The dominant classroom discourse was TL discourse and ELF was relatively little used, but was used by both teachers and non-native speakers of English (henceforth NNSs) for specific functions and it clearly served as a useful form of scaffolding for the learning process. We examine the use of ELF first in relation to input and then in relation to classroom interaction.

### **5.4.1 Input Enhancement**

While both teachers use TL consistently throughout their class sessions, they and the ELF-speaking learners are inevitably aware of ELF as a shared lingua franca that is currently at a more advanced level than the target classroom lingua franca (TL). This knowledge is made use of to enhance the input given and received, both in relation to formal aspects of language and to clarification of meaning. We take examples first from the learning of morphology and syntax and secondly from the area of lexis.

### 5.4.1.1 Morphology and Syntax

Both teachers adopt an inductive approach to the teaching of morphology and syntax, presenting the material in TL and assisting learners to reach an understanding through TL. Usually occurrences of ELF are initiated by the learners themselves, although sometimes teachers do spontaneously clarify the input in ELF. Example 1, for example, offers a case of teacher-led use of ELF where, while maintaining predominantly TL input, what are perceived as potentially difficult key words in the metalinguistic explanation are offered in ELF without dwelling on them or otherwise code-switching into ELF. (Uses of ELF are highlighted in bold in the examples to distinguish them from translations, presented in italics.)

#### Example 1

T2: El imperativo se usa para dar instrucciones y para dar órdenes –  
 commands, instructions.  
*The imperative is used to give instructions and orders –*  
 commands, instructions

In example 2, T1 initiates the use of ELF, apparently from a sense that the explanation of a grammar query will be too complex or lengthy if made in TL, even though NNS makes the original query (¿Qué es ‘lo’?) in TL:

#### Example 2

T1: *(to class, in relation to audio/reading text being studied)*  
 ¿Qué es lo más interesante que ha hecho esta mañana?  
*What’s the most interesting thing he has done this morning?*

NNS: *(after long pause from Ss...)*  
 ¿Qué es ‘lo’?  
*What’s ‘lo’?*

T1: ‘lo más interesante’ means ‘the most interesting thing’...

NNS: ‘Lo’ is a pronoun isn’t it?

T1: ‘Lo’ is a pronoun. It means literally ‘what is the thing most interesting’ .... ‘lo’ is ‘the thing’ and it’s ‘lo’ because it’s neuter and does not refer to a specific thing, but just to something general.  
*(Explanation continues in ELF contrasting the neuter pronoun with gender specific pronouns relating to specific referent.)*

Usually, however, Ss initiate the use of ELF. In example 3 T1 wants Ss to focus on the agreement of ‘doscientas’ with the female referent. The response comes from an ELF speaker who spontaneously uses ELF to reveal that she has partially understood, although T1 continues to use TL



to try to draw out the full significance of the point she is trying to make. Eventually NNS shows full understanding, still using ELF. T1 accepts the ELF contributions from NNS but she does not change from TL use. Instead she tries to show that NNS could have made the same point easily in TL, by offering a final model in reply. For the learner it seems that the use of ELF allowed for what might be perceived as a more sophisticated expression, ‘they are all female’.

### Example 3

- T1: Doscientas fans... ¿Qué me podéis decir de los fans? Doscientas...  
 ¿Por qué doscientas?  
*Two hundred (+ f. agreement) fans... What can you tell me of the fans? Two hundred (+ f. agreement)... Why two hundred (+ f. agreement)?*
- NNS: It’s a number, no?
- T1: Sí es la cantidad... pero no dice ‘doscientos’, dice ‘doscientas’ fans  
*Yes, it’s the quantity ... but he doesn’t say ‘Two hundred (– f. agreement)..., he says ‘Two hundred (+ f. agreement)...*
- NNS: They are all female
- T1: Sí, son todas chicas.  
*Yes, they are all girls*

Elsewhere (example 4), another NNS asks a question about TL syntax in ELF, wanting to know if the subject verb inversion is essential. Again, the question could have been asked in Spanish in a simple way (‘¿se puede decir ‘Raúl ha hecho?’’), but NNS chooses a more complex formula and is clearly thinking in ELF at a metalinguistic level. On this occasion T1 replies briefly in ELF before reverting to TL, again perhaps sensing that explaining a stylistic point in limited TL is unlikely to be fully understood.

### Example 4

- T1: (referring to text studied)  
 Esto es lo más peligroso que ha hecho Raúl esta mañana.  
*(literal) This is the most dangerous thing that has done Raúl this morning.*
- NNS: Is it possible to put Raúl in front of ‘ha hecho’?
- T1: It doesn’t sound so good in Spanish.

At this point in the programme, Ss are still at the point where their command of ELF is significantly better able to deal with morphological or syntactic explanations like these. It is thus frequently the case that, having presented a new tense, for example, and having encouraged Ss to

understand the working of the tense through TL, a subsequent ELF explanation will be provided in confirmation of understanding. This is so, for example, in relation to verb morphology, where person and number and tense are reflected in the morphology of the verb. Since the ELF-speaking Ss have also learned English to a high level, it helps to be able to compare TL systems with English systems, about which the ELF speakers are very conscious, perhaps more so even than of their own L1 systems which are understood at a more subliminal, less analytical level. Informal feedback from a Turkish learner, for instance, suggested that understanding the three different past tenses of Spanish (past perfect, imperfect and simple past) was easier in relation to English (which has at least two of them), than in relation to her L1, whose tenses she feels are not similar at all to those of TL. ELF thus mediated her learning in a very conscious way.

#### 5.4.1.2 Lexis

It is perhaps in relation to lexis, however, that ELF provides the readiest source of input support. Numerous examples occur in the data of ELF being used to facilitate understanding of lexis, although often in an incidental rather than a focal way. T2 in particular has a favoured technique of presenting new vocabulary, whereby an ELF translation is sandwiched between two presentations of the TL word or phrase and the predominantly TL discourse of the classroom is preserved.

#### Example 5

T2: Tengo hambre. I'm hungry. Tengo hambre. ¡Qué hambre tengo!  
How hungry I am! ¡Qué hambre tengo!

At other points, as with syntax and morphology, ELF is used to confirm a meaning that Ss have hopefully deduced, as in examples 6 and 7:

#### Example 6

NNS: ¿Qué es afónico?  
*What is 'afónico'?*  
T2: Cuando no puedes hablar...  
*When you can't speak...*  
NNS: Aah  
T2: you lose your voice. Estás afónico.

#### Example 7

T1: Ha perdido la voz. Perder la voz. ¿Qué es la voz? Es algo importante para un cantante...

*He's lost his voice. To lose one's voice. What's 'la voz? It's something important for a singer...*

NNS: Voice...

T1: Sí, ésta es la voz. Si no tienes voz no puedes cantar. Dice 'he perdido la voz', he's 'lost his voice'.

*Yes, that's 'la voz'. If you have no voice you can't sing. He says 'I've lost my voice'.... He's lost his voice*

Sometimes overt attention is drawn to ELF for clarifying a new linguistic item. T2, for instance, draws explicit attention (example 8) to a Spanish-English contrast in explaining when to use 'tener' (as in 'tengo hambre': *I am hungry*) and when to use 'estar' (as in 'estoy cansado': *I am tired*). This reflects a tacit assumption that ELF is the common point of reference for all learners in the group, both L1-English and ELF users, and for the Spanish-speaking teacher, since no possible confusion would arise if it were not for prior knowledge of English, which does not make the same distinction.

#### Example 8

T2: Está expresando un estado, por ejemplo 'estoy cansado': I feel tired. Recordad que os dije que una regla para usar 'estar' es cuando en inglés podéis decir I feel.

*It's expressing a state, for example, 'estoy cansado': I feel tired. Remember that I told you that a rule for using 'estar' is when in English you can say I feel.*

Elsewhere explicit reference to English serves as a useful device for clarifying a subtle meaning distinction that derives from the Spanish use of reflexives to add an intensity of meaning. In examples 9 and 10 both T1 and T2 use this device as they switch between ELF and TL, weaving ELF translations into the fabric of their TL discourse:

#### Example 9

T2: (*confirming a task response*) 'vete a casa, go home, y ...descansa. El verbo es irse ... irse cuando se usa como reflexivo means 'to go away'. Pero aquí, de la misma forma podéis decir 've a casa', eh, go home. El verbo IR o IRSE. Vale, los dos quieren decir 'go' ... home es 'a casa' – ve a casa/vete a casa.

*'go (reflexive) home, go home, and ... rest. The verb is 'irse' (plus reflexive) ... 'irse' when used in its reflexive form means 'to go away'. But here, you can also say 'go (non-reflexive) home, go home. The verb IR or IRSE. Both mean 'go' .... 'home' is 'a casa' – go home/ go(away) home.*

## Example 10

T1: Se ha caído. ¿Qué es caerse? (*Demonstrates*)... To fall over. Es reflexivo.

Existe el verbo ‘caer’, significa ‘fall’, pero ‘caerse’ significa ‘fall down’, ‘fall over’

*He’s fallen over. What is ‘caerse’? ... (To ‘fall over). It’s reflexive. The verb ‘caer exists, it means ‘fall’, but ‘caerse’ means ‘fall down’, ‘fall over’.*

Most uses of ELF in examples 5, 8, 9 and 10 are limited to translating the specific items whose meaning is likely to cause some difficulty, while in example 7 ELF provides an interpretation, as T1 reports what the speaker has said, rather than giving an exact translation. In example 9 the ELF use veers at one point towards a more integrated code-switching, as T2 introduces the word ‘means’ into her Spanish discourse. A similar case happens in example 11 where the ELF clarifications are mostly still strictly translations, woven into the discourse, apart from the use of ‘so’. Having provided a whole-phrase translation, though, T1 then picks up individual words (‘salud’) and expressions (‘tienes que’) that she suspects might cause difficulty and then offers an additional translation.

## Example 11

T2: Si quieres tener buena salud tienes que.....hacer deporte. ¿Eh? So if you want to have good health, salud - health, tienes que, you have to, hacer deporte.

*If you want to have good health you have to ... do sport. Eh? So if you want to have good health, ‘salud’, health, you have to you have to do sport.*

Example 12, however, shows more fully developed intra-sentence code-switching. A substantial portion of ELF discourse is interwoven into the TL discourse when it becomes clear that Ss are having difficulty with a new word ‘agotador’.

## Example 12

T1: Agotador, ¿qué significa ‘agotador’? (...*silence*) Si haces una cosa muy dura, y al final estás muy cansado, dices que ha sido ‘agotador’ (*still no response*) – exhausting, wearing out. ‘Agotar’ is to wear out – it can be a thing or a person – so ‘agotador’ is something that really wears you out. Entonces lo más agotador que ha hecho Raúl es que...

*'agotador' What does agotador mean? ...If you are doing something that's difficult, and at the end you are very tired, you say that it has been 'agotador' - exhausting, wearing out. 'Agotar' is to wear out - it can be a thing or a person - so 'agotador' is something that really wears you out. So the most exhausting thing that Raúl has done is that....*

Ss Ha hecho muchos ejercicios.

*He's done a lot of exercise*

T1: Ha hecho muchos ejercicios, se ha entrenado mucho, sí, muy bien.

*He's done a lot of exercise, he's trained a lot, yes, very good.*

Interestingly, in example 12, the ELF intervention appears to succeed yet Ss as a group respond in TL, showing that the dominant discourse in the teaching situation is clearly TL, in spite of the intrusion of ELF. Such interweaving of the two languages, and the development of a kind of TL/ELF bilingual discourse occurs even more in more affective aspects of classroom discourse, to which we now turn.

## 5.4.2 Classroom Interaction

### 5.4.2.1 Class Management and Task Completion

ELF is used in a number of different ways to assist comprehension and to facilitate activity in the classroom. Task instructions are typically given by teachers in TL and only when Ss have demonstrated whether or not they understand is confirmation given in ELF. Example 13 follows a full explanation in TL of an impending role play, including how it will happen and what its purpose is. Learners are about to be given time also to read through the TL instructions.

#### Example 13

T2: ¿Está claro? Primero mirarlo y luego preguntar si hay preguntas. OK? So have a look at it, at your handout, and see everything you have to do. And ask me if you have any queries. ¿Alguna pregunta?

*Is it clear? First you look at it and then ask if you have questions. OK? So have a look at it, at your handout, and see everything you have to do. And ask me if you have any queries.....Any queries?*

As with input enhancement, above, teachers do not automatically code-switch in response if a learner initiates an ELF interaction but will frequently respond in TL as if the query were initiated in TL. This occurs where Ss are involved in group activity and seek either clarification of the task (example 14) or assistance with vocabulary that they want to use (15).

#### Example 14

NNS: So what we have to do.....describe them?

T1: No, no, tenéis que decir lo que han hecho estas personas recientemente

*No. You have to say what these people have done recently*

Example 15 is a good example of T2 apparently being taken off guard by the use of ELF, as she responds ‘¿Cómo?’ to the ELF query.

#### Example 15

NNS: How do you say ‘engaged’?

T2: ¿Cómo?

*What?*

NNS Engaged.

T2: Prometido (como ‘promise’) *continues to explain in TL ‘prometido’, like ‘promise’,*

In example 16 T2 is helping Ss complete an activity from the course book. NNS gives a wrong response (‘Tienes gripe’) and T2 adopts the technique previously seen (9) to clarify what are perceived as key phrases, that may not have been understood. When NNS indicates, using ELF, that she does not know the word needed, T2 accepts the comment but responds in TL, before clarifying finally in ELF, but with an interpretation rather than an exact translation (as in 7).

#### Example 16

[Ss are completing an activity that involves supplying a phrase previously presented]

T2: Cuando trabajas mucho y duermes poco ¿.....?

*When you work a lot and sleep little?*

NNS: Tienes gripe.

*You have flu*

T2: Trabajas mucho, ¿eh?, you work very hard, y duermes poco, you sleep very little. ¿Estás?

*You work a lot, eh, you work very hard and you sleep little, you sleep very little. You are?*

NNS: I don't know the...

T2: Agotado. Estás agotado. Estás muy muy muy cansado. (*Writes on board*) (*Says*) I'm exhausted.  
*Exhausted. You are exhausted. You are very, very, very tired. I'm exhausted*

The accepted use of ELF and the teachers' responses in these previous examples show ELF acting in a support role to the second language learning process. Although we cannot provide firm evidence of this from this 'snapshot' case study data, experience shows that if the learners' requests in ELF are accepted unobtrusively but dealt with in TL their confidence gradually grows to the point where they feel more able to inquire in TL themselves. Indeed queries are already occurring in TL (examples 2 and 6) but in many learners this point arrives only after some months of learning. The assistance of ELF provides a cushion, or scaffolding in socio-cultural terms (Antón and DiCamilla 1998: 318), to enable learners to negotiate the difficult early stages of language learning and offers protection for the psychological vulnerability of the new language learner. Such vulnerability is likely to heighten a learner's anxiety state, an area highlighted by studies of learner variables as potentially influencing successful learning (Ellis 1994: 479–83; Skehan 1989: 115–118). Oxford (1990: 140) talks of the 'tremendous influence over the emotional atmosphere of the class' that can be exerted by teachers. ELF is clearly deployed and accepted within the observed language classrooms as a valuable tool in reducing learner anxiety.

#### 5.4.2.2 *Interpersonal Relationships*

If the learner-teacher relationship is important in the learning process, so too is the relationship between learners, since group dynamics and peer relationships are also likely to be contributory factors in affecting a learner's anxiety state. Among the students themselves, the study shows that ELF serves on a number of occasions to cement the relationship between them. It is difficult in an embryonic language to establish the kind of easy, jocular relationship with peers that can help group bonding and create an ambience in which learners feel at ease. ELF helps to create this atmosphere and to allow the learners to reveal their personalities or make humorous comments to and about each other, or indeed about themselves. Through ELF they can assuage the sense of unease that learners feel when trying to express themselves in TL while acutely aware that their expressive potential is much more limited than someone of their age and intellectual ability would wish.

This is illustrated in examples 17 and 18. Both examples show interplay between males and females in the group, clearly at ease with each other, where ELF allows them to interact via ELF-TL code-switching to make jokes, based on male-female teasing. In example 17, NNS1 is describing a good looking film actor and a male (NNS2) offers himself, in ribald fashion, as the obvious answer – using ELF. A second female (NNS3) supplies the correct answer, at which NNS2 expostulates in TL at the idea that Brad Pitt is good looking. NNS3 retorts with good humour in ELF that ‘we (*females*) know these things’. T1 interestingly intervenes as a participant in this discourse, effectively switching it back to TL mode, although NNS2’s response is then part TL, part ELF – ELF helping out with the idiomatic, wry comment ‘come on!’ (directed at both teacher and fellow learners), when an appropriate TL phrase, such as ‘¡Qué va!’, is still not available in the learner’s interlanguage.

#### Example 17

[Learners are describing a person whose name the others have to guess]

- NNS1(f): Es muy guapo, y se ha divorciado y es ...  
*He's very good looking, and he's got divorced and he's...*
- NNS2 (m): Me  
*Laughter*
- NNS3 (f): Brad Pitt
- NNS2 (m): ¡¿Guapo?!  
*Good looking?!*
- NNS3(f): *laughs ... we know these things...*
- T1: Sí, es muy guapo  
*Yes, he's very good looking*
- NNS2 (m): No ‘muy, muy’, come on!  
*Not ‘very, very’, come on!*

Example 18 shows the interplay of TL and ELF when a female learner, who is developing a good, friendly relationship with her male peers, comments jokingly on the fact that a male (NNS1) can identify a blond female photograph when the rest of them cannot (‘How do you know all their names?’). Another male suggests in ELF that it’s ‘because she’s beautiful’ but the female learner jokes that the blond must be of the same nationality as NNS1 (‘She must be Italian’). T1 again participates in TL, diverting the discourse back to TL, as in the previous example.

#### Example 18

[Ss try to identify people in photos]

- T1: Otra persona de las fotos es bastante famosa. ¿Cuál?



- NNS1(m): *Another person in the photos is quite famous, which one?*  
 (It) La rubia...  
*The blond one ...*
- T1: La rubia, sí... ¿Cómo se llama?  
*The blond one, yes..... What's her name?*
- NNS1(m): Valeria Matsa ...
- T1: Sí, muy bien  
*Yes, very good*
- Other Ss: laughter.*
- NNS2(f): How do you know all their names?
- NNS3(m): She's... beautiful
- NNS2(f): She must be Italian (*laughter from others*)
- T1: ¿Es italiana, A.?  
*Is she Italian, A.?*
- NNS1(m): No, es argentina  
*No, she's Argentinian*

On other occasions, ELF serves a different purpose: it helps a learner out of difficulty or embarrassment within the group, by explaining that they cannot provide an apparently simple answer to a question because they do not know how to pronounce something, or have misunderstood a word in a question. In other words, it allows the speaker to save face as in example 19.

#### Example 19

[Referring to text where answers have to be picked out and comprehension is not difficult]

- T2 Si duermes en una mala postura, y te duele el cuello, ¿qué te pasa?  
*If you sleep in a bad position, and your neck hurts, what's the matter with you?*
- NNS: I understand what it says, but I don't know how to...  
*(presumably how to pronounce it)*
- T2 Tienes tortícolis. You have a stiff neck.

At other times learners use ELF to help each other out. In pair activity they can be heard explaining or questioning how the TL works in particular instances, sometimes even when they could have been expected to use a mutually shared L1. One particularly striking example occurred between two students, one a French native speaker and the other a bilingual English/French speaker. The French native explained a TL difficulty to his partner in ELF, rather than French (as might have been expected), 'it's like in French...'

Although no examples occurred in the recorded data, throughout the course learners have used ELF to elaborate cultural points, stimulated by contact with the TL culture. When learning about how surnames function in Spanish, or how Christmas customs work, or about particular festivals, learners in multilingual, multicultural groups want to be able to tell others about their home customs. This is of course encouraged to happen in TL, but at a point where their TL ability is limited they may be tempted into ELF by a desire to inform that exceeds their linguistic capability. Ultimately the teacher has to take a pragmatic decision: to cut the contribution, with the risk of demotivating and discouraging the learner at a personal level in a context where he or she has to develop a relationship with multicultural peers, or to allow the contribution to continue in ELF, with the attendant interest and involvement of the peer group and the consequent raising of the learner's stock in their eyes. In the interests of group bonding, and indeed of wider educational benefit, it is often wiser to allow the ELF elaboration to continue.

It must not be forgotten, though, that the prime motivation of the foreign language class is for the learners to learn the TL. In this regard, use of ELF can serve a useful intercultural function: when some aspect of the TL culture has been presented or explained in TL, the fact that learners want to clarify, comment and, indeed elaborate on parallel customs in their own culture using ELF, helps to reinforce learning in relation to the TL culture. It also helps the class teacher to confirm to what degree learners' understanding of the TL culture has been achieved through the TL itself.

TL and ELF can thus fruitfully work together in the early stages of SLA in the ways outlined. A valid question is whether the use of ELF has any detrimental effects on acquisition of TL. While one can see clear examples of transfer from learners' L1 from time to time, especially from speakers of French and Italian, there is only one obvious example in this data of confusion between ELF and TL on the part of an ELF learner, this from a speaker of Czech, whose own language is removed from either ELF or Spanish. She interprets the phrase 'tu personaje' in T1's initial question through ELF, when she responds 'two persons?'

#### Example 20

[Learners are identifying a well known personality according to what new worthy activities they have done recently]:

- T1: M., *dinos ¿qué ha hecho tu personaje recientemente?*  
*M., tell us what your character has done recently?*
- NNS1: Two persons?
- T1: No, tu personaje, no 'two persons'  
*No, 'tu personaje', not 'two persons'*

- NNS1: (*Laughter.*) Sorry! ... Ha vestido 'Nazi costume' y su padre ha tenido aventura.  
 Sorry! *He has worn 'Nazi costume' and his father has had an affair.*
- T1: En vez de 'costume' mejor decir 'traje' ... ha vestido traje de nazi, y su padre ha tenido una aventura, sí  
*Instead of 'costume' it's better to say 'traje'... he has worn Nazi costume, and his father had an affair, yes*
- NNS1: Bueno, y va ser rey, so it's obvious  
*Well, and he's going to be king, so it's obvious*
- NNS2: Prince er Harry
- T1: Y ¿cómo se dice 'prince' en español?... príncipe, el príncipe Harry, sí  
*And how do you say 'prince' in Spanish? ... príncipe, Prince Harry, yes*

This example suggests that at this point in this particular learner's interlanguage ELF and TL are somehow fused, perhaps not unlike the case of children developing bilingually who periodically mix their two languages. This impression is reinforced by her use of ELF for pragmatic functions, to apologise for her mistake ('Sorry!') and to minimise the likely transparency of her contribution ('so it's obvious').

## 5.5 Discussion

Two main issues of interest emerge from this experience of ELF in the third language classroom. One concerns the way ELF use in this particular context relates to other observations of ELF use. The other concerns the role that ELF is playing in a third-language classroom and how this squares with current orthodoxies on input in second language acquisition and with prevailing methodologies. We deal with each of these in turn.

### 5.5.1 ELF in Relation to Previous Research

Previous research on ELF has focused on its use in a variety of contexts, including casual conversation (Meierkord 2000), more formal, discussion contexts (House 2002a, 2002b), or business negotiation (Firth 1990), and among speakers of variable ELF ability. While some studies focus on ELF as a linguistic system (Jenkins 2000; Seidlhofer 2002; for example), others focus on the characteristics of lingua franca communication (see House

2002a, 2002b; Meierkord 2000; Meierkord and Knapp 2002). Messages emerging from studies to date suggest that ELF communication may frequently be superficial in nature, with speakers opting for 'safe topics' on which they can achieve a degree of consensus and avoid inadvertently raising taboo subjects (Meierkord 2000). At other times they engage in parallel monologues, not really interacting with each other (House 2002a) as native speakers would, perhaps because of different cultural assumptions about what polite interaction consists of. Generally, though, ELF use seems to be supportive, with ELF speakers helping each other out, not focusing on others' linguistic weaknesses and not focusing on misunderstandings, but being willing to change topic rather than highlight miscomprehension. Reference is made to the co-operative nature of much ELF interaction (Meierkord 2000; Meierkord and Knapp 2002; House 2002a).

Our ELF data comes from a very different context, but is perhaps nearest in kind to the casual conversation observed by Meierkord (2000) although now it is incidental to the main activity. Nonetheless, ELF use in our observed data is always purposeful, being directly focused on the task in hand (learning TL) and is clearly fundamental to the functioning of the FL classroom. The co-operativeness noted in previous studies has usually related to the face needs of other participants in interaction (avoiding embarrassment, disguising failures of comprehension, etc.). Here ELF use may instead protect own face-needs (examples 16, 19, 20), allowing learners to excuse their own perceived inadequacies and thus protect their own face in relation to both the teacher and their peers. In relation to others, a different kind of co-operativeness operates, learners using ELF, in these rather unusual circumstances, to create a mutually supportive environment for a common endeavour. ELF-TL code switching is used on a number of occasions, sometimes with the collusion of the class teacher, to allow a more continuous discourse than would otherwise occur (examples 11, 12, 13, 14, 17, 18). However, it is in the examples of extended inter-group interaction, that we find perhaps the most interesting occurrences of ELF as it takes on a real pragmatic function in the interaction, allowing the repartee (18 'how do you know all their names?!'), the casual comments (20 'so it's obvious'), the whimsical or ironic comments (18 'come on!'), or even expressions of regret (20 'sorry'), that are still unavailable in TL. In the recorded data, T1's group produced most of these examples. This appears to be a group at ease with itself and wanting to inter-relate at a level that TL does not yet allow. ELF at this point in learners' development clearly helps.

### 5.5.2 ELF Use in Relation to SLA Research

As regards the role of ELF in the language learning process, we indicated earlier that prevailing orthodoxies have for a long time stressed the need for maximising TL use in the second language learning classroom on the grounds that classroom input is the main, if not the only, source of input in the instructed learning process, a view that stems from the post-Krashen assumption that L2 learning will occur most successfully if the L1 learning process is simulated. This has led to the banishing of L1 from L2 classes and to L2 teachers being reluctant to admit to any use of L1 (Cook 2001). This view has been questioned in a spate of publications urging a reconsideration of the use of L1 in L2 learning (see *inter alia* Butzkamm 2003; Caldwell 1990; Cook 2001; Dodson 1972; Harbord 1992) and a recommendation that the L1 resource be more systematically exploited, especially among older learners, for whom a different learning process may be needed in SLA (Caldwell 1990). Socio-cultural approaches to L2 have also become prominent advocates of the importance of L1 in mediating the learning process through private speech and collaborative task completion (for a résumé and persuasive classroom evidence see Antón and DiCamilla 1998). L1 is seen both as an important cognitive tool in analysing L2 and as a vital tool in promoting effective collaboration in task-based activity.

What we have seen in the current study is ELF fulfilling several of the functions envisaged for L1 in some of the debate mentioned above. L1 use is not a classroom option here, as teachers do not normally have access to the learner's L1. Experience shows, and student feedback confirms, that those learners whose language is closely related to Spanish (notably Italian and French) clearly refer to L1 in interpreting Spanish vocabulary and understanding syntactic functioning. They admit to cross-referencing with L1 outside the classroom and can sometimes be heard using L1 in collaborative task activity with a partner from the same background. Those whose languages are distant from Spanish (Turkish, Arabic, Persian, for example) see L1 as unhelpful and find ELF more useful to them. All, however, seem willingly to collude in creating the ELF-supported environment in which they learn: ELF functions as the default medium of expression of the 'international environment', conducive to language learning, that we mentioned earlier.

Both teachers and learners, as we have seen, adopt a kind of code-switching behaviour between TL and ELF, where ELF bridges the gap between current level of ability in TL and the level needed for successful communication. ELF here fulfils the kind of scaffolding, or interpsychological function, described by Antón and DiCamilla (1998: 318),

whereby learners can focus on the elements within their range of ability while something/someone else takes charge of the elements that are currently beyond them. Both teachers and learners employ ELF in this sense, as when ELF is used to access TL lexical items or to understand text (examples 5–12). We would argue that it is also used in the inter-subjective function identified by the socio-culturalists in classroom interaction, where learners complete their discourse with elements from ELF (examples 17, 20).

## 5.6 Conclusion

The major conclusion that can be drawn from this study, in our view, is that it provides further evidence of the value of supplementing TL input with other linguistic resources in the early stages of adult language learning. Although we would in no way argue against maximising L2 input in SLA, arguments in favour of exploitation of L1 as a resource in SLA learning are persuasive and are reinforced by the evidence that, when L1 is not available, learners may, as here, opt to use instead a common lingua franca. Learners who are already fluent ELF speakers are cognitively advanced individuals, who know better than most what it means to learn a second language and they appear instinctively to call upon what prior linguistic knowledge they have as they negotiate the first stages of learning, even though from the outside such a mingling of language resources might appear potentially confusing. If at the same time they can function within a more natural environment where ELF provides some essential pragmatic functions in the discourse, this appears to be likely to be conducive to learning in that it reduces stress, preserves face and mediates the development of comfortable inter-group relationships.

What this study cannot show is the full extent to which learners use ELF and the extent to which they will continue to use it as their learning progresses. A number of lines of future research suggest themselves. Observation of ELF speakers' interaction in pair or group work, for example, would throw more light on the nature of ELF use in collaborative activity, especially its pragmatic function, and would permit a greater contribution to the understanding of the characteristics of ELF itself. Such observations could also show how far ELF is involved in the intra-psychological function of private speech among more advanced ELF speakers (Antón and DiCamilla 1998), or whether they revert to L1 or perhaps a combination of the two in mediating TL. Furthermore, different learners are also likely to make use of ELF in different ways. We saw above (20), a learner who has a kind of mingled TL/ELF interlanguage and

individual learner studies could reveal interesting variation in this respect. They could also help to show how long ELF continues to mediate learning, and with what ultimate effect, for those who begin as TL learners in an ELF context.

Clearly the current study represents only a first step in understanding ELF use in the SLA context and much remains to be understood. Platt and Brooks (1994: 509) speak of L1 as ‘really the only mediational tool fully available to learners, especially at the lower proficiency levels, for solving the kinds of problems we have seen in these various examples of talk.’ Butzkamm (2003: 29), lamenting the dogma of monolingual classrooms, sees the L1 as ‘the greatest asset people bring to the task of foreign language learning’ and one which ‘provides a Language Acquisition Support System.’ We would argue, on the basis of what we have observed here, that a lingua franca such as ELF can also serve as an efficient support system in certain contexts and is worthy of further exploration.

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## Writing-to-learn in Instructed Language Learning Contexts

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### 6.1 Introduction

It is a common observation that writing is part and parcel of learning and teaching second languages (L2) in many parts of the world, and this is certainly the case across Europe, precisely the context analysed in this book. It follows, then, that writing must play an important role in the life of students and teachers in instructed language contexts, just as its role must also be important in the life of many professionals worldwide for whom communicating through writing in an L2 plays a central part in their daily routine. These issues might explain the exponential growth of research on what learning to write entails (especially, although not solely, at university levels), the result of which has been an active research agenda that has included both theoretical concerns related to the three dimensions of writing (the writers themselves, their texts and the contexts in which they write and learn to write. See Cumming, 1990, 1998, 2001 for recent reviews), as well as more applied matters related to pedagogy. For instance, as one of us recently stated (Manchón 2001: vii):

scholars have devoted their efforts to trying to elucidate how writing teachers can best respond to and assess their students' writing, as well as how teachers and educational programs can best assist second language users (including disadvantaged groups) in their efforts to express their voices, purposes and intentions in a new language in a variety of educational settings and communicative situations, and for different purposes, participation in society and personal growth.

Featuring in a significantly less prominent place in the research agenda are scholarly discussions of other equally important theoretical and applied matters –perhaps more relevant in foreign (as opposed to second) language

learning contexts-, such as the actual role that writing plays or should play in the language learning experience of classroom learners (is writing an end in itself or a means to an end?), or the various personal (for both teachers and students) and/or institutional consequences that derive from introducing writing into school programmes.

There are indications, however, that this state of affairs might change in the near future. Two recent publications are representative of what we hope is an emergent critical line of enquiry. The first one is a lucid and ideologically committed paper by Ilona Leki (2001) with the suggestive title of “Material, educational, and ideological challenges of teaching EFL writing at the turn of the century”, in which she critically reflects on different sets of challenges faced by foreign language teachers both on a day-to-day basis, and also at a more general, invisible level. Among the former Leki mentions the problems derived from having to teach large classes, to accommodate local needs, to overcome the teachers’ own lack of professional training, or their students’ lack of training and experience in L1 writing. The more invisible, ethical and educational challenges discussed by Leki encompass a whole set of crucial concerns (which perhaps have much more far-reaching consequences, as the author herself acknowledges) such as:

the need to justify the large investment required on the part of institutions and individuals in order to teach L2 writing, the right to resist center imposed materials and methods, the need for a dialogue with students about the role of writing in their lives, and the need to make L2 writing enhance learner options rather than limit them so that for learners, writing in L2 becomes not a pointless additional burden but a powerful means of accomplishing personal goals (Leki 2001: 197).

The second publication representative of this recently-opened research avenue is Linda Harklau’s (2002) thorough and timely reflection on the crucial role that literacy plays in the learning experience of many foreign language learners and, thus, the need for more research on the issue in classroom-based studies of second language acquisition (SLA). Despite the fact that the issue of foreign language writing and intercultural writers has been partly tackled by some scholars (Ventola and Mauranen 1996), Harklau convincingly argues that in many instructed language contexts, and in contrast to what may be inferred from published SLA research, useful input for acquisition does not come about as a result of the interactions among the participants in the classroom, but rather through the printed word, as she herself could discover when she observed different American foreign language classrooms, and as the reader might also confirm on the basis of

his or her learning/teaching experience. This far-reaching observation leads Harklau to claim that SLA research still has to understand how these L2 learners exploit their literacy experiences in the accomplishment of their self- or other imposed learning goals, which means that at the level of theory and research “it is important to investigate how L2 learners learn how to write, but it is just as important to learn more about the instrumental role that writing can play in the acquisition of a second language in educational settings” (Harklau 2002: 345). Based on these premises, the author sets up a research agenda that includes learner and target language variation, multimodality and language socialization in classroom communication, and interactionist approaches to classroom research.

This chapter is motivated by a desire to contribute to this debate. We will do so by reflecting from two different angles on the learning potential of writing in instructed language contexts. Along the lines of the research agenda set up by Harklau, it is our aim to present the psycholinguistic rationale for the purported language learning potential of writing in instructed language contexts, a potential that, we will argue, is closely linked to the problem-solving nature of composing. Thus, our second building block is a review, albeit selective and synthetic, of the empirical evidence available (including data from our own research) on the problem-solving behaviour L2 writers engage in when they write. This is what we will do in the second part of the chapter, in which we offer a synthesis of the research on the problem-solving nature of the text-generation subprocess of composing (thus leaving out issues pertaining to how writers approach the planning and revision of their texts), but we shall limit our reference to essay writing, i.e. to cases in which an attempt is made to produce a whole text. The decision to focus on essay writing is based on the conviction that, although other forms of writing are present and surely useful in learning and teaching writing, as Hedge (1988) once put it, the ultimate goal of any writing programme ought to be to enable “students to write whole texts which form connected, contextualized, and appropriate pieces of communication” (Hedge 1988: 8). We conclude the chapter by mentioning some general implications of the research reviewed for the teaching of writing in instructed learning contexts.

## **6.2 A Psycholinguistic Rationale for the Language Learning Potential of L2 Writing**

Our analysis of the language learning potential of L2 writing is approached from two strands of research: cognitive views of writing, and cognitive accounts of SLA.

### 6.2.1 The Problem-solving Nature of Composing

It is our view that an explanation of the language learning potential of L2 writing needs to take account of the cognitive conceptualisation of writing as a *recursive, cognitively-demanding, problem-solving task*. In this view, the process of text creation is *recursive* because, as suggested by Perl (1979), writers' composing processes develop by "shuttling from the sense of what they wanted to say forward to the words on the page and back from the words on the page to their intended meaning" (p 330). Therefore, and in contrast to traditional beliefs, texts are not produced by first planning what one wants to say, then writing it and, finally, revising it. Rather, these three macro-processes (planning, formulation and revision) interact with each other in a cyclical manner in a way that makes it possible for any of these processes to be embedded in any other. What is more, the recursive nature of writing also entails a continuous backward and forward movement between the already written and the emerging text since what we have written exerts a very strong influence over what we will write next. As Flower and Hayes (1981) once put it, writers need to "juggle and integrate the multiple constraints of their knowledge, their plans, and their text into the production of each new sentence" (p 371).

This juggling of constraints explains in part why, in addition to being recursive, composing a text is also a complex, *cognitively demanding task* that involves continuous *decision-making and problem-solving activity* on the part of the writer. Problem solving in this context means that an organism (in our case somebody trying to produce a text) has to cross a gap between two points (known as "initial state" and "end state", respectively) and that the gap cannot be crossed automatically, i.e. it requires a search process. To put it in a different way, composing a text is a task in which goals are continuously set, although not automatically achieved. The goals pursued may be related to any possible dimension of text creation, from language-, text-, or content-concerns, to issues of purpose or audience. The problem-solving process is the thinking process one engages in to get from the initial to the end state and it has been defined as a sequence of cognitive operations, also referred to as problem-solving strategies (see Manchón et al., forthcoming, for a review of the empirical research on L2 writing strategies).

Researchers in the field have attempted to shed light on the type of problems L2 writers pose themselves while composing, the search processes they engage in, and the writer-internal and/or writer-external variables that influence the writers' problem-solving behaviour while they attempt to express themselves in their L2 (as reviewed in Roca et al. 2002). We will synthesise this research in a later section, but at this juncture let us

clarify a couple of points. First, it is important to note that all stages or subprocesses of composing (i.e., planning, formulation –or text generating– and revision) entail problem solving, although in L2 writing this is especially the case during text-generating activity, i.e. when an attempt is made to transform ideas and intentions into language. The explanation is that, compared to more able, experienced, or proficient L2 users, the majority of L2 learners have less knowledge of the L2 (at some or all linguistic levels), and/or less possibility of having automatic access to the L2 knowledge that they possess. Thus, when faced with the dialectic between content and rhetorical concerns that lies at the heart of writing, L2 writers are likely to experience many “gaps” between their content concerns (their intended meaning) and their rhetorical concerns (how to convey their intentions successfully, with “success” acquiring here various possible meanings).

Second, it is pertinent to refer to two further aspects of the problem-solving nature of composing which have crucial pedagogical implications. The first is that writing problems fall into the category of “ill-defined problems”, i.e. those for which either the actual end state one is trying to reach is not clear at the start, and/or the search process is a question of using heuristics rather than algorithms. The second is that writing problems are self-initiated in the sense of their being the result of one’s own goals, intentions, and perception of task demands. As such, the problem-solving route followed by the writer, in addition to being self-initiated, is not fixed as it can be easily modified, or even replaced by an alternative route that, in extreme cases, could entail “problem avoiding” rather than “problem solving” behaviour: writers may attempt to reach the original end state of the problem space, set a less distant end state from the original one, or even abandon the search altogether. The traditional distinction between “risk-taking” -or “achievement”– and “risk-avoiding” – or “reduction”– oral communication strategies (cf. Faerch and Kasper 1983) somehow echoes these possible problem-solving routes. The implication is that it cannot be taken for granted that, when confronted with identical writing tasks, all writers will necessarily engage in identical problem-solving behaviour. This issue has crucial implications for pedagogical decision making. For instance, it would seem reasonable to suggest that one of the teacher’s tasks is to create learning conditions for “all” learners to engage in what we could call “deep problem-solving behaviour”. These conditions are closely linked to, *inter alia*, issues of task design (see Manchón 1999 for an example of how different prompts encourage students to pursue goals of increasing complexity) and to teachers’ responses to the students’ writing, the ultimate aim of which –as repeatedly stated in the relevant literature– is to give students reasons for

revision, i.e. to give them problems of a different nature from those they posed themselves in the first place.

Returning to the problem-solving nature of composing and to its relationship with the learning potential of writing, it has been suggested that when L2 writers fully engage in their attempt to express thoughts and ideas in writing, i.e. when they employ deep problem-solving behaviour, they will of necessity have to solve the multiplicity of problems involved in writing. This problem-solving activity would result in a linguistic exercise that might, in turn, contribute to the student's progress in his/her language learning process, and do so in two different ways: repeated and guided writing practice may help the student in *knowing more about the language*, and also in *becoming more competent at using the language*. The psycholinguistic rationale behind these assumptions is related to the role that attentional processes and certain types of practice have in second language development, as we discuss next.

### **6.2.2 Attention and Practice in L2 Development**

Some cognitive processing models of L2 acquisition view it as the acquisition of a complex skill (DeKeyser 1998, 2001; Segalowitz 2003) and, accordingly, the process involves a gradual progression from having declarative L2 knowledge (i.e. knowing what), to the proceduralization of declarative knowledge (i.e. knowing how), and then to the automatization of procedural knowledge (i.e. being able to use the L2, receptively and/or productively fast, unconsciously and without effort or attention). In the words of Segalowitz (2003: 395):

Initially, the execution of a cognitive skill involves retrieving and using declarative knowledge to solve the problem at hand, involving the application of production rules upon the declarative knowledge [...] [T]he transition from declarative knowledge to procedural knowledge through the application of production rules occurs via a process called proceduralization. This involves passing from a cognitive stage where rules are explicit, through an associative phase where rules are applied repeatedly in a consistent manner, to an autonomous stage where the rules are no longer explicit and are executed automatically, implicitly in a fast, coordinated fashion.

Seen from a cognitive angle, the progression from having L2 declarative knowledge to being able to use the L2 with automaticity comes about as a result of the actual processing engaged in by the learner. And it is precisely here where two processes associated with composing become crucial: to

progress in L2 development learners need to engage in meaningful and challenging L2 production, and to do so through “real practice” (in contrast to “controlled practice”). These statements need further unpacking.

The learning potential of producing language is associated with the “Output Hypothesis” (Swain 1985), which posits that output, in addition to being the end result of the language learning process, can actually have an important role in promoting language development. Its main tenet is that producing language (either orally or in writing) pushes learners into making their output more precise, coherent and appropriate. This is especially so when learners experience communicative difficulties in the sense of having to struggle to express their intentions, as in the case of writing when conceptualised as a form of problem solving in the sense explained above. The production of this type of output is thought to contribute to second language development as a result of the hypothesis-testing, metalinguistic, noticing, and a fluency functions attributed to output (Swain 1995, 1998):

The *hypothesis-testing function* is predicated on the grounds that the internal or external feedback obtained on their productions can help L2 learners to test their L2 hypotheses (see Shehadeh 2002 for a review of the empirical research in this area). In the case of writing, and in contrast to the on-line production of messages in oral interactions, writers have time to write and rewrite, to search for an optimal match between intentions and their expression. This search may trigger internal feedback in the form of self-evaluation of one’s own choices, for instance, a process that quite often is done through the writer’s L1, as we shall see later. In addition, learners also obtain external feedback on their writing, because responding to students’ writing is, has been, and will always be an integral part of pedagogical approaches to the teaching of writing, which might explain the abundant attention that matters of feedback have received in the research in the area (see Ferris 2002, 2003 for recent comprehensive accounts).

The second purported function of output is the *metalinguistic function*. Swain suggested that the production of output is “the trigger that forces the learner to pay attention to the means of expression needed in order to successfully convey his or her own intended meaning” (Swain 1985: 249). This reflection on language (which, it should be remembered, comes about while engaged in meaningful communication) may help students develop their L2 knowledge, most probably at the level of declarative knowledge: “Reflection on language may deepen the learner’s awareness of forms, rules, and form-function relationship if the context of production is communicative in nature” (Izumi 2003: 170). Whether or not this awareness has a long-term impact on learning is still an empirical question, as is also the question of whether or not this impact results in expanding

L2 declarative knowledge or in restructuring L2 declarative knowledge to facilitate its proceduralization.

In line with other important developments in SLA research, producing output is also thought to serve a *noticing function*, by which it is meant that when producing oral and written language, L2 learners may notice the gap between what they know and can do, and what they need to know in order to convey successfully the messages they want to communicate: “It is while attempting to produce the target language [...] that learners may notice that they do not know how to say (or write) precisely the meaning they wished to convey” (Swain 1998: 67). In the case of writing, “noticing the gap” may encourage learners to look for alternative ways to express their intentions, either by searching existing knowledge or relevant/expert sources, which in turn may lead to expanding one’s own learning resources. This is more likely to happen in writing than in oral production because of the time factor: in writing we are in control of the flow of time, thus facilitating attention to form while performing the communicative task. It is perfectly possible for the communicative function (i.e. actual writing) to be called to a halt while one pays attention to the form of the language, behaviour that could easily lead to a breakdown in communication if done while engaged in oral interaction.

Common to the three functions of output mentioned so far is the assumption that learners can pay “attention” to language while writing, and that this is beneficial for language learning because (i) attention allows the L2 learner to become aware of the gap or mismatch between what they can communicate and what they would like to communicate, and (ii) through external feedback and the process of monitoring one’s own productions, learners may also notice the gap between the rules underlying their production and the L2 rules, as well as the gap between what they can produce and what more proficient users of the L2 (for instance their teacher) produce or ask them to produce.

But these attentional processes may just trigger the learning declarative knowledge. However, as suggested earlier, skilled performance is governed by procedural knowledge, which comes about with practice. As noted by DeKeyser (1998:30):

[...] proceduralization is achieved by engaging in the target language behaviour –or procedure- while temporarily leaning on declarative knowledge [...] Repeated behaviours of this kind allow the restructuring [...] of declarative knowledge in ways that make it easier to proceduralize.

It is precisely at this point where we can establish a link with another function attributed to output, i.e. the *fluency function*. It has been claimed



that “extended practice, under particular conditions and circumstances, will increase fluency by developing automaticity” (Segalowitz 2003: 401). What is more, the promotion of automaticity requires “massive repetition experiences and consistent practice” (Segalowitz, 2003: 402). It follows that engaging in meaningful, frequent and guided written practice can be an ideal scenario for the development of automaticity and fluency in second language acquisition.

In short, there are convincing grounds to posit a language learning potential for the problem-solving activity involved in frequent, repeated and guided practice in writing whole texts which (echoing Hedge’s and Swain’s words again) form connected, contextualized, coherent, and appropriate pieces of communication. We now turn our attention to what empirical research has uncovered about the nature of this problem-solving activity.

### **6.3 The Problem-solving Nature of Writing Processes: Research Insights**

As announced earlier on, what follows is a synthesis of the research that has focused on the problem-solving nature of L2 writers’ composing behaviour while engaged in the subprocess of text generation. Although we will make general reference to the research in the area, the analysis pays particular attention to the empirical findings obtained in a comprehensive programme of research on cognitive writing processes that we have conducted over the last ten years. Let us start, then, with a brief overview of the project as the necessary background for the research synthesis that follows.

The original drive behind our research project, entitled *A crosssectional study of EFL writing processes*, was to contribute to current theorizing on second language writing, and to do so with data from a study conducted in a foreign language context. More precisely, we attempted to investigate whether or not cognitive activity is influenced by some writer-related and task-related factors: (i) the writer’s command of the L2; (ii) the cognitive demand of the task to be performed; and (iii) the language of composition, i.e. whether writers composed in their L1 or L2.

The participants were three year groups in the Spanish educational system with 6, 9 and 12 years of instruction in English whose L2 proficiency was assessed with a standardised test. Each level was composed of 7 participants, who were all Spanish native speakers. Level 1 consisted of high school pupils aged 16–17; Level 2 was composed of

university students of Education aged 19–20; while the informants in Level 3, aged 23–24, had recently graduated after completing a five year degree in English. Gender was not controlled in the design of the study. There were 4 males and 3 females in Level 1, 7 females in Level 2, and 6 females and 1 male in Level 3, which was more or less a proportionate representation of their year groups.

Data for the project consisted of the participants' think-aloud protocols while performing an argumentative and a narrative task in L1 and L2 (4 tasks in total). Participants were given 1 hour to complete each task. As explained elsewhere (see especially Manchón et al. 2005a), part of the reasons for our choice of concurrent protocols was the belief that it would afford us a more accurate picture of our participants' on-line processing, and this was essential given the phenomenon we wanted to investigate: cognitive activity while writing. However, as with the use of any other methodology, we needed to reduce the threats to validity associated with this method. This entailed taking decisions basically at three levels: the design of the study, the elicitation of the verbalisations and the coding of the data.

### **6.3.1 The Problem-solving Nature of Text-generating Activity: Research Insights**

Although only three studies have specifically focused on the analysis of text-generating activity (Chenoweth and Hayes 2001; Roca de Larios et al. 2001; Roca de Larios et al. 2006a), reference to this subprocess of composing appears in many other process-oriented L2 writing investigations, and therefore some conclusions can be drawn about the nature of this important writing process, which is in fact, the only compulsory activity while writing: writers may decide to plan or not to plan, to revise or not to revise their text, but there is no text at all if the writer does not attempt to transform ideas into language.

#### *6.3.1.1 L2 Writing is Less Fluent than L1 Writing.*

Research has consistently shown that writing fluency (operationalized as the number of words written, or as the number and length of pauses) is affected by the difficulties involved in L2 composing (Silva 1993). As compared to their L1 writing, L2 writers tend to produce fewer words of written text (cf. Chenoweth and Hayes 2001; Sasaki and Hirose 1996; Silva 1993) and show a higher number of pauses and a lower number of words between them (Chenoweth and Hayes 2001; Krings 1994; Roca de Larios et al. 2001; Whalen and Ménard 1995). It is still an empirical question whether or not

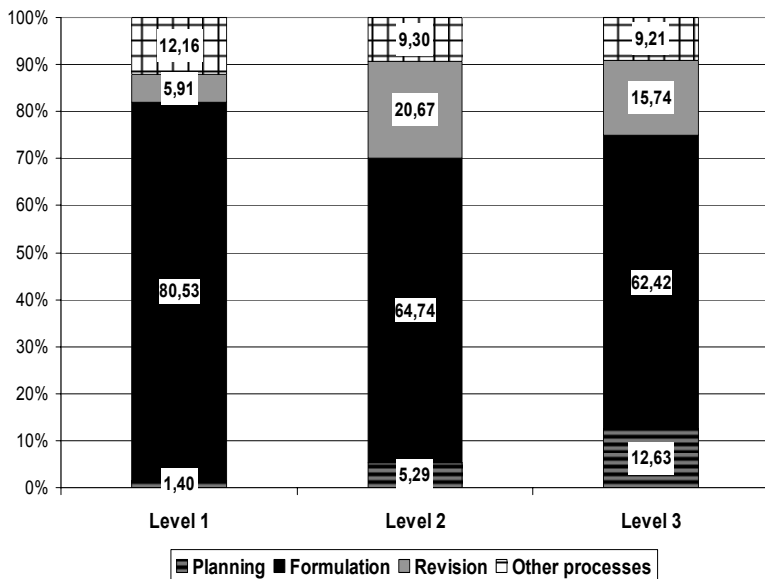
these two aspects of writing (number of words written and pausing behaviour) are affected by writing skill (see review in Roca et al. 2002).

### *6.3.1.2 Text-generating is the Writing Subprocess that Consumes more Writing Time*

As could be expected, consistent empirical evidence has been obtained regarding the predominance of text-generating activity while composing. Wang and Wen (2002), in a study of Chinese learners of English, found that their participants devoted over 60% of their time to sentence construction, a finding interpreted by the authors as suggesting that “text-generating activity might be the most difficult among all composing activities” (p 239). Our own empirical data offer clear evidence in the same direction: the time devoted to formulation by our participants ranged from 62% to 80% of their total composition time (Manchón et al. 2005b; Roca et al. 2001). Taken together these data offer further empirical evidence of previous findings in L1 writing that L1 writers mainly devote their efforts to transforming ideas into language. However, important quantitative differences exist between the 2 language conditions: while L1 writers have been reported to devote around 50% of time to formulation, in the L2 condition this figure can rise to 80%.

In addition, if we look closely at the picture of the writers devoting most of their writing time to generating their texts, we are able to see further details. Two of them stand out: on the one hand, not all the time devoted to formulation is used to solve problems and, second, there is a clear proficiency-dependency in the way L2 writers distribute their time among different composing activities, which, in turn, affects how much time is devoted to generating their texts.

In Roca et al. 2001 an attempt was made to uncover how writers manage the trade-off between fluent transcription and the range of problems they have to solve on-line in L1 and L2 writing. Interestingly, it was found that across languages, and regardless of the writer’s L2 proficiency level, the writers under investigation devoted more time to fluent formulation (i.e. generating text without having to engage in problem solving) than to problem-solving formulation. However, and this is evidence of the more labour-intense nature of generating texts in a non-native language, these writers, when writing in their native language, spent five times longer on fluent formulation, whereas in the L2 condition, the ratio was 2/1, i.e. generating texts without having to engage in any type of problem solving required twice as much time as problem-solving formulation processes.



**Figure 6.1** Time allocation to planning, text generation and revision in L2 writing

The second issue we mentioned above is that the way L2 writers distribute their time is proficiency dependent (Manchón et al. 2005b). The tendency observed in our data is towards a more balanced allocation of time to different processes as proficiency increases, which concurs with previous findings in both L1 and L2 writing research that associate successful writing with an appropriate balance among writing processes (Hayes and Nash 1996; Pennington and So 1993; Raimes 1987; Smith 1994).

As can be seen in Figure 6.1, the three groups of participants in our study devoted most of their time to generating their texts. However, we also observe in Figure 6.1 a gradual decrease in the time devoted to transcription processes as a function of proficiency, complemented by a parallel increase in the time devoted to planning, and revision as proficiency increases. This differential allocation of processing time results in a more balanced allocation of time to different composing activities.

### *6.3.1.3 The Type and Range of Problems Tackled While Text Generating Activity is Proficiency-dependent and Varies in L1 and L2 Composing*

We have conducted different studies (Roca et al., 1999, 2001, 2006b) in which we tried to ascertain what type of problems writers tackle while they generate their texts, as well as whether or not this problem-solving

behaviour varies (i) cross-linguistically, and (ii) as a function of the writer's L2 proficiency level. This research focus is in part the result of the fact that previous studies had produced contradictory findings regarding whether or not writers deal with the same type of problems in L1 and L2 writing. Thus some investigations have empirically confirmed a decrease in the number of goals generated in L2 composing (Skibniewski 1988), with writers tending to give priority to morpho-syntactic and lexical aspects rather than to rhetorical and textual ones (Whalen and Ménard 1995). In contrast, other studies point to similarities across languages in the attention paid to grammar, spelling, and vocabulary (Sasaki and Hirose 1996), content, language, and discourse (Uzawa 1996).

In our own data (cf. Roca et al. 1996, 1999, 2006a), we found both similarities and differences. Thus across proficiency groups, writers allocated around 50% of their time to solving compensatory problems (i.e. those that derive from lack of interlanguage resources or lack of automatic access to relevant knowledge). Concerns related to the upgrading of lexical, stylistic and rhetorical options constituted the other 50%, and occupied a percentage of time similar to that spent on solving similar problems in L1 writing, a condition in which compensatory problems were practically nonexistent. It appears then that, although there is a common ground of upgrading concerns that runs across languages, writers have to invest more time in formulating their L2 texts because they have to add the compensatory problems in order to produce meaningful messages. Similar results were obtained in another study (Roca et al. 1999) in which we set out to investigate lexical searches, an important component of text-generating activity which we operationalised as the access and retrieval of lexical items through which the writers can express their intended meaning. We found that our participants struggled with various types of lexical problems, including higher-level concerns (concerns of lexical precision and appropriacy, a characteristic usually considered typical of writing expertise), search for translation equivalents (in cases in which the intended meaning is encoded in the L1), and problems derived from lack of access to relevant lexical items in long-term memory with which to express the intended meaning. All these problems were present in L2 writing, whereas in the L1 condition the participants tackled a more restricted range of lexical problems as they did not have to engage in searches to find translation equivalents, or tackle problems that derive from being unsure about the correctness or appropriacy of the option available to express the intended meaning. Given this crosslinguistic difference, it might be concluded that L2 writers may need a wider range of strategies than those developed in their L1 to deal with lexical problems when composing in an L2. If this were the case, the pedagogical implication

would be that learners should be helped to develop specific L2 writing skills to be added to their general L1 writing skills.

Regarding the proficiency-dependency of the writer's problem-solving behaviour, and in relation to the study of lexical problems that we have just referred to, it was found, as could be expected, that with increased proficiency, L2 writers faced fewer L2-specific lexical problems. This finding matches the developmental trend observed in the other studies in which we have focused on the tackling of L2 formulation in general (not just lexical issues). We observed that the lower the proficiency of the writers, the more they were found to engage in compensating for interlanguage deficiencies vis à vis ideational or textual preoccupations (Roca de Larios et al. 1999, 2006a).

#### *6.3.1.4 L2 Writers use a Wide Range of Problem-solving Strategies While Engaged in Text Generation*

As recently reviewed in Manchón et al. (forthcoming), empirical research has greatly contributed to uncovering the strategic behaviour L2 writers engage in while composing. Regarding the process of text generation in particular, and as part of our global research project, we have studied in detail three very characteristic writing strategies: Restructuring, Backtracking, and, what is perhaps the most characteristic feature of L2 writing, the use of one's native language (or any other language known) in the process of creating a text in a second language. We shall summarise this research next, although in broad strokes rather than in detail.

##### *6.3.1.4.1 Restructuring*

This strategy is conceptualised as the search for an alternative syntactic plan once the writer anticipates or realises that the original one is not going to be satisfactory for a variety of linguistic, ideational or textual reasons. In our data (Roca et al. 1999) restructuring was implemented at all three levels of discourse (ideational, textual and linguistic) for two main purposes: to compensate for limited language resources or –interestingly– to upgrade the form in which the writers had originally expressed their meaning. Our interpretation was that, by manipulating this strategy successfully, writers can find a better match between intention and expression. Examining the effect of L2 proficiency on the deployment of this strategy we found that the participants were able to restructure, regardless of their level of L2 competence; however, each group distributed time differently. In line with other findings reported above, the intermediate group spent seven times longer on restructuring their texts for

compensatory purposes than the advanced group. In contrast, the advanced group allotted twice as much time as the lower group to restructuring for textual and ideational purposes. Considering the results from a different angle, the intermediate group was more balanced in its distribution of the time spent on upgrading and compensatory purposes, while the balance in the advanced group tipped heavily in favour of spending time on restructuring to upgrade rather than to compensate. This lends support to the idea that increasing proficiency allows greater control over the strategy, probably because automatization of language skills frees up cognitive resources to be deployed on higher level writing processes. Thus, our contention is that restructuring is not just a crutch for the L2 writer to lean on to compensate for limited language resources but a powerful strategy to manage the complex and multilevel nature of discourse production.

#### *6.3.1.4.2 Backtracking*

We mentioned above that writing is a recursive process that involves continuous rescanning of the text written so far as a way of moving forward. If, as has been suggested (Flower and Hayes 1984), a text is simply one instantiation, among many possible ones, of the writer's unwritten plans, goals and alternatives, backtracking the already written text may serve the purpose of checking the correspondence between intentions and expression. Rescanning the already written text also allows the writer to evaluate the role played by the text written so far in the generation of further text:

In composing sentences, writers frequently reread the beginning of an incomplete sentence in order to get a “running start” in composing the next segment. Writers appear to use the text written so far to remind them of the constraints imposed by what has already been written (Hayes and Nash 1996: 41).

These assumptions have received empirical confirmation in a number of studies (cf. Breetvelt et al. 1996; Raimés 1987; Smith 1994; Van den Bergh et al. 1994; Wong 2005; Wolfersberger 2003). The picture that emerges from this research is that writers rescan their texts in a variety of ways and for various purposes. Our own data (Manchón and Roca 2005; Manchón et al. 1998, 2000a, 2000b) indicate that L2 writers use both their languages for rescanning their texts in a variety of ways including a) back-translating literally, or b) paraphrasing, c) skimming-and-dipping, or d) summarising stretches of text through the L1, as well as the more expected direct rereading in the L2. In line with previous research findings, the participants in our research used backtracking for both retrospective and prospective purposes. However, we found that the main use of this strategy

was to move forward, especially regarding the process of text generation: writers strategically resorted to backtracking as a trigger to keep on generating ideas to be incorporated into their texts, and to solve the different linguistic problems tackled while they attempt to transform their intentions into language.

#### *6.3.1.4.3 L1 Use in L2 Writing*

The study of the writer's use of his/her L1 while engaged in L2 writing has featured prominently in the research agenda. This interest derives from the recognition that any comprehensive and explanatory theory of L2 composing must adequately account for a basic distinguishing feature that sets L1 and L2 writing processes apart, which is that, in contrast to L1 writers, L2 writers have at their disposal two linguistic systems. As Raimes (1987: 441–42) once put it, “Second language writers can be viewed [...] as bringing to the act of composing the additional and beneficial dimension of linguistic and perhaps rhetorical knowledge of another language”. Therefore, an empirical question in the field has been to ascertain whether or not L2 writers switch to their native language in the process of L2 composing, under what conditions, for what purposes and with what functional benefits. In our recent review of this issue (Manchón et al. forthcoming), we concluded that, regarding the text-generation process, writers resort to their L1 for three main purposes: to generate and rescan their texts (see above), to tackle linguistic and stylistic problems (both in their attempt to find a way to express their intended meaning, and also to evaluate and refine their lexical and syntactic choices), as well as to organise and structure their texts (perhaps as a result of lacking the required meta-language to be able to talk/think about these issues in the L2).

Due to its relevance for pedagogy, it is pertinent to refer to the debate as to the possible benefits or drawbacks of the generation of ideas through the L1. While some scholars argue that this procedure may be beneficial (especially when writing about L1-culture topics), others contend that the very act of translating a message originally encoded in the L1 may add to linguistic problems, thus slowing down the writing process and may even block the generation of ideas. However, a close look at the research available shows that the beneficial or detrimental effects of this use of the L1 (at both product and process levels) seems to be dependent on a number of variables pertaining to the writers themselves (e.g. the detrimental effects have been observed mainly in cases of low-proficiency writers) and to the task environment, especially regarding the time on task. Thus, in the studies that have compared direct and translated writing (Cohen and Brooks-Carson 2001; Kobayashi and Rinnert 1992), it was observed that,



if the time to complete the task is limited, the usefulness of the translation strategy decreases as its deployment would involve extra time needed to translate the L1 generated content into the L2.

In short, recourse to the L1 appears to be a strategy purposefully used by L2 writers in their attempt to solve the multiplicity of problems involved in the act of composing, and this strategy appears to be one of the most striking L2-writing phenomena.

## 6.4 Concluding Remarks

In this chapter we have argued in favour of the language learning potential of the problem-solving activity involved in frequent, repeated and guided practice in writing whole texts that form connected, contextualized, coherent, and appropriate pieces of communication. Apart from the role that this type of writing may play in the students' personal and academic growth, the view defended here is that this linguistic exercise may lead to the acquisition of declarative knowledge about the L2 (as a result of the attentional processes implemented during the act of writing), as well as to the proceduralisation of this knowledge (via engagement in the type of real practice that writing entails).

The empirical research reviewed in the preceding pages has shed light on the nature of this problem-solving behaviour while writing that is deemed to be conducive to learning. In our view, one clear implication of this research is the importance of the temporal dimension of writing. We have learned that most of the time employed while communicating through writing is devoted to the linguistic exercise of transforming ideas into language. However, when one becomes more competent at performing this task as a result of having developed more L2 proficiency, more time is available to pose oneself other types of higher-order problems at the levels of planning, revision or text generation, for instance, by tackling more sophisticated lexical problems. We have also learned that the efficacy of the deployment of some strategies is also dependent on the time available to complete the task. We mentioned the case of the use of the L1, although the same applies to other strategies, as we concluded in our recent review of the empirical research on composing strategies (Manchón et al. forthcoming). Similar findings have been obtained with respect to other aspects of writing, for example revision. For instance, Porte (1996) concluded from his analysis of the writing performance of a group of university EFL writers that "what encourages more extensive and profound revision may not be so much the amount of composing time made available in one session but rather the distance that can be created between

the writer and his or her text by judicious distribution of time across a number of sessions” (p 115).

In our view, it can be validly inferred from this research that L2 writers need time, time and more time to engage in the type of deep problem-solving behaviour that is thought to lead to L2 development. Hayes and Nash (1996) reviewed a number of studies which clearly offered empirical evidence of the strong relationship between text quality and time-on-task, and concluded that, if students do not spend the required amount of time on the completion of their writing tasks, “they will fail to face and solve the writing problems their writing assignment pose. Thus, writing instruction will suffer” (p 53).

It is obvious that simply allowing time-on-task will not guarantee the students’ involvement in deep problem-solving writing behaviour. The pedagogical intervention also entails finding ways to engage students in the writing tasks set, which links up with issues of motivation, a growing area of SLA research (see Dörnyei 2005 for a recent comprehensive account), although the study of writing has been absent from the research agenda in this area. Similarly, writing instruction has to pay attention to crucial issues in task design and implementation, as well as to finding ways of responding to student writing in meaningful ways to initiate and maintain their motivation, and to encourage them to solve problems of a different degree of sophistication from those the students posed themselves in the first place.

What lies ahead is a research agenda in which, first, the purported learning functions of L2 writing are put to empirical test, and, second, researchers search for answers related to the best ways of creating optimal conditions to foster the learning potential of L2 writing in instructed language learning contexts so that writing, echoing Leki’s (2001) words, becomes a powerful means of accomplishing language learning goals.

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## **The Acquisition of Pragmatic Competence and Multilingualism in Foreign Language Contexts**

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### **7.1 Beyond Second Language Acquisition: Learning Additional Languages**

Multilingualism is a very common phenomenon all over the world and one of the obvious reasons is that the number of languages spoken in the world nowadays (approximately 6000) clearly outnumbers the number of countries (approximately 200). The role of English as the most important language of wider communication also contributes to multilingualism in many countries in which English is learned as an additional language. The study of multilingualism and the acquisition of additional languages (going beyond the second language) has had a very important development in the last years as it is reflected in publications (Cenoz and Jessner 2000; Cenoz et al. 2001, 2003; Hoffmann and Ytsma 2003; Safont 2005). The new journal ‘International Journal of Multilingualism’ and the International Conferences of Multilingualism both focusing on the acquisition and use of more than two languages in different contexts also confirm the developing interest in this area.

Second language acquisition and the acquisition of additional languages have a lot in common but there are also some important differences between the two processes. The process of acquiring an additional language can be affected by the fact that learners have already faced the task of acquiring a second language. This influence can be reflected in the development of learning strategies and metalinguistic awareness. Moreover, additional language learning can be influenced not only by the first language but also by other languages already acquired. Therefore, the study of the acquisition of additional languages is potentially more complex because it involves all the factors related to second language acquisition plus additional factors related to the size of the learner’s linguistic repertoire and his/her experience as language learner (Cenoz and Genesee 1998).

The areas that have received more attention when comparing second and third language acquisition have been metalinguistic awareness, learning and communicative strategies (see Cenoz 2003a for a review). Research on the effects of bilingualism on metalinguistic awareness has associated bilingualism with a higher ability to reflect on language and to manipulate it. A number of studies have also reported that multilinguals use a wider variety of processing strategies (see for example Nayak et al. 1990). Multilinguals have been found to have greater flexibility in switching strategies according to the demand characteristics of the task and to modify strategies when they realize they are not effective. Bilingual children have also been reported to be more sensitive to the communicative needs of their interlocutors and to use more varied communication strategies (Genesee et al. 1975; Thomas 1992).

Several studies have analysed the influence of bilingualism on third language by comparing bilingual and monolingual learners acquiring a third language. These studies tend to confirm the advantages of bilinguals over monolinguals in language learning. The results concerning general aspects of proficiency indicate that bilingualism has a positive effect on third language acquisition when this process takes place in additive contexts and bilinguals have acquired literacy skills in both their languages (see for example Bild and Swain 1989; Thomas 1988; Cenoz and Valencia 1994; Sanz 2000).

However, not all research studies report positive effects of bilingualism on third language acquisition. Some studies comparing the degree of proficiency achieved in the third language by bilingual immigrant students and majority language students have reported no differences (see Sanders and Meijers 1995; Van Gelderen et al. 2003). These results highlight the influence of social factors in language acquisition.

Regarding specific studies of pragmatic competence in the acquisition of additional languages we can mention Safont (2005). This research study focuses on the differences between monolinguals and bilinguals regarding pragmatic competence and metapragmatic awareness. Participants were 160 monolingual and bilingual students from Jaume I University who were learning English. Safont (2005) used open role-plays, an open discourse-completion test and a discourse evaluation test. The results of the study indicate that bilingual learners' degree of pragmalinguistic awareness was higher than that of monolinguals. Bilinguals also showed better results in oral and written production tasks and therefore showed a better performance in formulating requests.

The advantages of multilingualism and the positive effect of previously acquired languages on the target language have also been reported by different individuals when asked about their lives in different languages

(see Belcher and Connor 2001). For example Stevern Beering, former president of Purdue university, was raised in German and French before going to the US and considers:

I think my ability in English, which I wish were better, has been enhanced very much by my lengthy study of Latin –in a German Gymnasium Latin is required – and then by my early education in several languages. I think automatically about the proper positioning of words and syntax and grammar and spelling. I spell much better because I started with multiple languages (Beering and Connor 2001: 204).

Second language acquisition can take place formally (through instruction), naturally (outside school) or by a combination of instruction and natural acquisition. When several languages are involved, there is more potential for diversity. For example, Ytsma (2001) proposes a typology of trilingual education which includes 46 types and it is based on factors such as the linguistic distance between the languages involved, the use of the third language in the sociolinguistic context or the age of introduction of the third language. This diversity makes the process of studying multilingual acquisition quite complex.

## 7.2 Pragmatic Competence and Multicompetence

Pragmatic competence also called actional competence has been defined as: “the competence in conveying and understanding communicative intent, that is, matching actional intent with linguistic form based on the knowledge of an inventory of verbal schemata that carry illocutionary force” (Celce-Murcia et al. 1995: 17).

Some researchers distinguish between two dimensions of pragmatic competence: pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic competence (Leech 1983; Thomas 1983). Pragmalinguistic competence refers to the linguistic elements used in the different languages to perform speech acts. “Pragmalinguistic knowledge requires mappings of form, meaning, force and context” (Kasper 2001: 51). For example greetings can be expressed in different ways in different languages and in many cases it is not possible to have a literal translation:

Example 1

Spanish: ¡Buenos días! (*Good days*)

English: ¡Good morning!



Sociopragmatic or cultural component is related to implicit social meaning, and there can be different assessments of social aspects of the context, such as the social distance between the speaker and the addressee. Sociopragmatics refers to the link between action-relevant context factors and communicative action (e.g. deciding whether to apologize or not) and does not necessarily require any links to specific forms at all (Kasper 2001: 51). LoCastro (2003: 125) gives the following examples that can illustrate difficulties with sociopragmatic competence:

#### Example 2

[A clerk making a comment in English, her second language, to a visiting professor from the United States]

Clerk: “oh, you look like you’re ready to go to the beach...”

As LoCastro (2003) says the professor finds it difficult to interpret the pragmatic meaning of this utterance and has several possibilities. It can be interpreted as a compliment about the dress and sandals she was wearing, a criticism for wearing such clothing to an office or an icebreaker, showing the clerk’s desire to be friendly.

LoCastro (2003: 230–231) also gives an example of misattribution or faulty assessment of other participants’ intentions. She refers to the expression used in the North of England by postal clerks, both male and female who may address their regular customers with:

#### Example 3

‘Morning, luv, what can I do for you’

As LoCastro (2003) says customers not used the expression ‘luv’ in this context may take offence, mainly if the clerk is male.

Differences in linguistic and cultural backgrounds can produce important misunderstandings because they imply different rules of interaction and the use of different linguistic terms to convey meaning. As Boxer (2002) points out cross-cultural competence is increasingly critical in multilingual and multicultural contexts.

Pragmatic competence and pragmatic failure both at the pragmatic and sociopragmatic levels is studied by cross-cultural and interlanguage pragmatics. Cross-cultural pragmatics has adopted a sociolinguistic perspective and has focused on the comparison of speech acts by speakers with different cultural backgrounds. Each speech community has some values and beliefs which are the basis of their own culture. The speech acts they produce reflect this culture and therefore different cultures do not

produce or understand speech acts in the same way. Studies in cross-cultural pragmatics analyse the strategies and linguistic forms used in the formulation of speech acts. The comparison of distant cultures provides very interesting results and there is a substantial number of studies on speech acts formulated in Asian and Western cultures (see for example Ide 1998; Wong 2004). It is interesting to observe that differences are not only related to each language but also to each speech community. For example, speakers of different varieties of English or Spanish show important differences in the formulation of some speech acts.

On the other hand, interlanguage pragmatics adopts a second language acquisition perspective and focuses on the study of the pragmatic development of second and foreign language learners. Interlanguage pragmatics analyses the way language learners acquire and use pragmatic competence. Kasper and Schmidt (1996) pointed out that most studies in interlanguage pragmatics had focused on second language use rather than development, that is, they had adopted a product approach rather than analysing the process of acquiring pragmatic competence. This limited focus is changing and there is an increasing number of studies on the developmental aspect of interlanguage pragmatics (see Kasper and Rose 2002).

Pragmatic competence is one of the components of communicative competence and it is included as such in the most important models of communicative competence (Bachman 1990; Celce-Murcia et al. 1995; see Cenoz 1996 for a review). Pragmatic competence was considered as part of sociolinguistic competence in Canale and Swain's model (1980); other models include sociolinguistic competence as part of pragmatic competence (Bachman 1990) but others consider it as independent but related to other competencies (Celce-Murcia et al. 1995).

Second language learners and learners of additional languages need to acquire pragmatic competence along with all the other components of communicative competence: linguistic competence, sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic competence. When several languages are involved as it is the case in third language acquisition, it seems to be quite unrealistic to expect learners to acquire a native-like level of competence in all these different components. In fact, the traditional idea of competence as related to second language acquisition has been challenged. Grosjean (1992), Cook (1992, 1995), and others consider that the traditional position is a 'monolingual view of bilingualism' because we refer to monolingual native competence as a goal to be achieved by multilingual learners to monolingual learners. As Edwards (1994) points out a perfectly balanced bilingual or multilingual is exceptional. Most learners do not achieve native competence in a second or third language and in some cases teachers and learners feel this as failure in the language acquisition process. This feeling is derived

from the fact that only native speakers' norms are considered and not the needs that learners have and the way they are going to use the language. Even highly educated second language users who have been in contact with English after moving to the US declare that they are still more comfortable in the L1 (Kubota 2001) or that they feel they write as a foreigner even if their writing is ok (Kulwicki 2001) or they still feel they are learners and that learning English is a lifelong process (Tsai 2001). These feelings of incompleteness have also been confirmed by researchers working on the age factor who consistently report that second language learners do not achieve native competence unless they arrived to the host country at a very early age (see Singleton and Ryan 2004 for a review).

This view of bilingualism in which native proficiency in the first and second language is expected has been considered by Grosjean (1992) a "fractional" view of an idealized form of bilingualism which is different from the holistic view he proposes. Bilinguals seldom have balanced proficiency because they have developed communicative competencies in two languages according to the specific contexts in which they learn to use them. The language competence of bilinguals should not be regarded as simply the sum of two monolingual competencies, but rather should be judged in conjunction with the users' total linguistic repertoire.

Cook (1992) has proposed the notion of "multicompetence" to designate a unique form of language competence that is not necessarily comparable to that of monolinguals. According to Cook (1992), second language users should not be viewed as imitation monolinguals in a second language, but rather they should be seen to possess unique forms of competence, or competencies, in their own right. Herdina and Jessner (2002) also adopt a holistic view of bilingualism and emphasize the fact that multilingual competence is dynamic rather than static.

These alternative views of bilingualism are particularly interesting when applied to multilingualism and multilingual acquisition. If we go beyond bilingualism, we are even less likely to find balanced multilinguals because the multilingual speaker has a larger linguistic repertoire than monolinguals but usually the same range of situations in which to use that repertoire. Thus, although all of the components that are generally regarded as part of communicative competence among monolinguals may be necessary for effective communication in multiple languages, multilingual competence presents specific characteristics that distinguish it from monolingual competence. Multilingual speakers tend to use different languages in different situations for different purposes. Therefore, while they may need all the components of communicative competence in total, they do not necessarily and often do not need to develop all competencies to the same extent in each language.

### 7.3 Acquiring Pragmatic Competence in an Additional Language in a Foreign Language Context

There is a considerable body of research on the acquisition of pragmatic and discourse competence in first language acquisition and it has been found that children acquire pragmatic competence from a very early age even at pre-verbal stages (see for example Fletcher and MacWhinney 1995; Ninio and Snow 1996; Clark 2004). Parents help the children's acquisition of pragmatic competence and often remind children that they have to use expressions such as 'Thank you' or 'please' to mitigate the impact of requests on the hearer. Schools also pay attention to the acquisition of pragmatic competence, mainly in the first years and they try to teach children to be polite when they formulate speech acts.

One of the few studies on the acquisition of pragmatic competence by a trilingual child is Barnes (2005). Barnes reports the development of questions and their functions in English by a trilingual child in Basque, Spanish and English. This study shows that this trilingual child with English as the 'mother' tongue shares some of the characteristics of the development of questions reported in other studies but also that her development has some special characteristics because of the interaction with other languages. These findings are limited to one of the languages but are compatible with the concept of multicompetence proposed by Cook (1992, 1995) because they indicate that a multilingual speaker has distinctive characteristics.

The study of contrastive and interlanguage pragmatics in second language acquisition has also developed in the last years. Research in contrastive pragmatics points in the direction of a universal and a language specific component in the realization of speech acts. The universal pragmatic knowledge is shared across languages and explains, for example, that the same basic strategies (direct, conventionally indirect and nonconventional indirect or hints) are used in the realization of requests in different languages (Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper 1989). Here is an example of the three strategies:

#### Example 4

Direct: *Please open the window*

Conventionally indirect: *Can you open the window?*

Nonconventional indirect or hints: *It is cold, isn't it?*

At the same time, there are different interactional styles and important cross-linguistic differences in the selection, distribution and realization of speech

acts. For example, German speakers are more direct than British English speakers when uttering requests (House and Kasper 1981) and Hebrew speakers are more direct than American English speakers (Blum-Kulka 1982). Learning speech acts in a second or a third language does not only imply that we have to learn the new linguistic elements but also new social attitudes to know how these linguistic elements are used. It is very common that linguistic elements cannot be transferred from one language to another. This does not necessarily mean that speakers of different languages are more or less polite but that they use different resources.

As an example we can compare the following sentences in English and a regional variety of Spanish from Spain:

#### Example 5

English: *Could you close the door please?*

Spanish standard: *¿Podrías cerrar la puerta por favor?*

Spanish variety (Navarre): *Cierra la puertica.*

*Close the door-DIM*

The utterance in the Navarrese variety of Spanish seems to be more direct because it uses the imperative and does not add 'please'. However, the diminutive, the intonation and the gesture that usually accompany this type of utterance mitigate the request and produce an effect which is comparable to the English or Spanish standard. It is interesting to see that a similar use of the diminutive was already reported by Sifianou (1992) for Greek and its use to minimize the request has also been discussed for Colombian Spanish by Travis (2004) who gives the following example:

#### Example 6

Me hace un favor, un vasito con agua

*Could you do me a favour. A glass-DIM of water* (Travis 2004: 264)

The use of different linguistic and paralinguistic elements to convey requests can produce misunderstandings and Spanish or Greek speakers of English could be regarded as rude if they just transfer their utterances into English literally. In this case the use of the diminutive, the intonation or the gesture may be overshadowed by the imperative and the request may be considered impolite.

Differences between languages reflect different interaction styles and are related to social and cultural aspects. The differences are seen not only in the general style of the interaction but also in the selection, frequency and distribution of linguistic elements.

Studies on interlanguage pragmatics have shown important differences between native and non native speakers in the formulation of requests (Blum-Kulka 1983; Blum-Kulka and House 1989; Faerch and Kasper 1989), apologies (Olshtain 1983, 1989; Bergman and Kasper 1993) or complaints (House and Kasper 1981; Olshtain and Weinbach 1993). Differences are related to the type of structure used, the strategies, intensifiers or the perspective. Studies in interlanguage pragmatics also analyse the way pragmatic competence is acquired (see Kasper and Rose 2002).

Pragmatic failure differs from other types of failure because it is not easily recognizable by interlocutors who may judge the speaker as being impolite or uncooperative or attribute the pragmatic errors to the speaker's personality. Moreover, pragmatic failure is common not only among students with low proficiency in the target language but also among advanced language learners presenting a good command of grammatical and lexical elements (Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford 1990). The most common explanation for pragmatic failure is pragmatic negative transfer (Thomas 1983) defined as "*the influence of L1 pragmatic competence on IL pragmatic knowledge that differs from the L2 target*" (Kasper and Blum-Kulka 1993: 10). Pragmatic negative transfer can take place at the pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic levels (Blum-Kulka 1991; Thomas 1983). In the case of pragmalinguistic failure, the learner uses linguistic elements which do not correspond to native forms and can produce breakdowns in communication or socially inappropriate utterances. At the sociopragmatic and cultural level, the learner produces an inappropriate utterance because he/she is not aware of the social and cultural rules affecting speech act realization in a particular language. These rules can involve a different perception of social psychological elements such as social distance, relative power and status or legitimization of a specific behaviour. Pragmatic negative transfer has been observed in a large number of studies but there is less research on positive pragmatic transfer or other common processes in interlanguage such as overgeneralization (Kasper 1992).

Bardovi-Harlig (1996, 2002) has identified four main differences between the way native and nonnative speakers use speech acts. First, native and nonnative speakers may use different speech acts. An example of this was reported by (Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford 1993) who found that native speakers used more suggestions and nonnative speakers more rejections. Second, native and nonnative speakers may use different formulas for the same speech act. For example nonnative speakers may give more additional explanations when they 'waffle' by mitigating supportives as reported in Cenoz and Valencia (1996). Third, they may use

similar formulas but the content may be different. For example an explanation is provided but the content is quite different in the case of native and nonnative speakers. Fourth, the utterances produced by native and nonnative speakers may differ in the linguistic forms used.

The effect of instruction on the acquisition of pragmatic competence has been analysed in different research studies and its effect has been proved to be positive (see for example Rose and Kasper 2001; Martínez-Flor et al. 2003). After analysing the results of a number of studies on the effect of instruction Kasper and Rose (2002) conclude the following: i) pragmatic competence is teachable; ii) instruction has a positive effect and iii) explicit instruction with ample practice opportunities produces the best results.

Most studies in interlanguage pragmatics have been carried out in contexts where the second language is used. As Boxer says “Interlanguage pragmatics typically takes the perspective that it is the task of the language learner or newcomer to acquire the norms of the host community” (Boxer 2002: 151). The acquisition of pragmatic competence in a foreign language context with very limited exposure to interaction with native speakers has some characteristics which make it different from acquiring pragmatic competence in the community where the language is used. Some of these characteristics are the following:

- a) The learner is usually closely identified with his/her own language and culture. In this situation it may seem unnatural to adapt to the sociocultural rules of another culture which is seen as remote.
- b) The model of pragmatic competence offered in other contexts by native speakers is only shown indirectly through teaching materials. In the case of English it is even difficult to identify one model of reference because of the different varieties.
- c) The interaction with native speakers in natural contexts is very limited and in some cases there is no interaction at all. This situation implies that there is no feedback for the student and no communicative need.

These characteristics apply in different ways in different foreign language contexts because there are important differences regarding the opportunities to use the foreign language. In fact, the difference between ‘second’ and ‘foreign’ should be considered as the two ends of a continuum which includes other intermediate positions. Foreign language instruction can be combined with the experience of studying abroad which provides opportunities to develop pragmatic competence in a more natural way. Even within the school context the methodological approach can be more or less close to natural exposure to the language. For example, when

the foreign language is the main medium of instruction it is more likely to find natural situations to develop pragmatic competence. The role of the target language in the specific sociolinguistic context in which the learning is taking place is very important to provide opportunities to use the language with other speakers or to observe the way the language is used in the media.

The situation of acquiring pragmatic competence in a foreign language can even be more complex if the target language is only one of the languages in the learners' repertoire. The use of several languages can develop in different types of interaction as it can be seen in the following section.

## **7.4 Interaction between Languages / Multilingualism**

The acquisition of communicative competence in more than one non-native language is an enormous task. Even if we do not aim at acquiring native competence in all the components of communicative competence the task is certainly difficult. This section will focus on some aspects of the pragmatic component of communicative competence when a third language is acquired.

Transfer and cross-linguistic influence have a long tradition in second language acquisition studies but most studies do not consider the possibility of a bidirectional relationship between the two languages. Studies in interlanguage pragmatics follow the same tradition and tend to analyse the influence of the L1 on the L2. In the last years some researchers such as Kecskes and Papp (2000) have pointed out that there is evidence to prove that the L2 can also exert an important influence on different areas of the L1. Cook (2003) has collected a series of research studies on this 'reverse' or 'backward' transfer affecting different areas with a different combination of languages.

In the area of pragmatics the interaction between the L1 and the L2 has been reported by Blum-Kulka (1990) and Blum-Kulka and Sheffer (1993) who found that requests issued in English (L1) and Hebrew (L2) by American immigrants to Israel fully competent in the two languages differed significantly from both Israeli and American patterns. These requests presented a level of directness that could be situated between American and Israeli requests. The fact that second language learners of Hebrew differ from native speakers is not remarkable if we take into account that native proficiency is not achieved by most second language learners but it is interesting to observe that their first language differs from that of other Americans.



Blum-Kulka (1991) proposes the intercultural style hypothesis to define the development of an intercultural pattern which reflects bi-directional interaction between the languages. Research with immigrant population in other countries is also compatible with this hypothesis. For example Clyne (2003) reports the phenomenon of convergence in trilingual speakers who tend to make their languages more similar. There is also a lot of anecdotal support for this hypothesis. For example, some Spanish advanced learners of English are said to use *'por favor'* (please) and the conditional *'podría'* (could you?) more often than other Spanish speakers who are not proficient in English. It is true that the influence of English on Spanish can also be noticed at a wider sociolinguistic level but this is a different phenomenon. For example, the expression translated from English *¿Puedo ayudarlo?* (Can I help you?) is very commonly used by shop assistants nowadays and has the same function as the more traditional Spanish questions *¿Qué desea?* (What do you wish?) or *¿Le atienden?* (Are you being served?). This is an example of a loan expression that could come from the increasing number of multinational corporations and has some impact on language change. The intercultural pattern proposed by Blum-Kulka affects individuals who are in contact with other languages and it is the result of this contact at the individual level.

Another example of this pattern is reported by Cenoz (2003b). Cenoz carried out a study on the formulation of requests in English by university students in the Basque Country. Participants had Spanish or Basque as their first language, and they were studying English. The study aimed at analysing if the requests uttered by learners of English reflected bidirectional interaction, that is if the intercultural hypothesis could be confirmed.

The subjects (n=69) were divided into two groups according to their level of English. The subjects were divided into two groups according to their proficiency in English: the 'fluent in English' group was composed by 49 subjects who were specializing in English Studies and the rest of the subjects (n=20) were Psychology students with a very low command of English ('non-fluent in English' group). All the participants filled in a discourse completion test in English and Spanish. The five elements considered for analysis were the following: alerters, request strategies, syntactic down-graders, lexical downgraders and mitigating supportives.

The results indicated that subjects whose first language is Spanish and who are fluent in English do not present differences when they formulate requests in English and Spanish, that is, they tend to use a similar number of alerters, preparatory strategies, syntactic downgraders, lexical downgraders and mitigating supportives. The qualitative analysis of the utterances also indicates that they use the same type of elements when

formulating requests in English and Spanish. The use of similar pragmalinguistic elements to formulate requests in the two languages could partly be due to transfer from the first language (Spanish) into English. Pragmatic transfer is well documented in second language acquisition research. Nevertheless, the existence of pragmatic transfer from the first into the second language does not exclude the possibility of a more complex bidirectional interaction between the two languages. In fact, the comparison of the requests formulated in the first language (Spanish) by the two groups provides evidence to support the 'Intercultural Style Hypothesis'. These results reveal some quantitative and qualitative differences when requests are formulated in Spanish by the 'fluent in English' and the 'non-fluent in English' groups. Speakers who are fluent in English use their interlocutors' first name more often, more indirect strategies and a wider range of syntactic downgraders, lexical downgraders and mitigating supportives.

The advanced group seems to be developing its own intercultural style using requests which differ both from English (see Cenoz and Valencia 1996) and from the Spanish group who does not have a high level of proficiency in English. These advanced learners seem to have developed an intercultural pattern which is reflected both in the similarity between the requests uttered in Spanish and English and in the differences between these requests and those formulated by other native speakers of Spanish.

These results highlight the importance of analysing bidirectional interaction in pragmatic development and confirm the intercultural style hypothesis. This intercultural style is more likely to develop when more than two languages are involved. The fact that multilinguals are exposed to different dimensions of communicative competence in several languages and in the case of pragmatic competence to different ways to achieve pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic competence in the different languages could enhance the use of simplification strategies. In this way, multilinguals could use the same common underlying conceptual base and develop an intercultural style which explains the similarities of their requests in different languages. Monolinguals do not have the need to use these simplification strategies and their requests correspond to their experience in a single language.

## **7.5 Conclusions and Future Perspectives**

This chapter has focused on pragmatic competence as related to multilingualism and foreign language contexts. It has tried to link the already well developed area of cross-cultural and interlanguage pragmatics

to the specific area of multilingualism and the acquisition of additional languages. Moreover, it has focused on the acquisition of pragmatic competence in foreign language contexts. The situation discussed in this chapter has not received enough attention on part of researchers but it is extremely common all over the world.

To acquire pragmatic competence in several languages in a foreign language context is even more challenging than to acquire pragmatic competence in a second language in situations where the learner is living in the L2 speech community. Some second language users have reported to change personality when they speak different languages (see Enkvist 2001: 55) but it is unlikely for multilingual learners in foreign language contexts to give up their personal and social identity and their own style of communication when using each of the languages in their linguistic repertoire. It is not very realistic to think that learners can become native speakers of a second language and even less realistic to think that they can become native speakers of several different languages. As Cook (2003: 5) says even when only two languages are involved L2 users' knowledge of their L1 and L2 has some distinctive characteristics. In the case of multilingualism it is even more important to consider that there is interaction between the languages a multilingual speaker uses and that learning of an additional language can have an effect on the other languages. There are also many research questions to be answered regarding the interaction between the different languages at the pragmatic level. Bilinguals are in general terms more efficient learners of a third language (see Safont 2005 for pragmatic competence). It would be very interesting to conduct further research so as to know if they adopt the same intercultural style for all their languages and to see if this intercultural style is different from that of second language learners or from that of learners who go beyond third language acquisition and learn additional languages. One of the most important advantages associated with bilingualism is the development of metalinguistic awareness. The development of pragmatic awareness is crucial for the intercultural speaker to be competent at the pragmatic level (for a review of pragmatic awareness see Alcón and Safont, in press). It is crucial to carry out studies so as to know if multilinguals differ from monolinguals regarding pragmatic awareness and if they do it is important to analyse the type of specific characteristics associated with multilingualism.

In spite of the difficulty of acquiring pragmatic competence the intercultural speaker needs to be an efficient speaker in order to avoid misunderstandings when s/he interacts with native and non-native speakers of the target language. The intercultural speaker does not have to be an ideal native speaker of each of the languages s/he uses and as House (2003: 149) suggests:

the yardstick by which such a 'still unstable' ELF speaker should be measured is the stable bilingual or multilingual speaker under comparable social, cultural, historical conditions of language use with comparable goals for interaction in different discourse domains.

The aim is not to imitate native speakers of a specific variety but to make learners aware of the pragmatic conventions of different varieties so that they are in House's words 'expert users' of the language. Awareness raising is of course the first crucial step for the acquisition of pragmatic competence.

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## Interindividual Variation in Self-perceived Oral Proficiency of English L2 Users

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### 8.1 Introduction

Studies in SLA that focus on individual differences in oral proficiency can roughly be divided in two categories: firstly studies based on cross-sectional designs with the aim of identifying the underlying characteristics of the most proficient learners (Naiman et al. 1978), or in longitudinal designs, typically running the length of a school year, where the development of proficiency of individual learners can be analysed and linked to sociobiographical and psychological factors. Longitudinal studies allow researchers to measure the impact of specific teaching methods, or of the effect of a period spent abroad, on the learners' interlanguage. The problem with longitudinal studies is the difficulty in generalizing the findings. Firstly, because the samples are usually relatively small the results are often inconclusive: the difference between significant and non-significant results may depend on the presence or absence of a few outliers. Secondly, local factors (not necessarily identified by the researcher) may have neutralized the hypothesized effects of independent variables, for example, a dislike shared by the participants for a particular target language or method of instruction which might have overshadowed any effects of personality. Thirdly, longitudinal studies are seldom "long" enough.

Researchers involved in longitudinal studies typically follow participants over a one-year to a three-year period during which the learning process is on-going. We are unaware of really long-term studies (say a period of ten years) on the effects of the teaching method or study abroad on students' levels of proficiency (see however Regan 2005 and Regan et al. to appear who looked at the performance of study abroad students one year after their return). The aim of the present study is to avoid these pitfalls by investigating individual differences in a large



sample of L2 users rather than L2 learners. In other words, we will consider a socially diverse group of adult multilinguals with different native languages who have been using the same L2 (English) for quite some time since leaving school without necessarily reaching native-like proficiency in the L2 (Cook 2002). Local effects linked to a specific learning situation should have dissipated over time, leaving only the more enduring effects to be identified by researchers. What these L2 users all have in common is more than the use of English L2 as a neutral, linguistic tool of communication. They will have accumulated rich intercultural experience. This experience is likely to have affected their attitudes, beliefs, social identity and values (Berry et al. 1992). Their view of “in-group” and “out-group” may have evolved as they may have shifted themselves imperceptibly to an “out-group” position. The intercultural experience makes people realize that their own values, beliefs and behaviours are not absolute, and that alternatives can be valid and possible (Byram, Gribkova and Starkey 2002: 13). This process can provoke frustration, a sense of loss, but also one of enrichment and fulfillment. Sercu (2005: 2) observes that surprise is the cornerstone of the intercultural experience. Eva Hoffman presents a poignant illustration of this surprise. She emigrated with her parents from Poland to Canada at the age of thirteen. She seems to have picked up English quicker than her parents and has acculturated into the new culture to a much higher degree. As a result her mother suddenly notices that her daughter has “changed”:

My mother says I'm becoming “English.” This hurts me, because I know she means I'm becoming cold. I'm no colder than I've ever been, but I'm learning to be less demonstrative. (...) Perhaps my mother is right, after all; perhaps I'm becoming colder. (Hoffman 1989: 146–7).

The focus in the present study is on self-perceived oral proficiency in English. This is the kind of holistic statement that is expected in the curriculum vitae under the heading “language knowledge”. It is a judgment that we are all forced to make at some point. It probably reflects a sum of various aspects of the L2 including perceived competence in grammar, phonology, lexis, syntax, pragmatics and it is probably also influenced by past traumatism or successes in the L2, as well as recent experiences in intercultural communication. Pondering over the adjective describing our proficiency, we probably all decide after some deliberation that an honest answer is the safest option, as boasting about one's language knowledge only to be caught out at the job interview is something most of us would prefer to avoid.

Research on the acquisition of communicative competence suggests that a complex interplay of psychological, affective and sociobiographical variables determine the levels of proficiency reached by L2 learners and users. The present paper will consider the effects of sociobiographical variables: context of acquisition (instructed, mixed or naturalistic); “age of onset” of the L2 (AOA); typological distance between the L1 and English L2; frequency of use; gender; age; and education level of the participant.

The data have been gathered through an on-line web questionnaire with open-ended and closed-ended questions aimed at multilinguals (Dewaele and Pavlenko 2001). The questionnaire contained 35 questions concerning emotional and non-emotional language use in different situations in up to five languages. It included questions on social, demographic and linguistic background and questions on the relationship between languages and emotions. The closed questions allowed the gathering of numerical data through the use of Likert scales and permitted further statistical analysis. Five open-ended questions at the end of the questionnaire invited participants to comment on (1) the weight of the phrase “I love you” in the participants’ respective languages; (2) their linguistic preferences for emotion terms and terms of endearment; (3) emotional significance of their languages; (4) language of the home and language in which they argue; (5) ease or difficulty of discussing emotional topics in languages other than the first. The questionnaire has been completed by 1454 multilinguals with 77 different first languages. The data elicited through the open questions yielded a corpus of about 150,000 words.

## **8.2 Literature Review**

### **8.2.1 Context of Acquisition**

Context of acquisition emerged as a significant variable in a number of previous studies on emotion and bilingualism (Dewaele 2004a, 2004b, 2005). The effect of context of acquisition was found to have a significant effect on the self-reported use and perceived emotional force of swear words and taboo words in up to five languages among 1039 multilinguals. The effect of context of acquisition was generally stronger for self-reported language choice for use of swearwords than for perception of their emotional force. Participants who learned their language(s) in a naturalistic —or mixed— context were more likely to use swear words and taboo words in that language and they rated them as being more forceful compared to the rating of instructed language learners. The effect of

authentic language use with the TL on the development of the interlanguage has been clearly demonstrated in a study by Housen (2002). He looked at the English L2 of Italian primary school children (aged 8–10) in four different contexts: one group of learners in foreign language classroom from a mainstream school in Bologna, three groups of learners in the European Schools of Varese (Italy), Brussels (Belgium) and Culham (UK), and one control group of English L1 speakers from the European School of Brussels. The amount of formal instruction was similar across the groups, only the amount of extra-curricular contact with the TL varied. The amount of contact with English outside the classroom was limited in Bologna and Brussels and much more frequent in Varese and Culham.

Although ANOVAs failed to uncover an overall effect for context on verb type diversity, lexical richness, verb/noun ratios and global lexical mastery, post-hoc tests did show that the Culham group scored significantly higher than the two other learner groups, but remained significantly below the scores of the English L1 control group. This clearly demonstrates the beneficial effects of frequent interaction in the TL in addition to the formal instruction. Similar patterns have also emerged from numerous studies on the acquisition of sociolinguistic competence (for an overview, see Dewaele 2004c). The studies showed that after their stay abroad or after prolonged contact with native speakers the L2 users approximated roughly – though not exactly – to the native speaker norm on a range of sociolinguistic variables. It seems thus that living abroad for an extended period does something unique to the learners' usage which classroom input does not.

### **8.2.2 Age of Onset (AOA)**

One of the big debates in Second Language Acquisition concerns the optimal age to start learning a foreign language. The problem is that there is lot of contradictory evidence on the effect of AOA. Firstly, a number of recent studies that looked at AOA in formal instruction of English found that older beginners significantly outperformed younger ones in both oral and written proficiency when the number of hours of instruction was held constant (Cenoz 2003, García Mayo 2003, Muñoz 2003). Secondly, several studies have shown that younger starters have an advantage over older starters in the area of phonology Bongaerts et al (2003). The third position is that younger starters might be better in the long run. This focus on long-term attainment goes back to the study by Krashen et al. (1979: 161) who stated that: “acquirers who begin natural exposure to second languages during childhood generally achieve higher second language proficiency

than those beginning as adults”. Support for this position has come from the studies of Hyltenstam and Abrahamsson (2000) who found that immigrants who had arrived in Sweden early reached higher levels of proficiency than those who had arrived around and beyond puberty.

Our own studies on language choice for emotional speech among adult multilinguals have exactly the type of time-scale that Singleton and Ryan (2005) were pleading for. AOA was found only to predict perception of emotional force of swear words in the L2 (and not in the L3, L4 and L5), it had no significant effect on language choice for swearing (Dewaele 2004a, 2004b). A stronger effect of AOA on language choice for the expression of anger was found in Dewaele (2006a) who used the complete corpus with the 1459 multilinguals. Participants who had started to learn a language early were more likely to use that language to express anger at the time of filling out the questionnaire (which was, on average, more than 20 years after the start of the L2 learning process). We argued that this long time-span between the acquisition phase and the moment the data were gathered could account for the weakness of the effects. A multilingual using or not using a language for a prolonged period may have reinforced or annulled the effect on context of acquisition on language choice. Some participants reported never having used an instructed language again after school; others reported picking it up again much later and becoming highly proficient in the language. It is therefore possible that the effect of some more recent life-events can overwhelm the effect of variables linked to the genesis of the language learning experience, but that these remain detectable like a kind of background radiation.

### **8.2.3 General Frequency of Use of a Language**

Another finding that emerged from the previously mentioned studies concerned general frequency of use of a language (Dewaele 2004a, 2004b, 2005, 2006a). It was found to be a strong predictor of perception of the emotional force of swear words in a TL, of frequency of swearing in a TL and of expression of emotions in a TL. The adage “practice makes perfect” certainly applies to multiple language use. Frequent use of a language has been shown in previous research to be linked to development of grammatical accuracy as well as the more elusive aspects of sociopragmatic and sociocultural competence (Dewaele and Pavlenko 2002; Dewaele and Véronique 2001; Pavlenko 2003). However, one should not underestimate the effect of fossilization, i.e. an L2 user might remain “stuck” for years on a plateau below native speaker norm (Han 2003). Foreign accents in an L2, for example, may be detectable despite

years of intense use of the L2. The awareness of the foreign accent may also affect the judgment of multilinguals about their proficiency in a language.

#### **8.2.4 Typological Distance between the L1 and the L2**

The effect of typological distance between the L1 and foreign languages has been analysed in studies on cross-linguistic influences at morphological, morphosyntactic, lexical, pragmatic levels (Cheng 2003; De Angelis 2005; Safont Jordà 2005; Williams and Hammarberg 1998; to name but a few). A typical finding has been that typological closeness increases the probability of the influence of one language on another. Studies that considered the effect of typological/cultural distance between the L1 and the target language (TL) on levels of sociocultural and sociopragmatic competence in populations with similar levels of linguistic proficiency in the TL reported a negative correlation between typological/cultural distance and levels of sociocultural and sociopragmatic competence (Rintell 1984). Dewaele (2004c) investigated patterns of foreign language anxiety in English L2 in the same sub-corpus of 475 multilinguals on which the present study is based. Despite non-significant differences in levels of self-perceived proficiency in speaking and writing, native speakers of Slavonic languages reported significantly higher levels of foreign language anxiety than native speakers of Romance languages, who in turn scored higher on the foreign language anxiety scale than native speakers of Germanic languages. The differences were especially striking in stressful situations like phone conversations or public speech. They were weaker in communication with friends, colleagues or strangers. However, the effect size was modest ( $\eta^2 : .045$ ). It thus seems that intercultural communication is more anxiety-arousing when the L2 user perceives a wide cultural divide between him/herself and the native speaker interlocutor.

#### **8.2.5 Gender, Age and Education Level**

Grosjean (1998) exhorted researchers to pay close attention to methodological and conceptual issues, such as the potentially confounding effect of sociobiographical variables such as gender, age and education level. Donovan and MacIntyre (2004) investigated age and sex differences in Willingness to Communicate. They found no sex differences in communication apprehension or self-perceived competence between the

junior high (90 males, 177 females) and high school students (85 males, 106 females), but they discovered that the female university students ( $n = 215$ ) suffered more from communication apprehension and had lower self-perceived competence than their male counterparts ( $n = 68$ ).

### **8.2.6 Self-perceived Competence**

Self-perceived competence is a person's evaluation of their ability to communicate (McCroskey and McCroskey 1988). It is considered by MacIntyre (1994) to be one of the two antecedents underlying Willingness to Communicate (the other being communication apprehension). Donovan and MacIntyre (2004) found a negative correlation between self-perceived competence and communication apprehension. In other words, higher levels of self-perceived competence are linked to lower levels of communication apprehension.

To sum up, variables such as context of acquisition, AOA, frequency of use, language distance and sociobiographical variables have been found to have an effect on language choice for the communication of emotion (which may be interpreted as a sign of sociocultural competence) and affective variables (attitude, perceived competence and communicative anxiety) among adult multilinguals. The present study will investigate whether these independent variables also affect the multilinguals' self-perceived oral proficiency in English L2.

## **8.3 Method**

### **8.3.1 Participants**

A sample of 475 multilinguals (338 females, 137 males) was extracted from a web questionnaire database of 1459 participants (Dewaele 2006a). The selection criteria were the following: participants had to have English as a second language and had to be native speakers of a Germanic, Romance or Slavonic language. Native speakers of Spanish represent the largest group ( $n = 111$ ), followed by French ( $n = 100$ ), German ( $n = 91$ ), Italian ( $n = 36$ ), Dutch ( $n = 31$ ), ( $n = 1$ ), Russian ( $n = 27$ ), Portuguese ( $n = 22$ ), Swedish ( $n = 15$ ), Afrikaans ( $n = 14$ ), Danish ( $n = 9$ ), Romanian ( $n = 5$ ), Norwegian ( $n = 5$ ) and Polish ( $n = 3$ ). There are also native speakers of Catalan, Slovene, Bulgarian and Albanian.

The mean AOA of learning of English as L2 was 8.95 yrs ( $SD = 4.8$ ). The L2 was defined as the second language to have been acquired.

Participants are generally highly educated with 42 having a high school diploma (8.8%), 133 a Bachelor's degree (28%), 154 a Master's degree (32.4%), and 145 a doctoral degree (30.6%). Age ranged from 16 to 73 (Mean = 34.6; SD: 10.0).

### **8.3.2 Research Design**

Seven main independent variables were selected in the present design: 1) acquisition context; 2) age of onset of learning the language; 3) language family; 4) frequency of use of the L2; 5) gender; 6) age; and 7) education level. The dependent variable is a self-perceived proficiency score for speaking and understanding spoken English. Variables will be presented in more detail in the following sections. Sample sizes may vary across the analyses because some participants did not provide data for all the dependent variables. Quantitative results are supplemented by qualitative data provided by the same participants. These responses, elicited by means of open-ended questions, have a purely illustrative value in the present study.

### **8.3.3 Independent Variables**

#### *8.3.3.1 Context of Acquisition*

The variable 'context of acquisition' distinguishes between three types of contexts: 1) naturalistic context (i.e. no classroom contact, only naturalistic communication outside school), 2) mixed context (i.e. classroom contact + naturalistic contact), and 3) instructed context (i.e. formal classroom contact only). No further distinction was made between types of formal instruction, such as, for instance, 'immersion classrooms', where the TL serves as the medium for teaching non-language subject matter and 'non-immersion classrooms', where the TL is the instructional target. Similarly, the notion of 'naturalistic context' as used here is a cover term for a wide range of ways in which a language can be learned without guidance from a particular teacher or program, but developed gradually or spontaneously through interaction with speakers of the TL. An analysis of the distribution of participants according to context of acquisition of English as a L2 showed that half of them ( $n = 234$ ) had learnt the language in a mixed context, 44% ( $n = 205$ ) had learnt the language through formal instruction and 6% ( $n = 29$ ) had learnt English naturalistically.

**Table 8.1** Distribution of participants according to language family of L1

Language Family	L1	N
Slavonic (n = 35)	Russian	27
	Polish	3
	Serbian	2
	Slovene	1
	Bulgarian	1
	Albanian	1
Romance (n = 275)	Spanish	111
	French	100
	Italian	36
	Portuguese	22
	Romanian	5
	Catalan	1
Germanic (n = 165)	German	91
	Dutch	31
	Swedish	15
	Afrikaans	14
	Danish	9
	Norwegian	5

### 8.3.3.2 *Language Family*

Participants were grouped in three groups according to the language family their L1 belonged to: Germanic, Romance or Slavonic. Table 8.1 shows the distribution of the sample according to first language and the language family.

### 8.3.3.3 *AOA of Learning*

Three categories of participants were distinguished: 1) Those who can be considered “bilingual first language users” who started learning English before the age of three; 2) “early learners” who started learning English before onset of puberty; and 3) “late learners” for whom the learning process started at the age of thirteen or later.

An analysis of the distribution of the sample according to AOA of English L2 revealed that 10% of the participants (n = 48) started learning English before age three, 77% of the participants (n = 366) learnt it between age three and twelve, and the remaining 13% (n = 60) learnt it after age thirteen.



### 8.3.3.4 Frequency of Use

An analysis of the distribution of the participants according to frequency of use of English showed that more than half of the participants (57%:  $n = 269$ ) used English all day long. Nearly a quarter used it every day (23%:  $n = 110$ ); 12% ( $n = 56$ ) of the remaining participants used it weekly; 6% ( $n = 29$ ) used it monthly and 1.5% ( $n = 7$ ) used it on a yearly basis.

### 8.3.4 Dependent Variable: Self-reported Oral Proficiency in English

Data on self-reported oral proficiency in English were elicited through two items using a 5-point Likert scale. The question was formulated as follows:

*On a scale from 1 (least proficient) to 5 (fully fluent) how do you rate yourself in speaking, and understanding English?*

Scores for speaking and comprehension were added up. The maximum possible score for oral proficiency was thus 10. The dependent variable is thus a single numerical value reflecting self-perceived oral proficiency in English L2. One could wonder whether such self-reports are accurate reflections of participants' actual oral proficiency. Dörnyei (2003) observes that "people do not always provide true answers about themselves" in questionnaires (p 12). The reason for this is the social desirability or prestige bias. While such a bias cannot be excluded from the present study, one can argue that in most cases the participants were unknown to the researchers, unknown to each other, and that they had nothing to gain from exaggerating their proficiency level in English. Given the wide range of languages involved, it was impossible to design tests for measuring actual oral and written proficiency in all languages known to the participants. The disadvantage that self-reports may not be as accurate as one may wish does not weigh up to the fact that they are easy to collect, enabling us to consider larger sample sizes than in research based on production data. Also, they provide sufficient detail for the current research questions.

Finally, research on this question has revealed that self-report measures of proficiency correlate highly with linguistic measures of proficiency. Mettwie (2004: 238) correlated self-reported oral proficiency scores for Dutch and French with an objective measure of language proficiency (based on results for grammar tests, reading and listening comprehension exercises) among 338 pupils in Brussels. She

found highly significant positive relationships between the measures ( $r = .83^{***}$  for Dutch and  $r = .76^{***}$  for French) which led her to conclude that self-reports provide valid measures to researchers. MacIntyre et al. (1997) looked at perceived competence in French L2 as a function of actual competence and language anxiety in a sample of 37 adult Anglophone students. They completed scales of language anxiety and a “can-do” test, which assessed their self-perceptions of competence on 26 French tasks. They then performed each of those tasks. Perceived L2 competence and actual L2 competence were found to be strongly intercorrelated. It thus seems that measures of perception of proficiency are acceptable indicators of actual proficiency. Although some personality types tend to overestimate their proficiency slightly (MacIntyre et al. 1997), this is compensated by the fact that an equal number tends to underestimate their proficiency slightly.

A series of one-sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests revealed that the oral proficiency scores in our corpus are not normally distributed (Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z values = 6.6,  $p < .0001$ ). The distribution of participants across frequency categories (proficiency scores ranging from 1 to 10) is strongly skewed towards the positive end: Table 8.2 shows that more than half (53.9 %) of the participants judge themselves to be fully fluent in oral English. As a consequence, Kruskal-Wallis tests were used as nonparametric equivalents to one-way ANOVAs, and a Mann-Whitney test was used instead of a t-test.

**Table 8.2** Distribution of participants according to self-perceived proficiency

Oral Proficiency Score	English L2	
	n	%
1	0	0.0
2	4	0.8
3	0	0.0
4	1	0.2
5	5	1.1
6	15	3.2
7	24	5.1
8	100	21.1
9	70	14.7
10	256	53.9
	474	100

## 8.4 Hypotheses

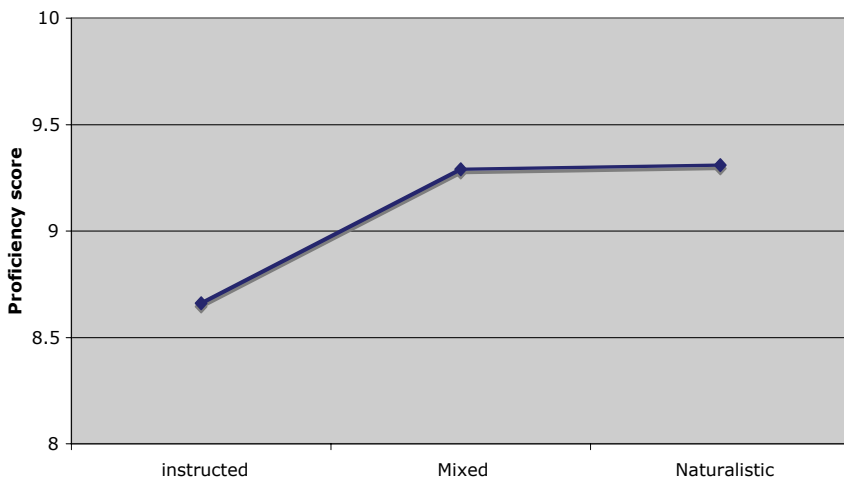
It was hypothesised:

- 1) that participants who learned English in an instructed setting only would rate their oral proficiency in English lower than participants who learned the L2 in a mixed or naturalistic environment;
- 2) that participants who started learning English L2 at a younger age would rate their oral proficiency in English higher than participants who started learning English later;
- 3) that participants whose L1 was typologically closer to English would rate their oral proficiency in English higher.
- 4) that frequent users of English would rate their oral proficiency in English higher than less frequent users.
- 5) that females would rate their oral proficiency in English higher than males.
- 6) that more highly educated participants would rate their oral proficiency in English higher than less educated participants.
- 7) that older participants would rate their oral proficiency in English higher than younger participants.

## 8.5 Results

### 8.5.1 Testing Hypothesis 1: Context of Acquisition

The Kruskal Wallis tests revealed that acquisition context had a highly significant effect overall ( $\text{Chi}^2 = 30.6$ ,  $\text{df} = 2$ ,  $p < .0001$ ) on self-reported



**Figure 8.1** The effect of context of acquisition on self-perceived oral proficiency.

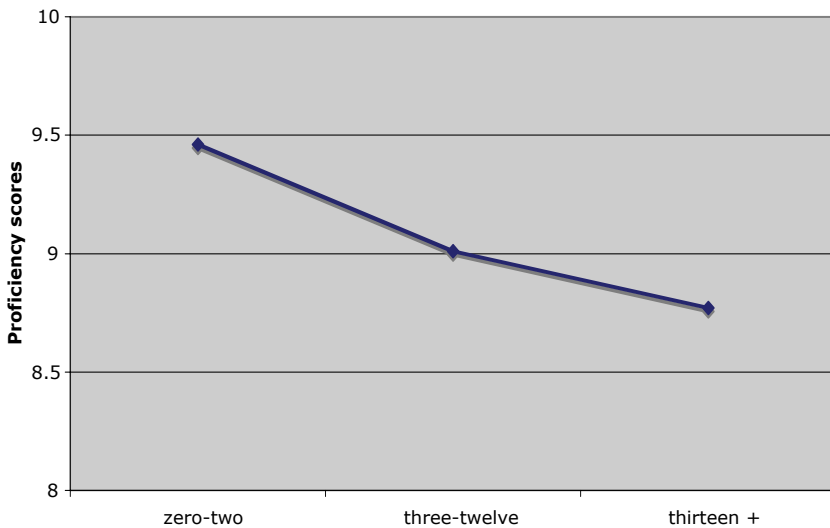
oral language proficiency. An inspection of the mean scores show that instructed learners feel less proficient in English compared to mixed and naturalistic learners (see Figure 8.1).

Participants' comments illustrate the fact that purely formal instruction in a TL makes it harder to attain high proficiency levels in that TL. For example, participant A reports that after spending many years studying English in her home country, she did not master emotional speech and intonation patterns in English. Only authentic language use allowed the participant to reach higher levels of proficiency in the L2:

Participant A: "During the five years I spent in London I learned many emotional expressions that I never really cared to translate into Slovenian (I didn't need to) and now they mean much more to me than their Slovenian translations because I experienced the words in real life (go berserk, my petal for "my darling"). I also learned to use the appropriate intonation together with the new words or new meanings, which I had not when I learned and later studied English in Slovenia".

### 8.5.2 Testing Hypothesis 2: The Effect of AOA

The Kruskal Wallis tests showed a significant effect of AOA on self-perceived oral proficiency ( $\text{Chi}^2 = 16.2$ ,  $\text{df} = 2$ ,  $p < .0001$ ). Those who started at a younger age rate their oral proficiency in English much higher than late starters.



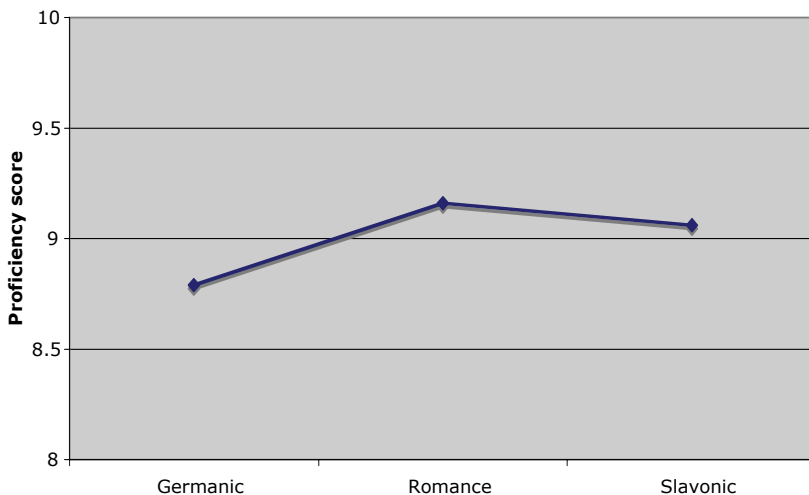
**Figure 8.2** The effect of age of onset on self-perceived oral proficiency

Participant B, who learned English L2 at the age of 15 observes that she does not feel as proficient in the L2 as in the L1 despite being a highly frequent user of English:

Participant B: “I’m always more comfortable communicating in my L1. I think I started with my L2 too late to really ever feel satisfied with my communicative competence even though I’ve lived in the UK for 5 years.”

### 8.5.3 Testing Hypothesis 3: The Effect of L1 Language Family

The Kruskal Wallis test revealed that the language family to which a participant’s L1 belongs has a significant effect on self-perceived oral proficiency in English ( $\chi^2 = 8.3$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p < .015$ ). The pattern is unexpected however. Native speakers of Romance languages perceive themselves to be most proficient in English, followed by the native speakers of Slavonic languages, with the native speakers of other Germanic languages trailing behind.



**Figure 8.3** The effect of the L1 language family on self-perceived oral proficiency

None of the participants noted that they felt more proficient in a particular language because of its typological proximity to their L1. Most linked their feeling of proficiency to their life experiences in that language:

Participant C: “In English (L2) I feel I am more relaxed light-hearted and easy-going than in either German (L1) or Russian (L3) but I think

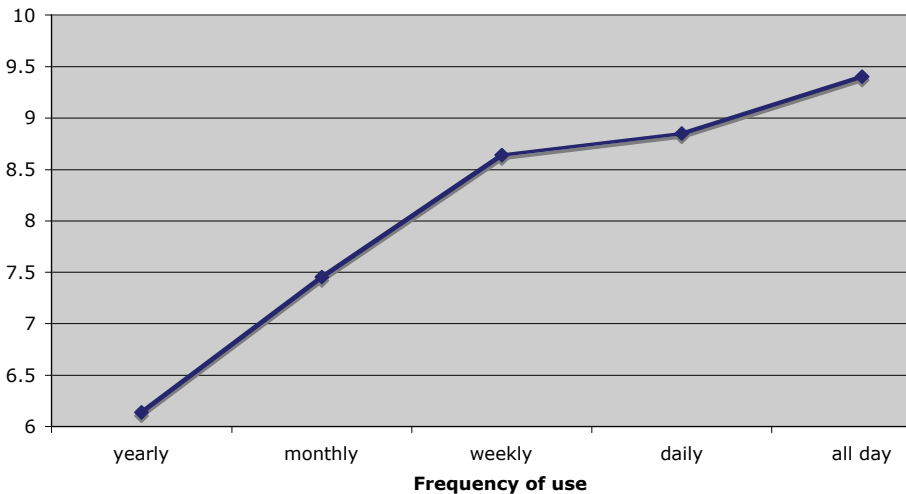
that's more to do with the environment (these things are valued highly in Ireland) and personality largely overrides any language- or environment-induced differences.”

Proficiency also encompasses the ability to produce culturally appropriate discourse. One participant (Romanian L1, English L2, Japanese L3) expresses a strong surprise when she discovered that the amount of emotional talk in her native Romania was much higher than in English (her L2) or in Japanese (her L3):

Participant D: “We Romanians do not only express our own emotions whenever given the chance, we also love talking about other people's emotions (attributing various emotional states to others and using these attributions in order to explain and predict their behaviour). I believe there is a connection between this 3rd person emotion talk and the capacity to express one's own emotions. Japanese almost never discuss other people's feelings in this manner. I find it very frustrating.”

#### 8.5.4 Testing Hypothesis 4: Frequency of Use

Frequency of use shows, as expected, a highly significant effect on self-perceived oral proficiency in English ( $\chi^2 = 100.4$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p < .0001$ ). Frequent users of English rate themselves higher than less frequent users of the L2.



**Figure 8.4** The effect of frequency of use on self-perceived oral proficiency

It is important to underline that the measure “frequency of use” gives at best a broad indication of how frequently a particular language is used. The multilinguals in the database may use different languages with equal frequency, but use these languages with particular people in particular situations. Some, like participant D cited below, may have become dominant in a language other than their L1 because the other language is that of the social environment and the one most frequently used. Yet, other languages, including the L1, may not be used as frequently, but allow the participant to be most proficient when talking about emotional topics:

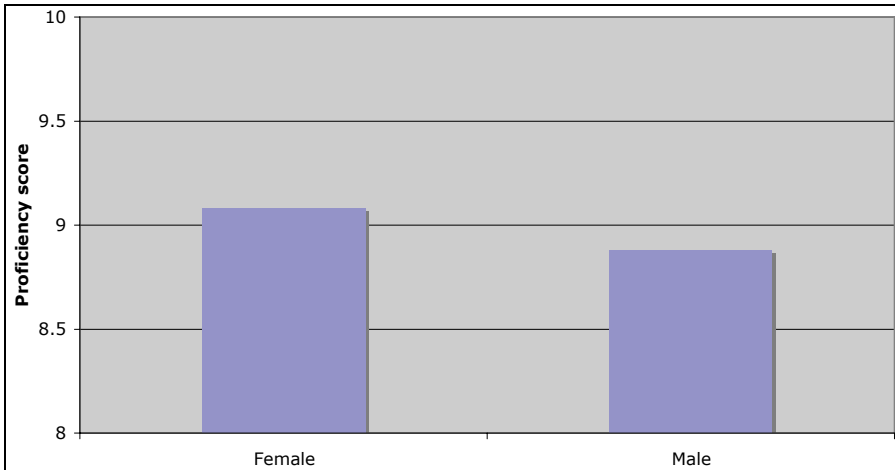
Participant E: “Since my second language (English) is now the strongest language, it is easier for me to talk in that language. However the people closest to me in my life speak Finnish and French, so I often speak about emotional topics with these people in Finnish and French. I use English mainly for work and other social activities not so much for “deep talk”. Sometimes however, because I am not as fluent in French, I have difficulty finding appropriate words. Then I can sometimes use an English word, hoping others will understand.”

Another participant (F) notes that despite feeling fully proficient in two languages, she prefers one language for writing and another for speaking, linked to past and present frequency of use of the languages in specific situations:

Participant F: “I’m ambilingual in Spanish and English. Though I have put 5 for my proficiency level in the different skills, one language takes precedence over the other in certain areas. For example I prefer to write in English as I went to university and did all my academic writing in English. I prefer to speak in Spanish as it’s the language I use most for general communication and the language that surrounds me. I have no preference when reading or listening.”

### **8.5.5 Testing Hypothesis 5: The Effects of Gender**

The effects of gender were tested using a Mann-Whitney test. The results show a marginally significant difference (Mann-Whitney  $U = 20788$ ,  $p = .056$ ) with females rating their oral proficiency English slightly higher than the males.



**Figure 8.5** The effect of gender on self-perceived oral proficiency

### 8.5.6 Testing Hypothesis 6: The Effects of Education Level

A Kruskal Wallis test determined the effect of education level on self-perceived oral proficiency in English. A marginal effect emerged ( $\text{Chi}^2 = 7.4$ ,  $\text{df} = 3$ ,  $p = .06$ ), suggesting that more highly educated participants tended to rate their oral proficiency in English higher compared to participants with lower levels of education.

The knowledge of English in a largely monolingual, non-English, environment can confer prestige on the speaker, as participant G, a Japanese female with a MA in English observes:

Participant G: “Language is power to me. Whenever I speak in English (L2) people usually tend to treat me with respect. If people don’t know that I’m bilingual, I see more ‘looking down’ looks glanced at me, you know those looks we all have when we are looking at strangers with no special interest. But once the same people notice that I am speaking English (in Tokyo) they suddenly react with a surprised look and the next thing you know you become close to a celebrity (a bit exaggerated).”



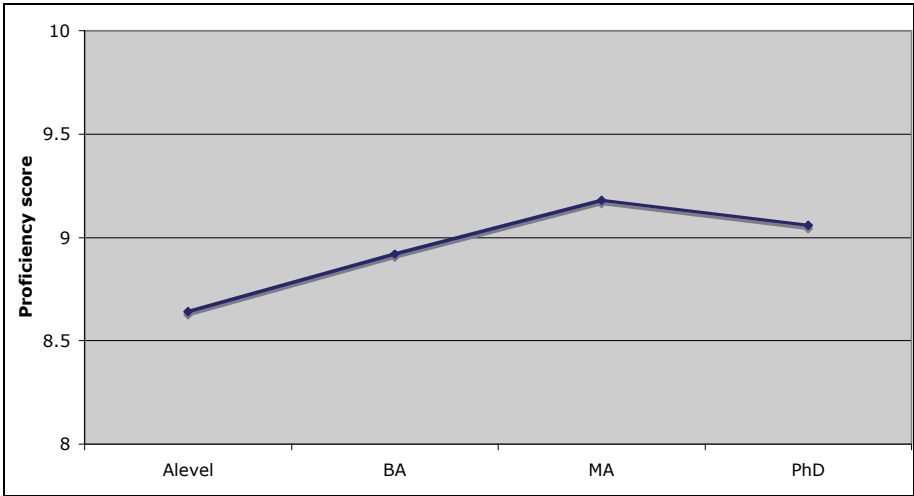


Figure 8.6 The effect of education level on self-perceived oral proficiency

### 8.5.7 Testing Hypothesis 7: The Effects of Age

A Spearman rank correlation showed a significant positive relationship between age and oral proficiency scores ( $Rho = 0.10$ ,  $df = 471$ ,  $p < 0.033$ ). In other words, older L2 users feel more proficient in the L2.

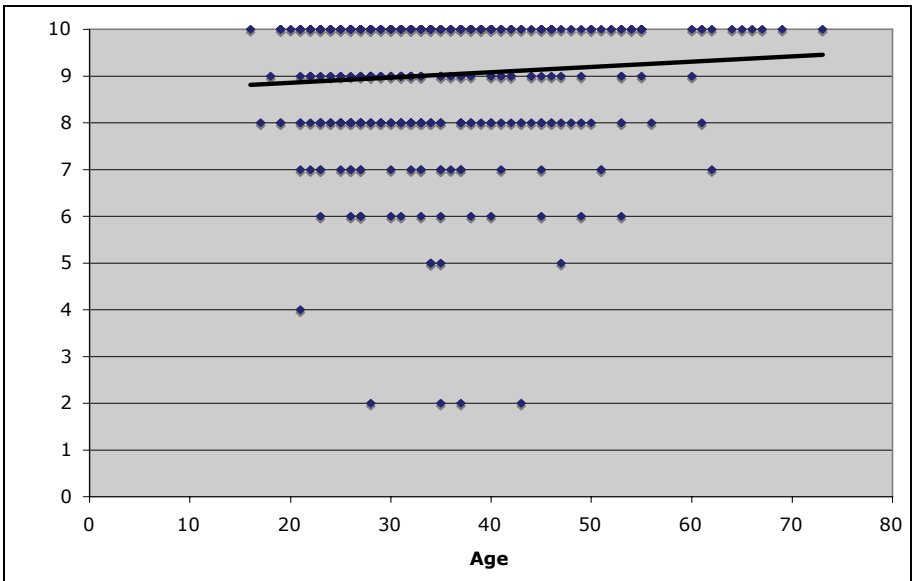


Figure 8.7 Correlation between age and self-perceived oral proficiency

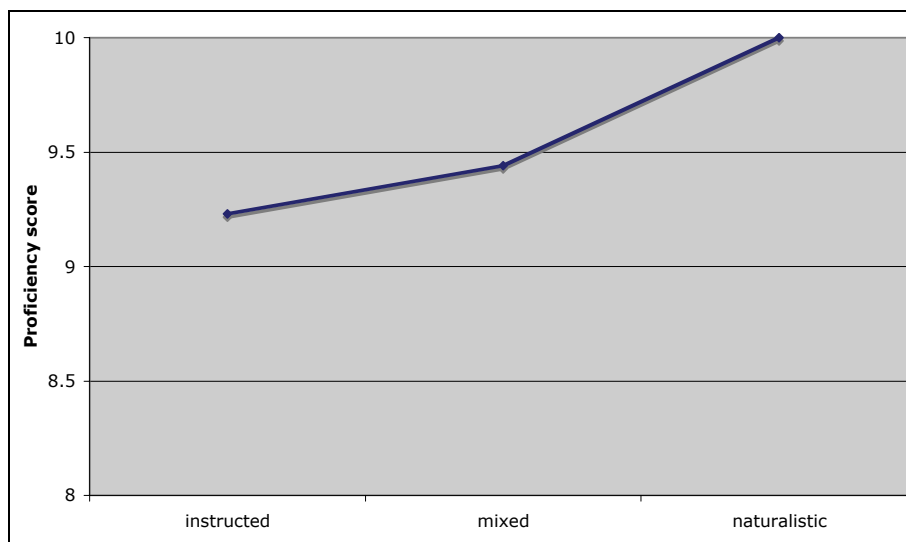
## 8.6 Discussion and Conclusion

To sum up, the findings of the study fully support hypothesis 1, namely, that participants who learned English in an instructed setting only rate their oral proficiency in English lower than participants who learned the L2 in a mixed or naturalistic environment. The findings also support hypothesis 2, namely that participants who started learning English L2 at a younger age rate their oral proficiency in English higher than participants who started learning English later. The results force us to reject hypothesis 3: participants whose L1 was typologically closer to English did not rate their oral proficiency in English higher; in fact the opposite pattern emerged. The findings fully support hypothesis 4, namely that frequent users of English rate their oral proficiency in English higher than less frequent users. Hypothesis 5, namely that females would rate their oral proficiency in English higher than males is partially supported. A similar marginally significant result emerged for hypothesis 6 concerning the effect of education level: more highly educated participants tended to rate their oral proficiency higher than less educated participants. Finally, support was found for hypothesis 7, namely that older participants considered themselves to be more proficient than younger participants.

Comments on the open questions illustrated the statistical trends and added nuance to the quantitative findings. First it is clear that the construct designed to “measure” proficiency is too rigid to fully reflect the complex reality of the multilingual individual. Indeed, some participants pointed out that they may feel more proficient in a particular language when speaking about certain topics and not others. Some are more at ease in written communication, others feel more comfortable in oral interaction. Also one may feel more fluent speaking to one person rather than another. Recent language episodes could also unduly affect the self-judgment of proficiency. The memory of a negative experience in relatively rarely used language may cloud one’s judgment; for example, a student having performed badly on a language test may feel that s/he is “rubbish” at it, also, a misunderstanding in an intercultural communication arising from one of the speakers’ foreign accent or non-native prosody could affect that person’s self-confidence and perceived competence in the foreign language. We decided in the present paper to focus exclusively on sociobiographical variables linked to self-perceived proficiency, but we are fully aware that psychological dimensions also play a role in judgments. MacIntyre et al. (1997) showed that students with higher levels of foreign language anxiety tended to underestimate their proficiency in French L2, while more confident students tended to overestimate their proficiency. Extraverts, who

tend to be less nervous and anxious than introverts, are also known to judge their performances optimistically, while the introverts exhibit the opposite pattern (Furnham and Heaven 1998). As these personality traits are normally distributed in the population, we had no reason to believe that our sample was skewed in this respect. In other words, while some participants may have exaggerated their level of oral proficiency in English, others may have underestimated it, and this would have cancelled itself out in the end, allowing us to focus exclusively on sociobiographical factors.

The most interesting results in the present study are undoubtedly the effects of context of acquisition and AOA. We used cross-tabulation to check whether these variables interacted with other variables: where the youngest learners for example also the ones who used English most frequently? Results showed an even spread along the different levels for the different variables. The significant effect for context of acquisition suggests that only after a certain amount of authentic interaction in English do participants feel that they are sufficiently proficient in English. This is typically reflected in narratives where they report choosing English to communicate emotions. Those who did not start interacting in English shortly after their formal instruction, somehow never seemed able to close that lag. In the group of L2 users who were using English daily at the time of filling out the questionnaire, those who had learned purely through formal instruction ( $n = 104$ ) trailed their peers who had learnt English in a mixed ( $n = 141$ ) or naturalistic ( $n = 19$ ) way (see Figure 8.8).



**Figure 8.8** The effect of context of acquisition on self-perceived oral proficiency among participants reporting using English all the time

This finding of a beneficial effect for an early start of L2 acquisition over a long term can provide fresh ammunition to those who defend an early introduction of a foreign language at school. Indeed, the present finding goes against the trend that emerged from a number of recent studies that looked into short term and mid term effects of an early start. Singleton and Ryan (2005) who reviewed the literature on the critical period hypothesis and age effects in SLA state that: “extrapolating from the naturalistic studies, one may plausibly argue that early formal instruction in an L2 is likely to yield advantages after rather longer periods of time than have so far been studied” (2005: 223). This is exactly what our results suggest: 20 years down the line, the younger starters may “win” the race after all. These results also lend support to the position of Hyltenstam and Abrahamsson (2000) on the advantage of early starters in terms of ultimate attainment in the L2.

The finding that native speakers of Romance and Slavonic languages report higher levels of oral proficiency in English rather than native speakers of Germanic languages is counter-intuitive and frankly puzzling. The effect was significant but not very strong. Maybe the cultural distance between the three groups was too limited. Only further research, preferably with a group of native speakers of Asian or African languages will allow us to see whether large typological distances between the L1 and the L2 language/culture do indeed affect self-perceived proficiency.

The present study further strengthens the argument for a maximalisation of authentic communication in an L2. MacIntyre and Charos (1996: 17) already found that for their English L1 students in French immersion programmes “having more opportunities for interaction in French may lead to an increase in perceived competence, a greater willingness to communicate in French, and more frequent communication”.

Skills in a foreign language learnt and used within the walls of a classroom look pale and weak compared to those of L2 learners/L2 users who engaged in (frequent) authentic communication. It thus makes sense to include stays in the target language community as part of the language-learning curriculum. Evans and Fisher (2005) showed that even a week-long stay abroad has significant effects on linguistic development in the target language.

The finding that females tend to perceive themselves as more proficient than the males contradicts earlier findings by Donovan and MacIntyre (2004). They found that while females in junior high school tended to score higher than their male counterparts, this difference disappeared in high school, and that at university the males scored significantly higher on self-perceived proficiency.

The effect of level of education on self-perceived oral proficiency is probably quite indirect and a consequence of the socio-educational make-up of the sample. Indeed illiterate speakers can still attain high levels of oral proficiency. There is no need for formal education to attain fluency in a foreign language. A majority of our participants with PhDs had studied linguistics, and very often English. Having studied and used English at this level implies a high level of proficiency. The fact of having higher degrees of education may also strengthen a participant's belief in his/her linguistic abilities compared to those without the prestige of a university degree.

The fact that older participants scored higher on self-perceived oral proficiency could be related to the fact that they had had more opportunities to use English in authentic intercultural interactions. It is possible that if we had asked more pointed questions about the knowledge of grammar and pragmatic knowledge, we would not have found a correlation between age and scores for strictly linguistic knowledge, but maybe a stronger correlation would have appeared between age and scores for sociopragmatic and sociocultural knowledge. We all learn to communicate by experience, so growing older has its communicative advantages.

Finally, it is important to remind ourselves that the different factors that determine oral proficiency cannot easily be considered in isolation, and that any attempt to do so, while statistically feasible, may show only part of the more general picture (Muñoz 2003; Navés et al. 2005). Also, we realized during the design of our questionnaire that factors such as length and intensity of exposure are hard to quantify (and consequently dropped from the questionnaire). Quantification is difficult, firstly because an adult L2 user cannot possibly be expected to remember the total time spent learning the L2. Also, periods of intense effort in learning the L2 may have been followed by periods of inactivity. Secondly, while it is probably true that "the longer the period of exposure, the better" in terms of linguistic development, it is perfectly possible that short but intense periods of L2 learning and use, linked to high levels of language learning motivation (Evans and Fisher 2005) may have a more significant impact than longer periods of less intense L2 learning/use with lower levels of motivation. In other words, quantitative researchers need to remain aware that the richness of individual experience in L2 learning and L2 use cannot easily be captured through questionnaires, tests and post-hoc rationalization. This is why we plead for triangulation in this type of research: i.e. the use of a combination of different research methodologies in order to answer common research questions. In this approach, empirical and quantitative accounts can be combined with an emic perspective, or participant-relevant view, "as a result of which the L2 learners' and users' voices and opinions (...) are heard on a par with those of the researchers" (Pavlenko 2002: 297).

To sum up, we would like to argue that individual levels of intercultural competence can be determined through a combination of measures of language choice for phatic communication, affective variables, and also, crucially self-perceived oral proficiency. The element of surprise, which is central to intercultural communication according to Sercu (2005), might not always be explicitly mentioned in the participants' narratives but it is present between the lines. This surprise (and sometimes frustration) comes in different forms. Some seem surprised by how different languages have acquired different emotional connotations to them, or how they have become able to express themselves fluently and appropriately in their English L2 after a long and difficult learning process. Some participants regret the sociocultural constraints that exist in their L2 or L3 that do not, for example, allow them to discuss their own and other people's emotions as freely as in their L1 (participant F). Other participants, like the Japanese teacher of English (participant G), describe the surprised reactions of their monolingual countrymen at their multilingualism and intercultural competence.

Multilingualism and intercultural communication are a constant source of surprise, both to researchers and to multilinguals themselves. Eva Hoffman, describes how, in her internal monologues, "Occasionally, Polish words emerge unbidden... They are usually words from the primary palette of feeling: "I'm so happy," a voice says with bell-like clarity..." (Hoffman 1989: 272, cited in Besemeres 2004: 143).

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## Pragmatic Production of Third Language Learners: A Focus on Request External Modification Items

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### 9.1 Introduction

This article<sup>1</sup> examines English learners' use of mitigation devices accompanying the request head act. In so doing, we focus on one aspect of third language learners' pragmatic development, that of mitigating the impositive nature of requests. The acquisition and use of request acts have received a great deal of attention in the interlanguage pragmatics area. Most studies have focused on request realisation strategies adopting Brown and Levinson's directness to politeness continuum (1987); however, few scholars have dealt with the use of mitigation devices in performing request moves (Hassall 1997; Hill 1997), thus providing a partial account of requestive behaviour. Furthermore, authors examining the use and acquisition of modifiers have focused on ESL settings. Given the need to mitigate the impositive nature of request acts and the apparent misuse of requests on the part of learners (House and Kasper 1987), further research should focus on the use of request acts peripheral modification items by EFL learners. These learners often possess knowledge of at least two other languages, hence they learn English as a third language. Very little research to date has been devoted to investigate pragmatic competence of third language learners (Fouser 1997; Safont 2005a and 2005b; see Cenoz and Dewaele, this volume). In addition to that, developmental studies in interlanguage pragmatics have scarcely accounted for the learners' linguistic background (Kasper and Rose 2002; Barron 2003).

We will first provide a short description of the speech act of requesting by pointing to existing descriptions, and to its two main constituents, namely those of the request head act and its peripheral modification items. We will pay special attention to the type of modification items that are examined in our study, that is, *grounders*, *expanders*, *disarmers* and the word *please*. Secondly, we will refer to the theoretical background

underlying the present study. Hence, previous studies dealing with proficiency effects in the use of request forms and modification devices will be taken into account. In addition, we will also tackle the importance of dealing with pragmatic competence from a multilingual perspective. After presenting the hypotheses for the present study which derive from previous research, we will describe the method and data collection procedure. Finally, we will show results and implications of the present study, which deals with third language learners' use of request external modification devices.

### 9.1.1 The Request Head Act and Peripheral Modification Items

The speech act of requesting has received a great deal of attention on the part of IL pragmatists either in cross-sectional (Scarcella 1979; Blum-Kulka and Olshtain 1986; Takahashi and Dufon 1989; Trosborg 1995; Takahashi 1996; Hill 1997; Hassall 1997; Rose 2000) or in longitudinal studies (Schmidt 1983; Ellis 1992; Ohta 1997). Requests are those illocutionary acts belonging to Searle's category of directives. As reported by this author, "these are attempts by the speaker to get the hearer to do something. They may be very modest attempts as when I invite you to do it, or they may be very fierce attempts as when I insist that you do it" (Searle 1979:13). Therefore, request acts are performed by the speaker in order to engage the hearer in some future course of action that coincides with the speaker's goal. In this sense, these are pre-event acts, which anticipate the desired or expected action, as opposed to apologies that constitute post-event acts. Asking somebody to do something for your own purposes bears an impositive nature which may then be regarded as an intrusion into the interlocutor's territory. Following Brown and Levinson's terms (1987), requests are characterised by their face-threatening nature. In fact, some authors prefer to include these acts under the term impositive acts (Green 1975; Leech 1983) rather than that of directive.

However, we agree with Sifianou (1999) in that requests do not always bear an imposition on the hearer, although they frequently direct him/her to perform some action, thus, the term directive would be preferred. Sifianou also points out the idea that request acts show the existing social relationship between participants, as these last ones may choose the entity that will be placed in prominent position when performing the request: (a) the speaker *Can I close the door?*, (b) the addressee *Can you close the door?*, (c) both speaker and addressee *Could we close the door?*, and (d) the action *Would it be possible to close the door?* These features have also been taken into account by Trosborg's (1995) suggested classification

for request acts linguistic formulations best described in the following subsection. A wide variety of linguistic forms can embrace a request act. This act is made up of two main parts: the core or head of the request, which performs the function of requesting, and its peripheral elements, which mitigate or aggravate the force of the request. These last ones involve modification items that are distributed into two main groups, those referring to internal modification of the request head and those modifying the core externally. Internal modifiers are those items that mitigate the impositive nature of the request and are placed within the request head act (e.g. Could I *possibly* ask you to open the window?).

As the focus of the present study refers to external modifiers, we will provide a more detailed classification. External modification items concern those optional clauses that soften the threatening or impositive nature of the request head. Sifianou (1999) distinguishes between commitment-seeking and reinforcing devices. The former group corresponds to Edmondson's pre-exchanges (1981), that is, initiation moves that focus on the speaker's assurance for fulfilment before realising the request (e.g. *Can I ask you a question?*). The second group, that of reinforcing devices, includes (i) grounders, (ii) disarmers, (iii) expanders and the use of (iv) the word *please*. According to Sifianou (1999), reinforcing devices have a twofold function, for they mitigate the force of the request and they may also intensify its impact. (i) Grounders may exemplify this double function, since they are clauses that either precede or follow a request act and which may provide an explanation or threaten the hearer. We might find cases where an explanation softens the impositive nature of the request (e.g. Could you switch off the light? *I have a terrible headache*), while other cases may denote a threat to the hearer and thus would intensify the force of the act (e.g. Can you be here on time? *Otherwise we will talk seriously about you delay*).

Focusing on the addressee, (ii) disarmers, as its name indicates, aim at limiting the hearer's possibilities for refusal to perform the requested action. Typical examples of English disarmers include if clauses (e.g. *If you have time, could you please type this letter for me?*), although declaratives can also be used (e.g. *I wouldn't like to bother you but could you type this letter for me?*). The speaker may also opt for repetition of the request move in order to increase its effect on the hearer. Sifianou (1999) refers to this possibility as the use of (iii) expanders, because when repeating or providing synonym expressions for the request act, the speaker is expanding his intention (e.g. *Could you come to the party? We'll have a good time. Please, come*).

A final instance of external modification proposed by Sifianou (1999) and which is very common in English requests involves the use of (iv) the

word *please*. Given its multifunctionality, it is treated separately as a sole entity that softens the force of the request and which may appear at the beginning or end of the request move, isolatedly when the social distance is high or low, and, as stated by Ervin-Tripp (1976), in direct, indirect or conventionally indirect realisations. However, House (1989) states that *please* cannot be employed with opaque (i.e. indirect) strategies, since it would mark the utterance as a request and result in a contradiction. According to Searle (1975), *please* may be regarded as the most conventional form for requests in English. As shown by the following examples, *please* is very frequently used in various requests realisations:

- *Please*, pass me the bread.
- Could you *please* look for this report?
- I wonder whether you could tell me what happened yesterday, *please*.
- A: Could you photocopy that for me?  
B:.. Sure!  
A: *Please*.

Despite the actual presence of *please* and other modifiers in request acts, most research in interlanguage pragmatics has focused on strategies involved in the request head. In the following subsection we shall present some of these studies which have accounted for foreign language learners' use of requests, and which, as our study, also aimed at denoting differences in these acts production by pointing to proficiency-level effects.

### 9.1.2 Proficiency-level Effects in the Use of Request Forms and Modifiers

Various studies from the field of interlanguage pragmatics (Takahashi and Dufon 1989; Hill 1997) have accounted for proficiency effects. Regarding request acts production, several scholars have pointed to significant changes in the type of linguistic formulations used that was related to an increase in the proficiency level of their subjects (Takahashi and Dufon 1989; Ellis 1992). Nevertheless, other studies have reported little influence of the learners' proficiency in their performance (Takahashi 1996). We should point out the fact that most of these studies have examined learners at an intermediate and advanced proficiency level. However, as raised by Kasper and Rose (1999), few studies have dealt with learners at a beginner level. Therefore, it seems appropriate to study learners of lower levels in

order to ascertain to what extent the learners' proficiency level in target language affects both their performance and pragmatic development. On that account, population for the present study consisted in learners at an intermediate and beginner proficiency level, and our research aim was to ascertain to what extent the learners' level would affect the use of request external modification items. On the basis of previous findings reported above, one could predict a mismatch between beginner and intermediate learners in terms of their grammatical and pragmatic competence (Kasper 1997; Kasper and Rose 1999), yet, other studies present contradictory results (Ellis 1992; Francis 1997; Hill 1997; Pérez-i-Parent 2002).

Ellis (1992) analysed two English learners' requests production within the classroom setting. Participants were aged 10 and 11 and their performance revealed three developmental stages in requests production. First, learners' productions showed illocutionary intentions but not socially or linguistically appropriateness. Second, participants started making use of certain routines and mitigators (e.g. please); and finally, they showed more variation in the use of request forms and politeness aspects. Francis' study (1997) reveals similar findings as intermediate adult ESL learners employed more appropriate request forms than their beginner counterparts. In the same line, Japanese EFL learners in Hill's study (1997) made higher use of conventionally indirect strategies as their level increased learners; particularly those strategies belonging to the willingness subtype. In this way learners' development denoted an approximation to the target language norms. Nevertheless, this author also found that learners at different proficiency levels shared an overuse of direct strategy types.

EFL learners were also analysed in Pérez-i-Parent's (2002) study with a focus on request acts production. Participants in this study were distributed into three level groups ranging from beginner to advanced levels. The author examined proficiency-level effects in the use of request forms by Catalan learners of English. Data were obtained by means of a written discourse completion test which included six situations that varied in terms of dominance and power. As concluded by the author, results showed that pragmatic competence improved in line with the learners' linguistic ability. Hence, results in Pérez-i-Parent's study (2002) coincided with those provided by Hill (1997) and Francis (1997), as stated above.

The studies mentioned above have focused on analysing particular request forms, and results showed that requestive behaviour of language learners was subject to proficiency effects. However, as it has been previously mentioned, request acts are made of two main parts: the request head act and accompanying modification items. Despite the scarcity in investigation dealing with request modifiers, findings from contrastive studies in ESL contexts point to the learners' underuse of internal request

modifiers compared to native speakers' performance (Rintell 1981; Kasper 1982; House and Kasper 1987; Harlow 1990; Hartford 1996). In addition to that, research in EFL contexts shows an increase of mitigation devices parallel to the learners' proficiency level. We may refer to the studies by Kawamura and Sato (1996), Kobayashi and Rinnert (2003), and Safont (2003) as an instance of investigation related to EFL learners and the use of request modifiers.

Kawamura and Sato (1996) analysed the performance of high and low-level Japanese EFL learners by means of a written discourse completion test. Results showed that both groups responded similarly in terms of external modifiers, while higher-level learners employed a wider amount of internal modification items. According to these findings, it seems that the choice of request modifiers was related to the learners' proficiency level, especially as far as internal modifiers were concerned. Yet, these results are just partly confirmed by another study which also dealt with Japanese EFL learners. Kobayashi and Rinnert (2003) found that their subjects' proficiency level was related to an increase in the use of both external and internal modifiers. We should state that these last authors made use of an oral task, namely a role-play activity, whereas Kawamura and Sato (1996) resorted to a written discourse completion test in obtaining pragmatic information.

Safont (2003) also made use of a written discourse completion task in analysing Spanish EFL learners' requestive behaviour after a particular instructional period. Despite the fact that proficiency-effects were not the goal of that study, it was found that intermediate learners employed a higher amount of external modifiers than beginner participants. Hence, some proficiency-effects could be attributed although further research would be needed to corroborate those findings.

From the above quoted studies, we may assume that the choice of request forms and modifiers seems to be influenced by the linguistic competence of participants. However, the extent to which proficiency effects correlate with the use of particular request modification items may require further study. On the one hand, results from studies conducted in Japan report contradictory findings as far as the use of internal modifiers and its relationship with the learners' proficiency level. On the other hand, studies adopting the same type of elicitation task present different results. Kawamura and Sato (1996) and Safont (2003) employed a written discourse completion task, but proficiency effects were not clear in the first study, as no difference was reported regarding participants' use of external modifiers. Yet, the learners' proficiency level affected both their use of external and internal modifiers in Safont's study (2003). We should point out the fact that learners in Safont's study were bilingual, and as

stated by Kasper and Rose (2002), a focus should be drawn on individual variables affecting learners' performance. In this sense, we have also considered the learners' L1 in analysing their use of request modifiers. More specifically, we have tackled the role of bilingualism in using English as a third language.

### **9.1.3 Pragmatic Production of Third Language Learners**

Current research on third language acquisition that focuses on cognitive and developmental processes has pointed out the advantage of bilinguals over monolinguals. Studies in this respect have focused on creative thinking (Ricciardelli 1992), metalinguistic awareness (Lasagabaster 1998), immersion programmes (Sanz 2000) and individual factors like those of age, motivation and intelligence (Cenoz and Valencia 1994; Muñoz 2000). Lambert (1990) also refers to bilinguals' advantage over monolinguals: "My own working hypothesis is that bilingualism provides a person with a comparative, three-dimensional insight into language, a type of stereo linguistic optic on communication that the monolingual rarely experiences" (1990: 212). In line with Lambert's hypothesis, Hoffmann (2001) argues that the learners' ability to create their own linguistic means and adapt them to suit particular communicative requirements draws a difference between monolinguals on the one hand and bilinguals and trilinguals on the other. Considering Bachman's model of communicative competence (1990), which is subdivided into language and pragmatic competence, Hoffmann (2001) presents a description of trilingual competence. According to this author, trilingual competence not only includes the linguistic aspects from the three language systems but also the pragmatic component, consisting of sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic competences pertaining to the three languages involved.

Some research has now been conducted with a focus on third language use addressing issues like those of switching phenomena (Hammarberg 2001; Williams and Hammarberg 1998), cross-linguistic influence (Cenoz et al. 2001), communicative sensitivity, communicative anxiety (Dewaele 2001). Results from such investigation point to two main trends. On the one hand, bilinguals' production presents distinct features that may bear interesting implications for current paradigms (i.e. models of language production). On the other hand, there seems to be an advantage of bilinguals over monolinguals regarding their interactional competence. Despite the increasing interest in third language use (see Cenoz et al.'s volume 2001), few studies have addressed the development of pragmatic competence in third language learners. Yet, findings so far reveal the out

performance of bilinguals when compared to monolinguals pragmatic production (Safont 2005a). The focus of research on third language pragmatics has been transfer (Fouser 1997) and the use of request forms (Safont 2005a).

Despite the above quoted assumptions that point out differences between monolinguals and bi-/trilinguals in terms of communicative language use, most research has accounted for cognitive and developmental variables rather than for features of language use on the part of third language learners. However, some research has been conducted in this respect addressing issues like those of switching phenomena (Hammarberg 2001; Williams and Hammarberg 1998) and cross-linguistic influence (Cenoz et al. 2001), communicative sensitivity, communicative anxiety (Dewaele 2001), interactional competence and pragmatic transfer.

Williams and Hammarberg (1998) analysed the role of background languages in the production of a third one as far as switching phenomena were concerned. The subject for the study was an adult whose first language was English, second languages were German, French and Italian, and Swedish was her third language. Results attributed a distinct role to the subjects' first and second languages in switching code while using a third language. In addition to that, findings presented interesting implications for existing models of bilingual production (De Bot 1992) regarding the activation of first and second languages in the use of a third one.

The influence of speakers' first and second languages in producing a third one, as well as interaction among those languages and its effect on their use has been further documented in Cenoz et al.'s volume (2001). These authors compile existing research on cross-linguistic matters affecting the use and acquisition of a third language in different multilingual settings. On the one hand, studies in this volume focus on factors involved in linguistic interference (Cenoz 2000) and on the interaction among existing languages in the trilingual mind (De Angelis and Selinker 2001; Hammarberg 2001; Kellerman 2001). On the other hand, certain issues related to trilinguals' or polyglots' communicative competence, mainly those involved in grammatical (Gibson et al. 2001), lexical (Ecke 2001; Herwig 2001; Ringbom 2001) and discourse skills (Fouser 2001) are also dealt with. Findings from these experiments present an extended research agenda in the field of third language acquisition thereby focusing on its use. Therefore, it raises the need for further investigating third language production. In fact early findings on language use pointed to an advantage of bilingual over monolingual subjects in communicating. Genesee et al. (1975) contrasted the degree of communicative sensitivity of bilingual and monolingual children in describing a game to a blind person. Results showed that bilingual



speakers were more sensitive than monolingual ones concerning interpersonal skills.

According to Oskaar (1990), interactional competence, including sensitivity to the listener among other features, may be described as the ability to transfer sociocultural norms. Bearing this notion in mind, we may consider pragmatic competence as a constituent of the whole construct of interactional competence. This definition also implies pragmatic issues of the languages known by the bilingual or multilingual speaker. Jessner (1997) also points to the advantage of bilinguals over monolinguals regarding their interactional competence, that is, their ability to communicate with others, to perform and interpret communicative actions on the basis of the sociocultural and sociolinguistic norms of a particular speech community. In fact, as argued by this author, bilinguals might show a higher degree of pragmatic development than monolingual speakers. Nevertheless, despite the increasing interest in third language use (see Cenoz et al.'s volume 2001), few studies have addressed the development of pragmatic competence in third language learners.

An exception is Fouser's research (1997) which focuses on pragmatic transfer of an adult Korean advanced learner of Japanese as a third language in manipulating various speech levels and honorifics in Japanese. Participants in this study were a 27 year old Korean/English speaker learning Japanese as a third language at an advanced level, and a native speaker of Japanese aged 24, who acted as a native-speaker informant. In order to elicit the use of honorifics and collect relevant data from the subjects, they were asked to complete a Japanese C-Test, a translation task, a Discourse Completion Test, a Discourse Evaluation Test, a short writing task, and a language learning experience questionnaire. Both participants also held a retrospective interview with the researcher. The use of various elicitation techniques aimed at obtaining information on their global proficiency level, pragmatic production, affective and cognitive variables and metapragmatic knowledge. The hypothesis of this study was based on perceived language distance effects in target language production, which had also been dealt with by Kellerman (1991) and Cenoz (2000). Therefore, the author predicted that language transfer would occur from the language perceived as closest (Korean) to the target language (Japanese). Fouser's prediction was supported by results, which pointed out the overruling effect of perceived language distance in pragmatic transfer. Subjects resorted to their first language (Korean) regarding pragmatic features of the target language (Japanese). The influence of the second language (English) is not clearly seen. On the basis of these results the author posits a mismatch between advanced learners linguistic and pragmatic competence. However, as stated by Fouser (1997), individual

variables might have also promoted the results. The author also raises the idea that cognitive variables, differences in formal education and metapragmatic knowledge might have affected the learners' output.

Following Fouser's assumptions (1997) on the factors that might have influenced his subjects' performance, particularly those of educational background and metapragmatic knowledge, we also believe that further research should consider other variables that may influence bilingual learners' pragmatic competence in a third language. Investigation in this respect should account for the complex nature of multilingualism on the one hand, and for particular characteristics of pragmatic development on the other.

Bearing this idea in mind, in the present study we have examined L3 learners' use of specific external modifiers and compared their performance with monolingual learners of English. In so doing, we have tackled the role of individual variables (Kasper and Rose 1999) in the pragmatic performance of EFL learners, the one side, and pragmatic production in third language acquisition (Hoffmann 1999), on the other. These issues have not received much attention on the part of scholars but they have been mentioned in the proposed research agendas of scholars from the IL pragmatics and L3 acquisition disciplines (see Kasper and Rose 2002; Hoffmann 2001).

Hypotheses of our study are as follows:

Hypothesis 1: Bilingual learners of English as a third language will outperform monolingual learners in the number of external modification items employed, thus denoting better pragmatic performance as far as request acts mitigation is concerned (Jessner 1997).

Hypothesis 2: The use of external modification items will be related to the learners' proficiency level. Hence, intermediate learners will make use of a wider amount of modifiers compared to the beginner subgroup (Safont 2003; Kobayashi and Rinnert, 2003).

## 9.2 The Method

Participants for the present study consisted in 80 female students of Jaume I University based in Castelló who were engaged in an English for Academic Purposes course as part of their Teacher Training program. Our subjects had studied English as a foreign language both at primary school and at high school and none of them had ever been to an English-speaking

country before. They were Spanish and born in the Castelló region. Their age ranged between 19 and 23 years old, the average age being 21.5 years.

For the purposes of our study two main factors were taken into account: their proficiency level in English and their degree of bilingual competence in Catalan and Castilian. In order to ascertain the actual degree of bilingualism of our subjects we distributed a bilingualism test that was designed on the basis of Wei's classification of bilingual competence (2000: 6–7) and Baker's definition (1996) of the phenomenon. The test included eighteen questions aimed at ascertaining the degree of bilingual competence of our subjects. On account of the results obtained from the bilingualism test, we considered as bilingual subjects those who had been trained both at primary school and high school with a prevalence of Catalan over Castilian language and who also made regular use of Catalan in their daily communication with friends, at home and at the university. These participants also viewed Catalan as their mother tongue and as the mother tongue of their parents. Besides, we considered as monolingual subjects those ones who had not received prior instruction in Catalan neither at primary nor at secondary schools and who had never used Catalan in formal or in informal situations. Interestingly, most of these monolingual subjects were living in Castelló city and their parents came from towns and cities belonging to Castilian-speaking areas in Spain. Therefore, despite the fact that they were born in this bilingual community, they had never had the need to communicate in Catalan, nor to read the press or watch TV in that language. Additionally, these subjects had never studied the language as they came from private schools, which some time ago did not necessarily include instruction in or about the Catalan language.

As stated above, a second criterion in selecting our informants was that of their proficiency level in the target language, i.e. English. All our subjects had studied English as a foreign language both at primary school and at high school. However, they did not have the same proficiency level. Hence, they were administered a proficiency level test that consisted of four main parts: listening comprehension, reading comprehension, writing, speaking and grammar. The tests were corrected on the basis of the ACTFL Proficiency guidelines suggested by Byrnes et al. (1986). As we were mainly concerned with learners' production as part of their communicative competence, we also considered the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines revision related to *speaking* that was provided by Breiner-Sanders et al. (1999). According to these authors, novice-level (or beginner) speakers can respond to simple questions, convey minimal meaning to interlocutors experienced in dealing with foreigners by using isolated words, lists of words and recombinations of words and phrases, and who may satisfy a number of limited needs. Intermediate learners can participate in simple, direct conversations, to

create the language and communicate personal meaning, obtain and give information, sustain uncomplicated communicative exchanges and satisfy simple personal needs. The teacher and researcher selected those learners that could be considered as beginners and those ones that were considered as intermediate learners. Subjects who showed higher or lower levels were not taken into account in this study. Furthermore, those subjects who had also learnt other foreign languages were excluded.

On the basis of the degree of bilingual competence and the proficiency level in the target language mentioned before, our participants' distribution is displayed in Table 9.1 below.

In order to analyse bilingualism and proficiency effects in pragmatic production, we examined participants' performance in an open role-play. This task was selected on the basis of previous research examining the advantages of a given elicitation method over another one (Kasper and Dahl 1991; Rose 1992). The role-play task consisted of ten prompts or brief descriptions for situations that identified the status of the speaker and hearer in the exchange to be produced but no further guidelines were offered. It was carried out in pairs for it required oral interaction. Data from the role-play task was tape-recorded and transcribed for its later coding. In order to codify our data related to the use of request acts modification items, we considered the amount and type of modifier employed by our subjects on the basis of Sifianou's (1999) and Achiba's (2003) suggested taxonomy of request modification devices, as illustrated in Table 9.2.

**Table 9.1** Participants' distribution according to their proficiency level and degree of bilingualism

	Bilingual N	Monolingual N	Total N
Beginner	20	20	40
Intermediate	20	20	40
TOTAL NUMBER OF SUBJECTS	40	40	80

**Table 9.2** Taxonomy of external modification devices based on Sifianou (1999) and Achiba (2003)

EXTERNAL MODIFICATION	Grounders	(Explanation)
	Disarmers	<i>if you are not too busy</i>
	Expanders	(repeat request with diff. formula)
	<i>Please</i>	

We believe that peripheral modification devices have a notable importance in the case of request acts given their impositive nature. In fact, other scholars (Trosborg 1995) considered the use of modification items in their subjects' requestive behaviour as an attempt to provide a comprehensive analysis of request acts use on the part of non-native speakers. On that account, we consider that learners' use of mitigation devices in performing requests may be seen as an instance of appropriate pragmatic behaviour. Nevertheless, criteria to identify appropriate request formulations and evaluation were discussed with that senior researcher from the second/foreign language acquisition field, and instances of inappropriate pragmatic behaviour were not taken into account.

Since our data were not normally distributed (Kolmogorov-Smirnov = .000), we made use of statistical non-parametric tests. The Mann-Whitney test was employed in addressing significant differences between monolingual and bilingual subjects' responses, as well as between beginner and intermediate participants' performance in the role-play task. The reason why we chose this statistical procedure referred to the fact that we lied data in two subgroups (bilingual and monolingual or beginner and intermediate) and contrasted their performance in the above quoted task. Results from those statistical analyses would allow us to test the first and second hypotheses of the study. In addition to that, we made use of the Kruskal Wallis test to specifically account for the use of particular request modifiers, and thus, provide a more comprehensive account of our analysis.

### **9.3 Results and Discussion**

As stated above a first analysis of our data concerned the comparison between our bilingual and monolingual subjects in terms of the number of external modification items used. In so doing, we aimed at testing hypothesis 1, which predicted the advantage of bilingual over monolingual subjects in their global use of external modification items. Findings to this respect are best exemplified in Figures 9.1 and 9.2 below.

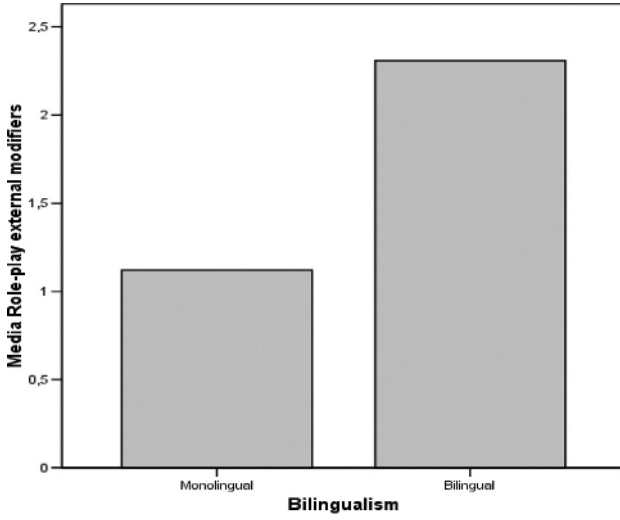


Figure 9.1 Total number of modification devices used by monolingual and bilingual subjects

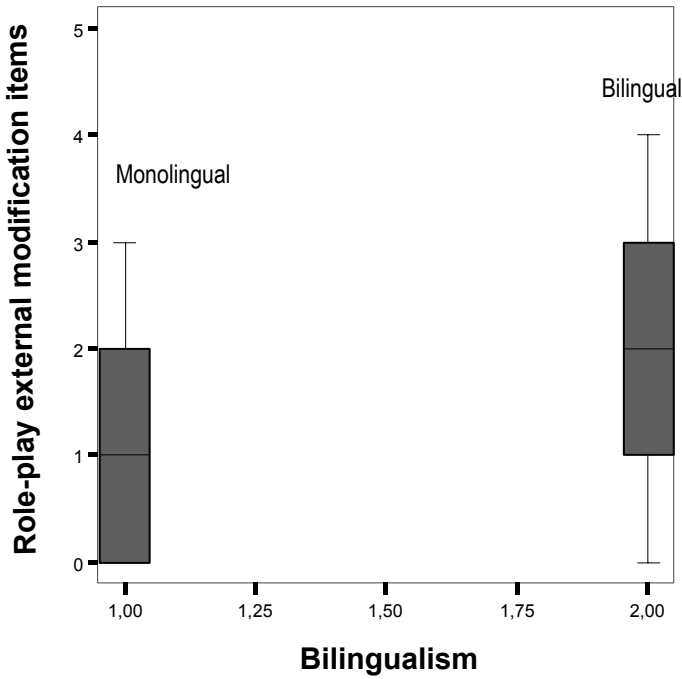


Figure 9.2 Total number of modification devices used by monolingual and bilingual subjects

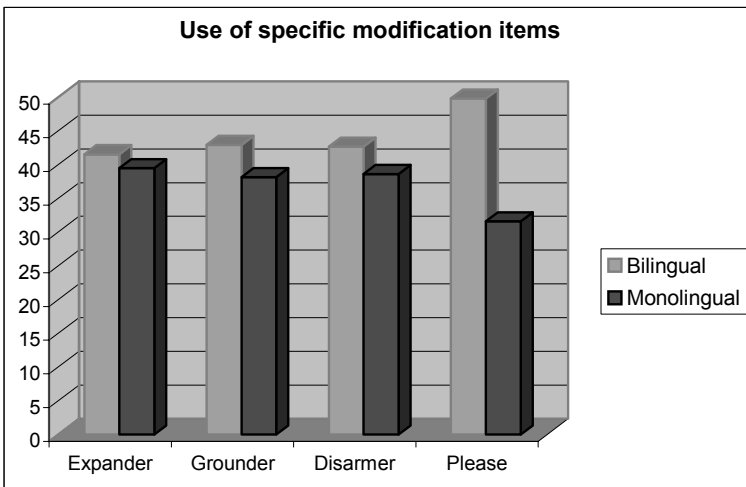
As shown in the box plot above and Figure 9.1, bilingual subjects did not only employ a wider amount of external modification devices but their performance reveals a higher degree of frequency in terms of use as a regular pattern. In order to further analyse the apparent divergence related to the number of external modification items used by the two subgroups, we decided to apply a Mann-Whitney test to our data.

**Table 9.3** Total number of external modification devices employed

	m. r.	Z
Monolingual	30.18	-4.181*
Bilingual	51.35	

*\*p < 0.001*

As provided by results from the Mann-Whitney test displayed in Table 9.3 above, the difference in the quantity of external modifiers appeared as statistically significant with a probability level of 99% { $p = .000$ }, thus, confirming hypothesis 1 of our study which predicted the advantage of bilingual learners' over monolingual ones in their global use of external modifiers. Results presented so far refer to quantitative differences between groups. In accounting for qualitative differences, we analysed bilinguals and monolinguals use of specific external modifiers. In order to account for statistical significance between groups, we made us of Kruskal Wallis test in contrasting the use expanders, disarmers, grounders and the word *please*. Results show that bilinguals employed a higher number of expanders, disarmers, grounders and the word *please* than monolingual speakers, as illustrated in Figure 9.3 below. However, such differences were only statistically significant in the case of the word 'please' { $\text{Chi}^2 = 13.441$  ( $p > .001$ )}.



**Figure 9.3** Use of particular external modification items in the two learner subgroups

Although qualitative differences between groups were not statistically significant in all cases, we believe that our results are significant to the extent that they posited relevant differences between the two groups as far as their global use of external modifiers was concerned. In this sense, we may say that hypothesis 1 of our study that predicted the advantage of bilingual over monolingual learners was supported by our findings. Additionally, our results coincide with those of a previous study (Safont 2005a) in which we examined bilingual subjects' use of both internal and external modifiers in a written and an oral production task. Results from that study showed that bilingual participants employed a higher number of external and internal modifiers than their monolingual counterparts. Although the type of modification item was not taken into account in that study (Safont 2005a) we believe that results may be compared as a similar population was used for the analysis.

Furthermore, we may state that our study is also in line with Jessner's assumptions (1999) which report an advantage to bilingual compared to monolingual learners as far as their interactional competence is concerned, since we understand pragmatic production is part of the learners' overall interactional competence, and request modifiers are instances of pragmatic behaviour. Additionally, our findings also seemed to confirm Herdina and Jessner's dynamic view of multilingualism (2000), since the skill of reducing the impositive nature of request acts by making use of mitigators (i.e. modification items) seemed to be highly more developed in bilingual learners of English ( $p = .000$ ).

Our second hypothesis was related to proficiency-level effects in the use of external modification items, and we predicted that intermediate learners would outperform beginner ones in the number of external modifiers employed. In testing this hypothesis we compared beginner and intermediate learners' requestive behaviour as far as their use of modification items was concerned. In order to identify whether differences between groups were statistically significant, we made use of the Mann-Whitney test. Results are displayed in Table 9.4 as follows.

**Table 9.4** Proficiency-level effects and external modifiers

	m. r.	Z
Beginner	25.35	-5.841*
Intermediate	54.91	

*\*p < 0.001*

According to Mann-Whitney Test results described above, we may state that hypothesis 2 of our study was confirmed by our findings, which stated



that the higher the level the more mitigation in making requests. Yet in an attempt to further account for the role of the proficiency-level, we decided to compare these two learner subgroups in terms of their use of specific external modification items. In so doing, we focused on beginner and intermediate learners' use of expanders, grounders, disarmers and the word please. In order to account for statistical differences a Mann-Whitney test was applied to our data. Results from such test showed that intermediate learners seemed to employ more modifiers in all cases, yet the difference between the two learner subgroups was not statistically significant in the case of expanders and grounders. We found statistical significant differences in their use of the word 'please'  $\{z = -6.315 (p < 0.001)\}$  and disarmers  $\{z = -2.888 (p < 0.001)\}$ .

Results reported above are in line with previous studies on the use of request realisations by learners at different proficiency levels (Takahashi and Dufon 1989) and with longitudinal studies addressing learners at a beginner level. Ellis (1992) examined request acts use by two beginner subjects and reported a significant change in their performance. According to this author, developmental stages were identified which referred to an increase in the use of mitigation devices and more variation in the request linguistic formulations used. Taking these facts into account, we may say that our results shared some characteristics with Ellis' study (1992), as a wider use of modification devices was reported by intermediate than by beginner learners. Similarly, intermediate learners employed a wider amount of request linguistic realisations, which also denoted wider variation. In addition, our findings confirm those of previous studies dealing with request modifiers in EFL settings, namely those of Kobayashi and Rinnert (2003) and Safont (2003). In both studies learners' use of external modifiers increased in line with their proficiency level. However, our findings differ from those that were provided by Kawamura and Sato (1996). In this latter study no significant differences were reported considering the use of external modifiers by low and high-level learners. However, we should state that Kawamura and Sato employed a written discourse completion task, while we have resorted to an oral task, which was also employed in Kobayashi and Rinnert's study (2003).

We may also assume that despite the fact that grammatical competence is not a sufficient requirement for pragmatic development (Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford 1990), it seems to play an important role, at least as far as request acts modifiers are concerned. However, such role calls for further attention on the part of IL pragmatics researchers, since no clear facilitating role in terms of pragmatic competence development may be attributed to the learners' proficiency level according to the results obtained in this study. In fact, there were no differences regarding beginner

and intermediate learners' use of grounders and expanders. Additionally, task effects could have also influenced our results as different findings were obtained in another study dealing with EFL learners (Kawamura and Sato 1996).

In light of our results further research is necessary to truly account for the role of bilingualism and the proficiency level in the learners' use of request modification devices in particular, and other pragmatic aspects in general. We have tried to adopt a different perspective in analysing our learners pragmatic production, that of their linguistic background which pointed to the fact that half of them were learning English as a third language. Additionally, it has also been our purpose to broaden the scope of investigation in third language acquisition to consider pragmatic development of L3 learners, since, as argued by Hoffmann (2001), it concerns one aspect which characterises bilingual and trilingual competence and differentiates these from monolingual competence.

## 9.4 Conclusion

As a conclusion, we may say that our hypotheses were supported by our results. On the one hand, we aimed at determining whether bilingualism would affect foreign language learners' pragmatic production and results confirmed the advantage of bilingual over monolingual learners in the global use of external modification items. Therefore, our results support Jessner's assumptions that point to a highly developed interactional competence in third language learners, since we understand pragmatic production as part of the overall communicative competence. Furthermore, we may state that our findings are in line with Herdina and Jessner's dynamic view of multilingualism (2000), since skills involved in making use of appropriate requestive behaviour (including mitigation devices) appeared more developed in third than in second (foreign) English learners.

On the other hand, our second hypothesis, which predicted the advantage of intermediate over beginner learners, was also confirmed by our findings. Results confirmed previous studies about proficiency-level effects on pragmatic development (Ellis 1992) and on the use of request modifiers (Kobayashi and Rinnert 2003; Safont 2003). However, our study is also subject to certain constraints, as we have only dealt with female participants at a similar age range, and data were not normally distributed. Dealing with subjects at different age periods or including male participants could have varied our results, since investigation in these matters bears some influential role to the age and gender factors (Cenoz 2000; Muñoz 2000).

Despite the above-mentioned limitations that may be attributed to the present study, we believe that findings should be considered to the extent that they support our hypotheses and seem to confirm and further expand previous research from the field of third language acquisition. The advantage of bilingual subjects in producing requestive behaviour seems to call for further research on the development of pragmatic competence on the part of third language learners by focusing on the production of other pragmatic aspects. So far a wide amount of research in the interlanguage pragmatics field (Bardovi-Harlig 1999) has signalled out developmental stages that help us understand psycholinguistic and cognitive processes in acquiring a second and to a lesser extent a foreign language. Nevertheless, we do live in a multilingual society and since knowledge of more than one language has proved to influence the acquisition and use of a third one, pragmatic competence deserves investigation from that perspective. In so doing, we may better understand the development of those processes implied in multilingual acquisition and use, while shedding more light on the development of second/foreign language acquisition and use in turn.

## Notes

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## North Korean Schools in Japan: An Observation of Quasi-Native Heritage Language Use in Teaching English as a Third Language

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### 10. 1 Introduction

In 2005, the number of foreigners living in Japan passed 2,000,000 for the first time, but it remains a small percentage of the total population of 128,000,000. The number of foreigners has increased steadily since the end of World War II, but Japan has yet to witness the influx of immigrants that has occurred in Europe and North America. Though acculturated foreigners become Japanese citizens in increasing numbers each year, Japan remains one of the most ethnically and linguistically homogeneous nations in the world. The degree of ethnic and linguistic homogeneity makes Japan a particularly interesting place to study efforts of ethnic minorities to maintain their identity and language against overwhelming odds.

Of all ethnic minorities in Japan, ethnic Koreans are by far the largest group. According to the 2004 Immigration Bureau (*Nyūkyoku Kanrikyoku*) figures, 607,000, or 30.8 percent of all foreigners in Japan are Korean. Of these, 461,000 have “special permanent residency,” which is reserved for Koreans were born in Japan or Korea before end of the World War II in 1945. Another 146,000 Koreans who were not born in Japan after 1945 have the same types of visas as foreigners from other nations. The overwhelming majority of these “newcomers,” as they are called, come from South Korea (Republic of Korea). Koreans who hold “special permanent residency” and who maintain a Korean citizenship (South Korea or North Korea [Democratic People’s Republic of Korea]) are referred to as *Zainichi Kankoku/Chōsenjin*, or “resident Koreans in Japan.”

Since the 1950s, resident Koreans have been taking out Japanese citizenship, and currently about 10,000 do so each year (Kashiwazaki 2000), bringing to total to over 250,000 by the early 2000s (Tai 2004). Determining the number of Koreans is complicated by intermarriage



because the percentage of marriages between ethnic Koreans has declined to only 10% of all marriages involving a Korean partner in the 2000s (Tai 2004). Together, as Ueda (2001) noted, it is commonly estimated that 700,000 people in Japan are ethnic Korean, either with Japanese citizenship, a Korean citizenship, or, in rare cases, citizenship of another country. The rise in intermarriage and the number of “newcomers,” however, makes it difficult to determine an accurate number.

Most of resident Koreans in Japan have roots in the period of Japanese colonialism in Korea (1910–1945) when large numbers of Korean laborers came or were forced to come to Japan. Most Koreans came from Kyōngsang Province, the closest province to Japan; the second largest group came from the island province of Cheju (Mori 1996). Korean students also came to Japan in considerable numbers during the colonial period, and many played leading roles in Korean history in the 20th century. By 1945, the Korean population in Japan was 2,400,000, many of whom were repatriated, amid considerable confusion, to the Korean peninsula shortly after the war ended (Ryang 1997). Those who stayed faced discrimination in employment, housing, and schooling. Though the situation has improved greatly in recent years (Tai 2004), resident Koreans still face subtle social discrimination, as Kashiwazaki (2000) and Umakoshi (1991) discussed with reference to the use of Korean names in school.

This paper investigates how Korean as “quasi-native” heritage language is used in teaching English as a third language in a junior high school operated by the General Association of Korean Residents in Japan (“Chaeilbon Chosōnin Ch’ong Ryōnhaphoe” in Korean and “Zainihon Chōsenjin Sōrengōkai” in Japanese), the organization of resident Koreans with North Korean citizenship in Japan. Following Ryang (1997), the abbreviated form “Chongryun”<sup>1</sup> is used to refer to the organization throughout this paper. Ueda (2001) termed the Korean used in Chongryun schools “Chongryun Korean,” and described it as a quasi-native variety of Korean that is unique among Korean dialects because it is used only in the public sphere. This paper offers insight into understanding of how classroom dynamics relate to broader issues of language in constructing and maintaining a Korean ethnic identity in Chongryun schools. The use of a quasi-native heritage language to teach English as third language also offers new insight into the role of foreign language education to create “third spaces” for ethnic minorities in largely homogeneous societies.

## 10.2 Background

Korean schools in Japan emerged soon after the end of the World War II. The majority of Koreans were repatriated quickly, but the pace of repatriation slowed in 1946 because parents of children who were not literate in Korean wanted to prepare their children for returning to Korea (Kim DR 2002). Rumors of instability in the Korean Peninsula, particularly in the southern half where most Koreans were from, added to the anxiety among Koreans. The number of Korean schools increased rapidly from the 1946 until local governments and the American occupation authorities forced them to close amid a broader purge of Communist and other left-wing activities in 1949 (Ryang 1997; Kim DR 2002). In 1955, three years after the end of the American occupation, Koreans sympathetic to North Korea founded the Chongryun with the primary aim of preparing Koreans to return to North Korea. From 1955 through the end of the 1960s, the Chongryun developed an extensive system of schools with Korean as the medium of instruction. The school system was organized into the same structure as Japanese schools: six years of elementary school, three years of junior high school, and three years of high school. At this time, the goal of the education system was to prepare Koreans for returning to North Korea. A less obvious goal was to promote loyalty to the Chongryun and to educate its future leaders (Ryang 1997).

In the 1980s and 1990s as South Korea gained economic strength and democratized itself and as the North Korean economy collapsed, North Korea lost its appeal and enrollment in Chongryun schools declined steadily. Since the 1990s, many schools have been forced to close or merge with other schools for lack of students. In 2005, the Chongryun operated 73 schools, including one university, throughout Japan. This marks a substantial decline from a peak of 150 in the 1980s. Umakoshi (1991) reported that Chongryun schools enrolled only about 13% of resident Korean students, while almost 86% attended Japanese schools (the percentage in Korean schools in 2005 is most likely below 10%). More recently, Chongryun schools have gradually deemphasized ideology and have reached out local communities in an attempt to repackage themselves as Korean language immersion schools (*The Asahi Shimbun*, September 10, 2002). A new curriculum and textbooks were adopted in 2003, the first such reform since 1993. The 1993 curriculum itself built on the sweeping changes implemented with the 1983 curriculum, the first to follow the Japanese national curriculum instead of the national curriculum in North Korea (Ryang 1997). The 2003 curriculum puts greater emphasis on science and technology and cross-cultural understanding than the previous

curriculum (*The Asahi Shimbun* 2002; *Chaeilbon Chosŏnin Ch'ong Ryŏnhaphoe* 2005). Chongryun schools are concentrated in urban areas with large resident Korean communities. Most schools are concentrated in four areas: Tokyo-Yokohama-Chiba, Nagoya, Osaka-Kobe-Kyoto, and Kitakyushu-Fukuoka. Of these, the Osaka-Kobe-Kyoto area has the largest number of resident Koreans.

The larger competing organization is the Korean Residents Union in Japan (abbreviated as “Mindan”), the organization of resident Koreans with South Korean citizenship. The Mindan operates only four schools and all of the schools use Japanese as the medium of instruction, but teach Korean as a second language within a curriculum that closely mirrors the Japanese national curriculum. Since the 1977 education for ethnic Koreans has been included in some Japanese public schools in Osaka, Nagoya, and Fukuoka (Umakoshi 1991). Korean ethnic education in the public schools focuses on Korean history, language, and music for two to four hours per week.

Many Mindan operated schools have changed their name as they have received accreditation from the Japanese Ministry of Education. None of the Chongryun schools has official accreditation, which means that graduation from the schools is not officially recognized. The Ministry of Education, however, has recognized them as “miscellaneous school,” a category reserved for nonacademic schools. To receive accreditation, Chongryun schools would have to follow time allotments in the national curriculum, which would drastically reduce the time allotted for Korean. For many years, students who graduated from Chongryun schools could not sit for examinations to national universities and faced distinct disadvantages in employment. This situation has improved since the 1990s, but some barriers remain. Chongryun schools are not eligible for Ministry of Education funding, but sympathetic boards of education have secured small amounts of funding from local governments in many places (Umakoshi 1991).

To instill Korean identity, Chongryun schools maintain a strict policy of using Korean only as a medium of instruction, known as the “100% Our Language Movement” (Ryang 1997). Korean is the medium of instruction and the medium of discourse in the school for every subject, except Japanese, which is taught as a “foreign language,” even though it is the native language of all the students and teachers (Ryang 1997; Ueda 2001). In the immediate postwar period, many teachers would have been native speakers of Korean who came from Korea during the colonial period, but now all the teachers are native speakers of Japanese who learned Korean in the Chongryun system (Ueda 2001). This produces an interesting situation in which the language of instruction is a quasi-native heritage language

that students and teachers rarely use outside of the school, except to mark their membership in the Chongryun (Ryang 1997). As a result, the Korean that is used in the schools is a stilted school language that has developed its own norms independent of those of the Korean used in standard language or dialects in either Korean state (Kim 1994; Ueda 2001). Ueda (2001) noted that the standard South Korean variety of Korean is influencing the language of ethnic Koreans in China and the former Soviet Union through contacts with South Koreans and South Korean media and pop culture. Ueda (2001) also noted that the Chongryun has published reference books on “proper Korean” to reduce the influence of the Japanese and reinforce the Chongryun standard against possible influence from the South Korean standard.

All Chongryun schools follow a centralized curriculum and, as mentioned above, the current curriculum was adopted in 2003. The curriculum is similar to the national curriculum in Japan except for the large amount of time devoted to Korean language study. Time allotments for most other subjects are similar to the national curriculum. Most of the time for Korean is taken out of Japanese, physical education, and non-subject activities that emphasize interdisciplinary approaches to learning. The time allotment for Japanese is less, but the contents of the subjects in the curriculum closely follow those of the national curriculum. Interestingly, the time allotment for English in Chongryun schools is slightly more than the national curriculum. In the 2003 curriculum, Korean, Japanese, and English subjects comprise 38.1% of the current elementary and junior high school curriculum, indicating that language is central to Chongryun education. Language subjects in Japanese schools, by contrast, comprise only 24.6% of the curriculum (*Chaeilbon Chosŏnin Ch’ong Ryŏnhaphoe* 2005).

## 10.3 Method

### 10.3.1 Participants

Data for this paper were obtained from a full 45-minute class observation of a second-year junior high school English class at Kitakyushu Korean Elementary and Junior High School (“Kitakyūshū Chosŏn Cho-junggŭp Hakyo” in Korean and “Kitakyūshū Chōsen Sho-chūkyu Gakkō” in Japanese) in Kitakyushu in February of 2001<sup>2</sup>. About 20 students were enrolled in the class and most were attending the day the data were gathered. The teacher taught the class solo, and the classroom had minimal decoration. Above the blackboard were framed photographs of Kim Il Sung and Kim

Jung Il, the founder and current leader of North Korea, respectively<sup>3</sup>. To the right of the blackboard was a map of the Korean Peninsula, and to the left, a quotation from Kim Il Sung stating that resident Koreans should study Korean as preparation for returning to a unified Korea. As specified by the 1993 curriculum in force when the data were collected, second-year students met for five 45-minute English classes a week (Pak 1997; information obtained from the school principal). In the 2003 curriculum, time for English in the second and third years of junior high school was reduced to four hours per week instead of five as part of time adjustments required because of the elimination of Saturday classes in Japan (Chongryun schools, however, have a number of required activities on Saturday). Table 10.1 provides an overview of the 1993 curriculum for junior high school.

**Table 10.1** Outline of the 1993 Curriculum for Chongryun Junior High Schools

Subject	1st Year	2nd Year	3rd Year
Social Studies	2	2	4
Korean	5	5	5
Korean Composition	1	1	1
Korean History	—	2	—
Korean Geography	2	—	—
Mathematics	4	4	5
Science	4	4	4
Japanese	5	4	4
English	4	5	5
Health and Physical Education	2	2	2
Music	1	1	1
Art	1	1	1
Home Economics	1	—	—
Computer Literacy	—	1	—
Number of Subjects	12	12	10
Total Class Hours Per Week	32	32	32

Source: information taken from Pak (1997) and unpublished information from Kitakyushu Korean Elementary and Junior High School

The Kitakyushu Korean Elementary and Junior High School was founded in 1968 and had an enrollment of 227 students in 2001 when the data were collected. Kitakyushu is an industrial city of 993,000 (2005) people on the northern tip of the island of Kyushu. For much of the 20th century, the city was a center of heavy industry and it remains the closest large Japanese city to the Korea. In 2003, Immigration Bureau (*Nyūkoku Kanrikyoku*) figures showed that the city had 7,365 persons of Korean citizenship, making it one of the larger Korean communities in Japan. As in other parts of Japan,

resident Koreans of school age were all born in Japan and are native speakers of Japanese. Most students in the class were fourth generation residents in Japan, and nearly all of them lived in the Kitakyushu area (a few students from outlying areas in Kyushu attended the school).

### **10.3.2 Procedure and Analysis**

Special permission for a private school visit was obtained from the principal of the school. The principal introduced the research to several English teachers and obtained permission to videotape the class for the complete 45 minutes. Supplementary data for the paper was obtained from various classes at the Kyoto Korean Junior and Senior High School (“Kyotto Chosŏn Chung-gogŭp Hakyo” in Korean and “Kyōto Chōsen Chū-kōkyū Gakkō” in Japanese) in Kyoto in November 2003. Data from the high school in Kyoto were gathered during an “open school day” in which members of the community were invited to visit the school and observe classes. English, Korean, Japanese, and other classes were videotaped for about 15 minutes each. Data from the short observations were used to supplement the discussion of the data from full class in Kitakyushu. In addition, trends in language use in teaching English in Japanese schools were included to augment the analysis.

Data from the full class at the Kitakyushu Korean Elementary and Junior High School and other supplementary data were analyzed qualitatively to discern trends in the classroom discourse and language use. Discourse issues include turn taking, repairs, and overall interaction between the teacher and students and among students (for a detailed discussion of types of classroom discourse, see Seedhouse 2004). Language use issues focus on the pronunciation, grammatical accuracy, lexical diversity, linguistic repertoire, and speech levels of the languages used in the classroom. This study is limited, of course, because of the small number of classroom observations and because the research had very limited contact with students and teachers outside of the classroom.

## **10.4 Results and Discussion**

### **10.4.1 Organization of the Lesson**

The lesson followed a pattern typical of most junior high school English classes in Japan. Table 10.2 provides an overview of the organization of the lesson.

**Table 10.2** Order and contents of observed English class at Kitakyushu Korean Elementary and Junior High School

Order	Contents	Duration	Language Use
1	Roll call; comments on homework	3 minutes	Mostly Korean
2	Review of use of “more” from previous lesson	3 minutes	Mostly Korean
3	Choral reading of first passage in Lesson 12 of the textbook	5 minutes	Mostly English
4	Explanation of reading passage	5 minutes	Mostly Korean
5	Practice using “most”	5 minutes	Mostly English
6	Grammatical explanation of “most”	7 minutes	Mostly Korean
7	Workbook activity using “most” while teacher wrote grammar explanations on blackboard and walked around to check student work	15 minutes	Mostly Korean
8	Summary of lesson; assigned homework	2 minutes	Mostly Korean
9	Concluding bow to teacher	Brief	English

The teacher began the lesson by calling roll and making brief comments on student homework contained in workbooks, which were piled on the teacher’s podium in the front of the classroom. Some students were talking with each other, and the teacher used the Japanese word *niichan* (“older brother”) to get the attention of a student who was looking away from the podium what he was doing. When used by a teacher to a student, this word is sarcastic and indicates impatience. This is the only Japanese word that appeared in the lesson. The teacher then moved quickly to a review of the grammar that had been introduced in the lesson the day before. The review focused on the use of “more” with adjectives ending in “-ed,” “-ing,” or “-ful.” All grammar explanations were in Korean. The teacher translated example sentences orally into written-style Korean, which reflects common teaching practice in Japan. Next, the teacher introduced the point of the lesson for that day and directed students to the first reading passage in Lesson 12 of the textbook. The teacher read phrases and clauses aloud and then prompted students to read aloud chorally. After the choral reading, the teacher moved to a sentence-by-sentence explanation of the vocabulary and structures in the reading while introducing the use of “most.” In this part of the lesson, the teacher used grammatical terminology frequently as the students took notes. The teacher then used various adjectives with “most” to ask questions to students. The teacher called on individual students, but did not press them for an answer. Frequently, she would answer herself, suggesting that this part of the lesson was used mainly to model the form. Next, the teacher offered a grammatical explanation of “most,” that included

examples sentences related to North Korea, such as “Pyongyang is the most beautiful city in Korea.”

The teacher then switched from teacher-fronted activities to individual work. She returned workbooks to students and asked students to complete the sentence writing activity relating to the use of “most.” While the students worked, the teacher put a grammatical explanation in Korean of the use of “most” with adverbs on the blackboard. The teacher then walked around the class to check students’ work, offering additional explanation to the whole class when she noticed that a particular student was having difficulty with the activity. During activity, some students helped each other quietly. Unlike many classrooms in Japan where students sit two to a row, students sat one to a row, making it somewhat difficult to work with another student in pairs. The teacher then reviewed the first couple of sentences in the activity in front of the class. She then offered a short summary of the point of the lesson—the use of “most” with certain adjectives and adverbs. As the bell rang, the teacher gave homework. The class ended with students standing and bowing, as is common throughout Japan, while the teacher said good-bye to the class in English.

#### 10.4.2 Instructional Material

The class contained three forms of instructional material: a textbook, a workbook, and writing on the blackboard. The textbook and workbook contained no Japanese, and the teacher did not use any Japanese on the blackboard or in the poster and flash cards that she used in the lesson. This differed from Walker’s (1999) observation of an English class at Osaka Korean High School in which the teacher there used trilingual (Korean, English, Japanese) flash cards. The textbook, *Yong’ŏ II chunggŭp* [English II Intermediate] (*Ch’ongnyŏn Chung’ang Sang’im Wiwŏnhoe Kyogwasŏ P’yŏnch’an Wiwŏnhoe* 2000), was the only textbook in use in Chongryun junior high schools in 2001. The book was first published in 1994 in cooperation with Sanseido Publishing Co. Ltd., a large Japanese publisher that publishes the *New Crown English Series* textbooks. Aside from references to Korean culture and to North Korea, the contents and organization of the textbook is very similar to other textbooks used in Japan. Table 10.3 below shows an outline of the contents compared with the *New Crown English Series: Book 2* (Sanseido Publishing Co, Ltd., 1997) textbook that was being used in many Japanese junior high schools in 2001.



**Table 10.3** Comparison of second-year textbooks in Chongryun and Japanese Junior High Schools

<i>Yong'ŏ Il chunggŭp</i>		<i>New Crown English Series: Book 2</i>	
Lesson	Title	Lesson	Title
1	The New School Terms	1	Life in Australia
2	Diary in English	2	English Diary
3	Holidays in May	3	Who “Discovered” America
4	Communication	4	Computers in Future Schools
5	Dolphins	5	Rain Forests
6	Who “Discovered” America	6	Squid
7	An Australian Teacher	7	Speech—“My Dream”
8	The Maori in New Zealand	8	Ainu
9	Speech—“My Dream”	9	The United Kingdom
10	Cooking	10	Gestures Talk
11	The United Kingdom	11	Kenya
12	City Life and Country Life	—	—

The similarity of titles of the lessons reflects the cooperation between the Chongryun textbook editorial committee and the Japanese publisher. Three lessons have exactly the same title, but the contents vary slightly. Throughout the Chongryun textbook, references to Japan, for example, are changed to refer to Korea. The contents of Chongryun textbook, however, are no more political or ideological than those of the Japanese book. The textbooks contain nearly the same vocabulary and cover the same grammatical structures. Taken together, the close similarity between the Chongryun textbooks and those of Sanseido, the cooperating Japanese publisher, and the similarity in lesson structure and teaching style reveals little difference in English teaching between Chongryun schools and Japanese high schools, except, of course that the language of instruction is Korean instead of Japanese.

### 10.4.3 Classroom Discourse

Analysis of classroom discourse was difficult because the lesson consisted of mostly teacher-fronted activities and individual work. During the teacher-fronted activities, the teacher addressed the class as a whole almost exclusively. When she addressed individual students, she did so in brief, formulaic language relating to the contents of the lesson. None of the students asked a question during the lesson and students did not interact much with each other except for brief comments which were not audible. During the workbook activity, the teacher observed students, offering comments, mostly in the form of repair statements containing the correct

form that the activity in the workbook was designed to elicit. Even during this time, students did not ask the teacher questions, and instead worked silently or quietly with a friend. The paucity of interaction, particularly during non-teacher-fronted activities, is somewhat unusual in a junior high school in Japan, but it is difficult to draw any firm conclusion because the teacher may have had opportunities outside the classroom to interact with students. One explanation could be that, as Ryang (1997) discussed, students lack a wide linguistic repertoire in Korean and are thus confined to a highly codified language derived from the written form. Interaction in English, meanwhile, was almost nonexistent. Though not uncommon in grammar-based teaching in Japan, most junior high school English classes begin with a warm-up activity that includes simple question-and-answer interaction between the teacher and students as a whole or between the teacher and an individual student. The classes observed at the Kyoto Korean Junior and Senior High School revealed a similar degree of teacher-fronted activities, but analysis of interaction in that school should be treated with caution because the data were gathered during an “open school day” for which teachers and students would have prepared carefully.

#### **10.4.4 Overall Trends in Classroom Language Use**

Analysis of language use showed that the teacher and students used Korean for most classroom activities. As mentioned above, the lesson included little time for student-student interaction, so it was difficult to determine whether students use Japanese with one another in class. Student-student interaction during the workbook activity was largely inaudible, but what was audible indicated that the students spoke Korean with one another in class. The teacher used English and Korean for classroom management; mostly Korean for grammar and vocabulary explanations and vocabulary prompts for drills; and English for presenting examples words and sentences. This style of organizing activities is common in Japanese junior high schools, though the amount and quality of English used varies with the teacher and the year in school.

As discussed at length in Ryang (1997), the language of Chongryun schools is a codified form of school Korean that does not reflect native-speaker norms in North or South Korea, though the textbooks follow the written form of Korean that is official in North Korea. Ryang (1997: 36) stated, “The Korean language schoolchildren speak is predominantly text-dependent: It is a written form that is spoken.” Data from the class under study correspond to Ryang’s description, though with

considerable individual variation. The teacher of the class at Kitakyushu Korean Elementary and Junior High School had a weak “Japanese accent,” whereas the teachers at the Kyoto Korean Junior and Senior High School had stronger “Japanese accents.” The influence of Japanese was most prominent in vowel sounds [ɔ] and [i] and syllable final [ŋ]. Because all teachers in Chongryun schools are graduates of the Chongryun system, younger teachers would have learned Korean among other quasi-native speakers who speak the same form of school Korean. Older teachers, however, would have learned Korean from native speakers, most of whom spoke dialects from Kyōngsang or Cheju Province (Ueda 2001). Students who attend Korea University (“Chosōn Taehak” in Korean or “Chōsen Daigaku” in Japanese), the sole Chongryun university in Japan, however, can visit North Korea and have informal contact with native speakers of Korean in the Tokyo area. Chongryun high schools also organize regular visits to North Korea. The differences in pronunciation among the teachers observed in this study are most likely because of individual differences in aptitude and cognitive skill, rather than differences in exposure to Korean in the Chongryun school system. The differences could also reflect the dialect of Japanese that teachers speak as a native language (Ryang 1997). The students in the class used the same form of school Korean, but it was difficult to discern differences among the students because the class was largely teacher-fronted, with almost no opportunity to observe student language production.

Individual differences in Korean proficiency were more difficult to discern in the accuracy of grammar and vocabulary use. The teacher at the Kitakyushu Korean Junior and Senior High School made no errors in Korean grammar and vocabulary usage during the 45-minute lesson. Teachers of the other classes observed also made no errors during the period of observation. Korean and Japanese share many lexical, morphological, and syntactical similarities that native speakers of Japan, such as Chongryun Koreans, can draw to learn Korean. The consistently high-level of grammatical accuracy of the teachers also confirms Ryang’s (1997) assertion that the Korean language in Chongryun schools is codified and controlled. The teachers in this study also showed a high-level of accuracy in use of English in the classroom. To be sure, the range of English required to teach the classes, particularly at the junior high school level, is limited, but the degree of accuracy raises the intriguing question of whether teachers in Chongryun schools apply the cognitive skills developed from learning and using quasi-native Korean as the medium instruction to the task of teaching English and other subjects. As Ryang (1997: 36) noted, “The schools do not teach how to speak daily Korean;

they teach how to read and write correct sentences.” The desire to maintain “control” over use of quasi- and non-native languages at work may also explain why the observed classes were largely devoid of the humor and spontaneous interaction that is often observed in English classes in Japanese schools.

The range of Korean vocabulary that teachers used in teacher-fronted activities was similar to that of other English teachers in Japanese schools. In the class at Kitakyushu Korean Junior and Senior High School, the teacher used a full range of metalinguistic terms to explain the words and grammatical patterns that appeared in the lesson. Though the teacher did not check whether students understood the terms or the explanations directly, most students took notes as the teacher spoke, suggesting that they were familiar with the terms. The teacher used North Korean vocabulary only twice. The first instance was adding the suffix *tongmu* (“comrade”) when addressing a student; the second was using the word *Chosŏn* to refer to Korea. In the few other cases where the teacher addressed students directly, she used their given name only. The teacher’s use of English vocabulary was largely limited to words in the textbook and that appeared in previous lessons. None of the vocabulary or words that appeared in the lesson were translations of North Korean usage. Data from the other classes observed were very similar to the full-class data, suggesting, as with the above discussion of grammar, that classroom language in Chongryun schools is consistent across the system.

#### 10.4.5 Sociolinguistic Trends in Classroom Language Use

To a greater degree, sociolinguistic trends in classroom language use confirmed descriptions by Kim (1994) and Ryang (1997) of the Korean used in Chongryun schools. The teacher of the class at Kitakyushu Korean Junior and Senior High School switched between two speech levels: the formal style and the *panmal* (informal/intimate) style. Like Japanese and Javanese, Korean has clearly defined speech levels that are marked through word choice, terms of address, and verbal suffixes (Lee and Ramsey 2000). As a quasi-native speaker of Korean, the teacher would have learned to manipulate speech levels as she rose through the Chongryun school system. The use of only two speech levels may also reflect North Korean usage, because in South Korea, the *panmal* level is frequently mixed with the formal level, particularly by women, when in classroom teaching. The *panmal* level would be used to address individual students or during the discourse of humor, discipline, and other context-specific discourse. Unfortunately, the observed classes offered

little insight into the speech levels that students used in talking to the teacher or to one another.

Ryang (1997) and Ueda (2001) discussed frequent code-switching between Japanese and Korean in private life, and Walker (1999) noted code-switching among Japanese, Korean, and English in English class. The teacher of the class at Kitakyushu Elementary and Junior High School moved freely between Korean and English, but the degree of code-switching was similar to that of an English teacher in a Japanese junior high school. One important difference, however, is that the students in the Kitakyushu class did not lose their concentration or turned their attention away from the teacher when she switched to English, as frequently as students in a Japanese junior high school. This is perhaps because, as Chongryun Koreans, code-switching is a part of everyday life (Kim 1994; Ryang 1997).

## 10.5 Conclusion

“... I look upon much of the ethnic education movement as well intentioned but historically limited,” was what Rohlen (1981: 221) concluded about the future of ethnic Korean schools in Japan. The 25 years since have largely proved Rohlen correct. Enrollment in Chongryun schools has plummeted, creating a wave of school closers and mergers. Indeed, the junior high school where data for this paper was obtained in 2001 was merged with the local Chongryun high school. In ever increasing numbers, Chongryun Koreans are taking out Japanese or South Korean citizenship, and intermarriage between resident Koreans and Japanese has become the norm. The issue of Korean ethnic identity is increasingly mote because the assumed holders of the identity are themselves less “Korean.”

For Chongryun schools, the weakening of identity subverts the rationale for a Chongryun education. The English class studied in this paper, however, reveals latent, no doubt deeply hidden, rationale: trilingual education. Except for a few symbolic references to North Korea and the comparatively small number of students, the classroom could be anywhere in Japan. The textbook, classroom activities, and atmosphere of the class could also be anywhere in Japan. The difference—the overwhelming difference—was language. The difference in language, of course, goes beyond the medium of instruction: Chongryun schools assume bilinguality; Japanese assume monolinguality.

In homogeneous Japan, the sight of students using a quasi-native language to learn a third language is unimaginable. For Japan as a whole, the “unimaginableness” of Chongryun schools gives them meaning. Since

1955, they have produced more than 100,000 quasi-native speakers of Korean (Pak 1997), which is far more quasi-native speakers of any language than the Japanese school system has ever produced. They have done so with limited resources and contact with native speakers. Amid challenges of globalization in Japan, then, the Chongryun schools stand as a model for what can be achieved in language education, multicultural education, and heritage language maintenance—if only Japanese society had the presence of mind to look.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>The organization uses this style of Romanization for the abbreviated form; romanization of other Korean words follows the McCune-Reischauer system.

<sup>2</sup>In 2004, the junior high school program was merged into the Kyushu Korean Junior and Senior High School (“Kyusyu Chosŏn Chunggogŭp Hakyo” in Korean and “Kyūshū Chōsen Chūkōkyū Gakkō”).

<sup>3</sup>In the observations conducted in 2003 in the Kyoto Korean Junior and Senior High School, the portraits of the two North Korean leaders had been removed from the classrooms used for junior high school classes.

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## Examining Mitigation in Requests: A Focus on Transcripts in ELT Coursebooks<sup>1</sup>

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### 11.1 Introduction

#### 11.1.1 Pragmatic Competence and Pragmatic Instruction

Studies of the development of foreign language (FL) knowledge have tended to focus more on the acquisition of phonological, morphological, syntactic and semantic forms than on the development of pragmatic ability (Kasper and Schmidt 1996). Evidence of this emphasis is the fact that FL learners may master the vocabulary and grammar of the target language without having a comparable control over the pragmatic uses of the language. This amounts to saying that FL learners may know several ways of thanking, complaining or requesting without being sure under what circumstances it is appropriate to use one form or another. As we have just mentioned, studies centred on speech act ability have not dealt with the development of this process. However, pragmatic ability is part of a learner's communicative competence, and it has received attention in the proposed models of communicative competence (Canale 1983; Bachman 1990; Celce-Murcia et al. 1995). In 1983 Canale proposed a model of communicative competence which consisted of four components: grammatical competence (the knowledge of the language code), sociolinguistic competence (the appropriate application of vocabulary, politeness, etc.), discourse competence (the ability to combine language structures into different types of cohesive texts) and strategic competence (the knowledge of communicative strategies to overcome communicative breakdowns). This model was highly influential, and it has been used as a starting point for many subsequent studies on the topic.

Bachman (1990) divided language knowledge into two main categories, which were in turn subdivided into subcategories. The first category was termed *organisational knowledge*, which included grammatical and textual knowledge. The second category was *pragmatic knowledge*, including



lexical, functional and sociolinguistic knowledge. In the mid-nineties, Celce-Murcia et al. (1995) developed their own model of communicative competence, and they added the *actional competence* component. The authors defined actional competence as “competence in conveying and understanding communicative intent” (1995: 17) and claimed that actional competence was closely related to interlanguage pragmatics.

As we can observe, what these models have in common is the fact that they consider pragmatic competence as an essential component of communicative competence. In this vein, Cenoz and Valencia (1994) argue that the mastering of phonetic, semantic and syntactic levels is not enough to acquire a second language (L2), but knowing how to use it in the appropriate way is of paramount importance, as a lack of pragmatic competence can cause both communicative problems and negative reactions on the part of the hearer. However, it has been widely acknowledged in the literature (e.g. Trosborg 1995) the poor performance in terms of pragmatic forms by both L2/FL learners. This is the case even in advanced students, as in many cases their level of grammatical proficiency does not match their level of pragmatic use.

To address the imbalance between linguistic and pragmatic competence, a large number of studies have shown that instruction on pragmatic aspects may be effective to develop pragmatic ability. In the L2 setting, studies by Billmyer (1990) on the teaching of compliments and responses to compliments and Bouton (1994) on understanding different types of implicature are examples of pragmatic development by means of instruction. Besides, studies using explicit and implicit instruction have provided evidence in favour of the effectiveness of both, with a slight advantage for the first type. For example, Kubota’s (1995) study on the teaching of implicature in Japan incorporated three groups of university students. One group received no instruction and the other two groups received deductive and inductive instruction, respectively. The results showed that both instructed groups benefited, with the inductive group outperforming the deductive. On the other hand, House (1996) examined two versions of a communication course in two groups of students: the first one received explicit metapragmatic information and the second one did not obtain it. The findings pointed to the importance of providing that kind of information.

In the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) setting, studies on requests carried out by Safont (2001, 2003) reveal that instruction favours the use of a wider variety of request formulae and modification devices in the post-tests than in the pre-tests. Therefore, the above-mentioned studies are part of the growing literature demonstrating the positive effect of instruction on pragmatic development. In Kasper’s (1997: 7) words, “comparisons of instructed students with uninstructed controls reported an

advantage for the instructed learners". Moreover, there seems to be more development when pragmatic features are explicitly taught. As shown by Tateyama et al. (1997), pragmatic instruction is also beneficial for beginners, a fact that may imply that learners do not have to possess a high level of linguistic proficiency in the target language to use it appropriately.

As reported by Kasper (1997), there is an increasing body of research showing that different pragmatic features can be improved through pedagogic intervention. Instruction is especially needed in the FL context, since it does not provide as diverse and frequent input as the L2 setting (Kasper and Schmidt 1996). One way of presenting learners with pragmatic input in the classroom is through the materials they have to work with. However, the studies which have focused on the analysis of the presentation of pragmatics in textbooks point to a lack of pragmatic information. As for English Language Teaching (ELT) materials, Bardovi-Harlig et al. (1991) carried out a study on closings in which twenty ELT textbooks were examined. The authors found that only twelve textbooks included complete examples of closings. Similar results were obtained by Boxer and Pickering (1995), who examined the presentation of complaints in seven textbooks. These materials dealt with direct complaints, and indirect complaints were not tackled despite the fact that in natural conversations this last type of complaining is more frequent than direct complaints. In turn, Alcón and Tricker (2000) analysed how the discourse marker *well* was used in some English coursebooks and compared its occurrence in transcripts from American films. As their findings indicate, ELT materials did not present interactive characteristics of *well* which encourage natural speech production.

A recent study on ESL and EFL textbooks is Vellenga's (2004). She carried out a qualitative and quantitative analysis of eight textbooks to determine the use of metalanguage, explicit treatment of speech acts and metapragmatic information. Her results show that the textbooks examined lack explicit pragmatic information. As a corollary, learning pragmatics from these materials is highly unlikely. Another study on teaching coursebooks was conducted by Usó and Salazar (2002). The authors corroborated previous findings by examining the range of requests in ELT recorded materials. They found that expressions which demanded the hearer's ability or willingness to comply with the speaker's desires were by far the most common manifestations of requests, with structures such as *Could you...?*, *Would you...?* (in Trosborg's (1995) taxonomy, conventionally indirect - hearer-oriented conditions). The results of this last study motivated the current paper, in that we aim at analysing whether the requests we examined include mitigating devices, and if so, how mitigation has occurred.

### 11.1.2 Requests and Peripheral Modification

In Trosborg’s (1995: 187) words, “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”. This author divides request strategies into four main categories which comprise eight sub-strategies. As observed in Table 11.1, the four categories range from the most indirect (hints) to the most direct (imperatives). In Brown and Levinson’s (1987) terms, this scale of directness varies between “on-record” strategies, which are pragmatically transparent and use no mitigating devices, to “off-record” strategies, which are pragmatically opaque and avoid unequivocal formulation of a face-threatening act through the use of hints.

**Table 11.1** Trosborg’s (1995) classification of request strategies

		Request Strategies (presented at levels of increasing directness)	
Situation		Speaker Requests to Borrow Hearer’s Car	
Cat. I	Indirect request		
	Str. 1	Hints (mild) (strong)	I have to be at the airport in half an hour. My car has broken down.
Cat. II	Conventionally indirect (hearer-oriented conditions)		
	Str. 2	Ability Willingness Permission	Could you lend me your car? Would you lend me your car? May I borrow your car?
	Str. 3	Suggestory formulae	How about lending me your car?
Cat. III	Conventionally indirect (speaker-based conditions)		
	Str. 4	Wishes	I would like to borrow your car.
	Str. 5	Desires/needs	I want/need to borrow your car.
Cat. IV	Direct requests		
	Str. 6	Obligation	You must/have to lend me your car.
	Str. 7	Performatives (hedged) (unhedged)	I would like to ask you to lend me your car. I ask/require you to lend me your car.
	Str. 8	Imperatives Elliptical phrases	Lend me your car. Your car (please).

The impact of a request on the addressee does not only depend on the degree of directness employed, it is also important to choose the appropriate kind of modification. Following Trosborg (1995) and Sifianou (1999), requests are made up of two main components: the core request or head act and the peripheral elements. The following example taken from our data illustrates those two components:

## Example 1

*I was wondering, could I have a smoking seat?*

PERIPHERAL

HEAD ACT

ELEMENT

The head act is the main utterance with the function of requesting and can stand by itself. Yet core requests may be preceded and/or followed by peripheral elements, which mitigate or aggravate the propositional content. Indeed, the use of peripheral modification devices with face-threatening acts such as requests changes the degree of politeness involved when performing this specific speech act. Therefore, the ability to use these devices adequately is one aspect of pragmatic proficiency, which according to Nikula (1996: 29) refers to “the ability to use language not only correctly as far as grammar and vocabulary are concerned but also appropriately so that language use fits the social context in which it is being used.” In order to use language appropriately, speakers have to master both linguistic knowledge and socio-cultural and context knowledge (Sifianou 1999). In other words, apart from the wide range of language choices available to the speaker to modify the request, the contextual constraints as well as the topic and the relationship between participants in a given situation always need to be taken into account.

The use of requests by learners has been largely examined in different contexts (e.g. House and Kasper 1981; Hill 1997) and they have generally focused on the use, rather than on the development, of this specific speech act. However, we concur with Safont (2003) in that attention has to be paid not only to the request head act, but also to its peripheral modification so that learners are provided with a wide range of formulations that may be used in making requests. Drawing on Brown and Levinson’s (1987) politeness theory and on Brown and Yule’s (1983) discourse types, Nikula (1996) proposes the following five contextual factors that may affect the appropriate use of peripheral modification devices:

- a) Power: those who have more power can express themselves without employing modifiers (for example, boss-employee)
- b) Social distance: those who are strangers will tend to use more modifiers
- c) Ranking of imposition: how demanding the request is implies that more or less modification will be used
- d) Type of interaction: whether the interaction is for transactional or interactional purposes will have an impact on the use of peripheral modification devices
- e) Type of speech act: the more the speech act is face-threatening, the more modifying devices are needed

Peripheral modification devices can be internal or external. Internal modification refers to linguistic elements within the same speech act, whereas external modification is achieved by devices which occur in the immediate linguistic context rather than in the speech act itself (Sifianou 1999). One instance of each type of modification is provided as follows:

Example 2: External modification

May I ask you a favour? I need some money for my new computer

Example 3: Internal modification

Would you mind closing the window?

Several taxonomies have been developed in order to account for the different modification devices in requests (i.e. Trosborg 1995; Sifianou 1999). For the purposes of the present study, we will be referring to the taxonomy presented in Table 11.2. In this taxonomy, we have mainly followed Sifianou's (1999) description of internal modification devices rather than Trosborg's (1995) for two main reasons. On the one hand, Trosborg (1995) divides internal modification devices into *downgraders* and *upgraders* following House and Kasper's (1981) classification of modality markers. The former refer to those modality markers that tone down the impact an utterance is likely to have on the hearer, whereas the latter increase the impact of an utterance on the hearer. However, Sifianou (1999: 157) states that "in English, intensifying devices are rarely used with requests", and this is the reason why an extensive study of softeners, instead of upgraders, has been carried out.

On the other hand, Trosborg (1995) classifies downgraders into two sub-types: syntactic downgraders and lexical/phrasal downgraders, paying special attention to grammatical forms when requesting. In this sense, Sifianou (1999) claims that making a request does not only require linguistic/syntactic knowledge, but also knowledge of the contextual factors that affect the appropriate use of a particular form to make a request.

The taxonomy which has been used for the purposes of the present paper has been elaborated drawing on previous literature and it has been modified on the basis of analysing EFL learners' oral production data. To better understand the table, a brief explanation of each modification device is offered.

Table 11.2 Typology of peripheral modification devices in requests (Alcón et al. 2005)

Type	Sub-type	Example
<b>Internal Modification</b>		
	Openers	- <i>Do you think you could open the window?</i> - <i>Would you mind opening the window?</i>
	Softeners	Understatement - <i>Could you open the window <u>for a moment</u>?</i>
		Downtoner - <i>Could you <u>possibly</u> open the window?</i>
		Hedge - <i>Could you <u>kind of</u> open the window?</i>
	Intensifiers	- <i>You <u>really</u> must open the window.</i> - <i>I'm <u>sure</u> you wouldn't mind opening the window.</i>
	Fillers	Hesitators - <i>I <u>er, erm, er</u> – I wonder if you could open the window</i>
		Cajolers - <i>You <u>know, you see, I mean</u></i>
		Appealers - <i>OK?, Right?, yeah</i>
		Attention-getters - <i>Excuse me ...; Hello ...; Look ...; Tom, ...; Mr. Edwards ...; father ...</i>
<b>External Modification</b>		
	Preparators	- <i>May I ask you a favour? ...</i> Could you open the window?
	Grounders	- <i>It seems it is quite hot here.</i> Could you open the window?
	Disarmers	- <i>I hate bothering you but</i> could you open the window?
	Expanders	- <i>Would you mind opening the window? ...</i> <i>Once again, could you open the window?</i>
	Promise of a reward	- <i>Could you open the window? If you open it, I promise to bring you to the cinema.</i>
	Please	- <i>Would you mind opening the window, please?</i>

As far as internal modification is concerned, it is divided into openers, softeners, intensifiers and fillers. Openers refer to opening words and expressions which search the addressee's co-operation (for example, *do you think...*). They are conventionalised ways of introducing requests in English and they soften the illocutionary force of the sentence. The second type of internal modification is softeners, which mitigate the force of the request by means of understatements (expressions such as *for a moment, a bit*), downtoners (adverbs like *just, possibly, perhaps*) and hedges (for example, *kind of, sort of*).

Unlike softeners, intensifiers aggravate the impact of the request with expressions such as *terribly, awfully* or *sure*. The last type of internal modification refers to fillers, which are subdivided into hesitators, cajolers, appealers and attention-getters. Hesitators are the most common fillers, taking place "when the speaker is uncertain of the impact of a request on the addressee" (Sifianou 1999: 179). Examples of hesitators are *er, erm*, which can be considered as simple stuttering. Cajolers are modifiers that invite the addressee to participate in the conversation and restore harmony (for example, *you know, I mean*). By means of appealers, the speaker requests the addressee's understanding and elicits consent. Instances of appealers are *OK? Right?* Finally, the speaker may employ attention-getters to alert the addressee before the actual request is made with expressions such as *Excuse me, hello* or *listen*.

External modification is achieved by means of six different types of modifiers: preparators, grounders, disarmers, expanders, promise of a reward and *please*. As for preparators, they are used by the requester to prepare the addressee for the request. Regarding the second type, grounders, they consist of reasons and justifications for the request being made and can precede or go after it. Disarmers aim at avoiding the possibility of a refusal on the part of the addressee and make him/her favourably disposed to perform the request being asked. The use of expanders involves the repetition of the same request act or other synonymous expressions. The promise of a reward entails a compensation for the requestee and therefore increases the possibility of compliance. The last modifier is the expression *please*, which, according to Sifianou (1999: 189) is "possibly the commonest and most significant modifier in requests". It softens the imposition carried out by the request and elicits cooperative behaviour from the addressee.

It is worth mentioning a further aspect that has been taken into account when dealing with requests and mitigation, we are referring to the Maxim of Congruence, which predicts that participants will employ speech acts congruent with their status. On the contrary, if a noncongruent act is performed participants may mitigate their contributions by using a

status-preserving strategy. Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford (1993: 281) provide the following definition of this maxim:

Maxim of congruence: Make your contribution congruent with your status.

Corollary: If congruence is not possible, mitigate noncongruence by employing a status-preserving strategy (SPS).

The status-preserving strategies these authors suggest are as follows:

- a) Appear congruent. Use the form of a congruent speech act where possible
- b) Mark your contribution linguistically. Use mitigators
- c) Timing. Do not begin with a noncongruent contribution
- d) Frequency. Avoid frequent noncongruent turns
- e) Be brief
- f) Use appropriate content

## 11.2 Methodology

As mentioned earlier, the research conducted draws on a previous study (Usó-Juan and Salazar 2002) which focused on only one part of the request act, that of the head. Requests seemed essential to us in Tourism exchanges, as they appear very frequently and constitute a speech act that has to be mastered by future workers in the Tourism industry. The results of that study showed a large number of requests belonging to conventionally-indirect hearer-oriented conditions (Trosborg 1995) in five ELT coursebooks. Specifically, the data analysed were the first ten transcripts of the following Tourism coursebooks: *High Season. English for the Hotel and Tourist Industry* (Harding and Henderson 1994), *English for International Tourism* (Jacob and Strutt 1997), *English in Tourism. Checkpoint 2* (Mioduszewska et al. 1997), *Going International. English for Tourism* (Harding 1998), and *Welcome! English for the Travel and Tourism Industry* (Jones 1998). A total of 49 transcripts (as *English in Tourism. Checkpoint 2* had only nine listening tasks) were analysed. The only criterion for selection is that these are the most common courses used in Spanish universities that offer a degree in Tourism. In the present paper we aim at examining the peripheral element accompanying the head act. The mitigation devices were analysed according to the taxonomy presented in Table 11.2.



### 11.3 Results and Discussion

Table 11.3 shows the number of requests found in the transcripts and the percentage of mitigation modifying those requests. Of the total number of requests offered, in *English for International Tourism* more than half (56%) are mitigated. *High Season* and *Going International* provide a very similar percentage of mitigation (32% and 31%, respectively) although the former offers more request realizations. Out of 33 requests, in *Welcome!* only 6 (18%) include mitigation devices; in turn, *English in Tourism* presents seven requests, none of which is mitigated. This quantitative analysis clearly shows the discrepancy in amount of mitigation that is available to the learner.

**Table 11.3** Number of requests and mitigators per coursebook

	High Season	English for International Tourism	English in Tourism	Going International	Welcome!
Total number of requests	44	25	7	29	33
Total number of mitigators	14 (32%)	14 (56%)	0 (0%)	9 (31%)	6 (18%)

From a qualitative perspective, Table 11.4 illustrates the distribution of mitigation devices in the transcripts.

- (1) High Season, (2) English for International Tourism, (3) English in Tourism, (4) Going International, (5) Welcome!

**Table 11.4** Distribution of mitigators

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	TOTAL
<b>Internal modification</b>						
Opener	1			2		3
Understatement		2				2
Downtoner	4			2		6
Hedge						
Intensifier						
Hesitator						

Cajoler						
Attention-getter				1		1
<b>External modification</b>						
Preparator						
Grounder				1		1
Disarmer						
Expander						
Promise of a reward						
Please	4	9			4	17
TOTAL	9	11	0	6	4	30

As can be seen in the above table, there is a wide difference in terms of variety and frequency of mitigators in the recorded materials. Yet, Table 11.4 does not show the occurrence of *combinations* of mitigators. By combination we mean those cases in which there is more than one mitigating device per request. These combinations have been taken into account in the data analysis, and for this reason the total number of mitigators in Table 11.3 outnumbers the number of mitigators in Table 11.4. In order to better understand the findings, we will deal with the mitigating devices employed in each coursebook individually. To begin with, *High Season* offers a single opener, four downtoners and four occurrences of *please*. This means that the use of internal and external modification is quite balanced. Moreover, this coursebook includes five combinations of mitigators, which are made up of (i) opener + downtoner, (ii) two cases of downtoner + *please*, (iii) downtoner and understatement and (iv) opener + grounder. Some instances of these combinations are the following:

#### Example 4

Reservations to caller: **I would be grateful** if you could **just** confirm in writing (opener + downtoner)

#### Example 5

Guest to reception: **Would you mind** asking someone to send up some aspirin – **I haven't got anything with me** (opener + grounder)

*English for International Tourism* presents two examples of internal modification (understatements) and nine instances of *please* (external modification). Three combinations of mitigators are also employed which are subdivided into (i) hesitator + opener, (ii) opener + *please* and (iii)

opener + downtoner. The first combination, that of the hesitator, is the only one appearing in all the transcripts reviewed.

#### Example 6

A: Could you tell me what your name is?

B: Yes, Bogdan Kominowski

A: **Um... yes... er, would you mind** spelling that for me? (hesitator + opener)

Usó-Juan and Salazar (2002) found seven request realizations in *English in Tourism. Checkpoint 2*. Out of those seven requests, none is mitigated in the transcripts. This may imply a serious drawback in terms of pedagogical implications, in the sense that learners are not provided with appropriate input needed for their pragmatic development.

*Going International* offers nine mitigators in the transcripts, which are divided into two openers, two downtoners and one attention-getter (internal modification). External modification is illustrated by one grounder. The transcripts also provide three combinations (two attention-getters + understatement and one attention-getter + opener). As shown by our findings, this coursebook is the only one that presents mitigation by means of several attention-getters:

#### Example 7

Interviewer to woman: **Excuse me**. Could I ask **a few** questions? (attention-getter + understatement)

#### Example 8

Interviewer to woman: **Excuse me, madam. I wonder if you'd mind** answering some questions? (attention-getter + opener)

Finally, *Welcome! English for the Travel and Tourism Industry* presents external modification by means of four examples of *please* and two combinations: (i) downtoner + *please* and (ii) opener + *please*. This last combination is illustrated as follows:

#### Example 9

Passenger to check-in clerk: **I was wondering**, could I have a smoking seat, **please**? (opener + *please*)

Our findings reveal a striking difference both in number and variety of mitigators in the transcripts of the coursebooks reviewed. Only in *English for International Tourism* more than half of the requests are mitigated. In the remaining coursebooks, one third or less of requests include mitigating

devices, reaching no mitigation in *English in Tourism*. From a qualitative point of view, most mitigators fall under the category of internal modification. On the other hand, external modifiers almost exclusively centre on the use of *please* in medial and final position within the request. This mitigator served as a marker of politeness while simultaneously reinforcing the request. There were no occurrences of *please* in initial position, which may be considered more as an attention-getter or as an apology for the interruption (Sifianou 1999). Finally, as regards the combinations of mitigators, we have found a wide range of possibilities, in that both types of modification make up the different combinations.

A common feature emerging from our analysis is the fact that the requests and their mitigation seem to comply with the maxim of congruence, in the sense that, depending on the role and the status of the requester, a higher or lower degree of politeness was involved and congruence was present in the examined service encounters.

Due to the limited amount and range of mitigation devices to soften the impact of the request (for example, there are no occurrences of hedges, disarmers, promises or cajolers), these pragmatic items may not be salient enough for FL learners. In other words, the input learners are offered may not be enough to help them develop their pragmatic competence in the academic setting.

## 11.4 Conclusion

This study is a brief overview of how mitigation devices are presented in several ELT coursebooks from the discipline of Tourism. According to the findings, the transcripts surveyed ignore a number of mitigators and focus on only a small number, mostly on the use of *please* and some combinations of mitigators.

Some authors have pointed out that the FL classroom is an impoverished learning environment for developing pragmatic competence (Alcón 2001). Kasper and Rose (1999) have also argued that the EFL class does not provide many possibilities for pragmalinguistic awareness. In light of our findings we should add that the recorded materials learners are exposed to are also poor materials to foster pragmatic ability. Although the transcripts examined tend to reflect real situations for the learner, we agree with Boxer and Pickering (1995) on the fact that data should be taken from spontaneous speech in order to show the real use of language. Moreover, attention should be paid to the fact that conversational interaction varies with different settings and relationships between participants.

Results from the current study corroborate previous ones (e.g. Kasper 1997) which point to the mismatch between textbook dialogues and authentic discourse. This implies the scarcity of features of everyday conversation found in ELT materials. In order to address this lack, research on conversational analysis and interlanguage pragmatics may positively contribute to textbook development, so that textbooks include a wide range of speech acts and pragmatic aspects.

The fact that the current study used a small sample of coursebooks and the analysis was limited to the first ten transcripts clearly presents a limitation. However, some pedagogical implications emerge from this study which can be useful to enrich the possibilities for pragmatic development in instructed foreign language contexts: first, in order to develop pragmatic ability, some factors as contextual and interlocutor information (e.g. status, age, etc.) should be provided in teaching materials. In this way, L2/FL learners will have the adequate tools to perform different speech acts appropriately. Secondly, activities such as role-plays may engage learners in different roles in order to offer opportunities to practise pragmatic abilities that are needed in service encounters. Therefore, it will be possible to explicitly point out when pragmatic failure occurs so that learners avoid impolite or inappropriate behaviour. Finally, focusing on aspects of pragmatic knowledge through consciousness-raising activities and communicative practice may also be highly facilitative.

## Notes

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## The Presentation and Practice of the Communicative Act of Requesting in Textbooks: Focusing on Modifiers<sup>1</sup>

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### 12.1 Introduction

Developing learners' communicative competence, i.e. the ability to communicate appropriately, is commonly recognised as the ultimate goal of language teaching (Kasper 1997a; Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor 2006). Therefore, teaching practices should focus not just on the features of the target language system but also on its sociolinguistic and pragmatic rules (Judd 1999). In other words, learners should be given plenty of opportunities to practise use of the language that is appropriate to a given situation. In fact, as noted by Crandall and Basturkmen (2004) *error of appropriacy* on the part of the non-native speaker may have more negative results than grammatical errors. While a grammar error when performing an impositive face-threatening speech act may be seen as a language problem by native speakers, an error of appropriacy may characterise the non-native speaker as being rude and offensive. Consequently, language learners need to be exposed to appropriate input in the classroom, particularly in foreign language (FL) classroom settings, where learners opportunities to be in contact with the target language are usually non-existent. In such a context, textbooks are the core of the classroom syllabi and therefore constitute the primary source of input learners are exposed to (Vellenga 2004). However, serious scepticism regarding their appropriacy for presenting learners with accurate language functions has been raised (Bardovi-Harlig 2001; Bardovi-Harlig et al. 1991; Boxer and Pickering 1995).

To test this contention, this paper attempts to explore how a particular speech act, namely the act of requesting, is treated, in pragmatic terms, in English language teaching (ELT) textbooks. The rationale behind the selection of this speech act derives from the fact that, given its



face-threatening nature, learners need to possess considerable pragmatic expertise to be able to perform it successfully. Related to this pragmatic expertise, knowledge of how to modify it so that the impositive force of the request is minimised is essential. On that account, this chapter aims to examine 1) whether pragmatic information is given in the activities learners have to carry out to practise requests, and 2) whether requests are presented with modifiers as happens in authentic language use and, if so, to examine the type of modifiers commonly presented. To this end, this chapter will first present a survey of the literature on the treatment of different functions and speech acts in textbooks. Following this, it will analyse what five popular textbooks teach about the communicative act of requesting. Finally, the findings will be discussed and teaching implications will be suggested in order to help teachers in their task of providing learners with opportunities to develop their full communicative competence.

## **12.2 Pragmatic Input in the Classroom: A Focus on Textbooks**

Learners' opportunities to develop pragmatic competence differ significantly depending on the setting in which the target language is being learned or taught. In a second language (L2) setting, learners may be exposed to the target language outside the classroom as well as experience opportunities for cross-cultural communication (Rose 1999). This fact provides learners with excellent opportunities to develop pragmatic competence. In contrast, in a FL setting learners' opportunities to be in contact with authentic situations in the target language are limited or absent and, therefore, the chance to develop their pragmatic competence depends on the quantity and quality of the pragmatic input presented to them in the classroom.

In a FL classroom setting, information to learners about pragmatics tends to be limited to textbooks, which serve as the main source of input. In fact, textbooks have been acknowledged by Vellenga (2004) as 'the centre of the curriculum and syllabus in most classrooms'. However, instructors are now becoming aware that the acquisition of pragmatic competence through textbooks or other instructional material is quite unlikely, since they do not provide learners with the necessary conditions to foster their pragmatic competence, namely 1) exposure to appropriate input; 2) opportunities for collaborative practice in a written and oral mode, and 3) metapragmatic reflection (Kasper 2001; Kasper and Roever 2005). With regard to exposure to appropriate pragmatic input, several studies have illustrated that often textbooks do not present a specific

language function or a speech act at all and when they do it may not reflect real language use (Alcón and Tricker 2000; Bardovi-Harlig et al. 1991; Boxer and Pickering 1995; Gilmore 2004; Grant and Starks 2001; Mandala 1999; Salazar and Usó-Juan 2001, 2002; Kakiuchi 2005; Williams 1988).

Scotton and Bernsten (1988), for example, compared real direction-giving conversations to those in textbooks dialogues and observed that the models provided in textbooks were missing sequences that take place in natural exchanges. Similarly, Williams (1988) analysed (at the level of speech functions) differences between how business meetings are taught (as used in the tapes and films that accompany the textbook) and what they are like in real life. The author reported a mismatch between both types of data and argued that natural language use is far more complex than simply realising functions with suitable exponents as presented in textbooks. Bardovi-Harlig et al. (1991) examined conversational closings in twenty ELT textbooks and reported that many of them fail to represent closing phases accurately since the majority of conversations ended in an abrupt way. Conversation closing typically went as far as shutting down a topic or occasionally as far as a pre-closing. Grant and Starks (2001) were also critical of textbook conversational closings. In their study, they compared textbook closings with closings from episodes of soap operas and reported that although soap opera materials are still far from constituting realistic conversational input, they are a better source of data than textbook examples.

This lack of authenticity in the presentation of language functions was also highlighted by Alcón and Tricker (2000) in their analysis of the presentation of the discourse marker *well* in the recorded and written material of two communicative English as a foreign language textbooks. Results showed that the recorded material of the textbooks did not pay much attention to the interactive features of *well* with regard to its use as a face-threatening mitigator (i.e. to signal that a face threat is about to occur) and as a delaying device (i.e. to allow the speaker time to consider his response to a difficult question) despite its high frequency in natural conversations. Furthermore, no activity in the two textbooks focused on analysing the different uses of this discourse marker explicitly. In a similar vein, Gilmore (2004) focused on the discourse features of several dialogues published in seven textbooks and contrasted them with comparable authentic interactions. He found out that textbook dialogues were far from being authentic-like, differing considerably across a range of features such as length and turn-taking patterns, lexical density, number of false starts and repetitions, pausing, frequency of terminal overlap or latching, and the use of hesitation devices and back-channelling.

Moving on to the presentation of particular speech acts and their realisation strategies, Boxer and Pickering (1995) examined complaints in four American and three British ELT textbooks. They reported that teaching material focused mainly on direct complaining rather than on indirect complaining (although this is common in natural exchanges) and that the main aim of what was presented was to teach the learner the cultural value of softening the face-threatening act of complaining through the use of certain expressions. The study conducted by Salazar and Usó-Juan (2001) investigated request realisation strategies offered in several textbooks by following Trosborg's (1995) request typology. The authors found that the majority of strategies fell under the category of conventionally indirect (hearer-based) requests with a few instances of indirect or direct requests and they therefore concluded that the input learners are exposed to in textbooks fails to offer examples of requests that reflect natural instances of language use in authentic situations. These findings however, should be seen as being tentative, since in this study no attention was paid to those modifying devices that accompany the request head act to soften its degree of imposition.

The speech acts of suggesting and advising have also served as the target of different studies. In the case of Salazar and Usó-Juan (2002), the focus was on the presentation of the suggesting and advising realisation strategies in several textbooks. The authors observed that the conventionally indirect realisation strategies were the most common ones presented in all courses analysed, with no instances of indirect or direct suggesting or advising strategies. Again, the authors were critical of the shortcomings of textbooks, claiming that realisation strategies of speech acts presented in textbooks should tackle a wider range of realisation strategies in order to be more realistic. For Mandala (1999), the target was advice realisation strategies. The author compared the structure of advice-giving exchanges in natural talk with such exchanges in textbook dialogues and found there was no correspondence between the two. It was observed that textbook dialogues were presented from an advice-giver's point of view therefore omitting the features of conflict resolution and mutual moves towards agreement that are common in authentic samples. Greetings were also addressed in the research carried out by Kakiuchi (2005), who analysed how this speech act is used by native speakers in natural conversations and compared these samples with those in textbook dialogues. The author found that while one-turn greetings were presented accurately in some textbooks, other features such as number of turn-takings and particular greetings expressions were not reflected appropriately. A possible explanation for such a lack of presentation of authentic language models in textbooks may be that such materials rely

heavily on the intuition of native textbook developers about functions and speech acts realisations rather than empirical research, which is sometimes unreliable (Boxer 2003; Kasper 1997a; LoCastro 2003).

In addition to the above limitation, textbooks have also been criticised for failing to provide learners with the two remaining conditions necessary to foster their pragmatic competence, namely opportunities for collaborative practice, as well as metapragmatic reflection (Crandall and Basturkmen 2004; Meier 1997; Vellenga 2004). A few studies have examined these issues however. Meier (1997: 24) criticised textbooks for presenting the speech act realisations as a mere list of phrases along a directness/politeness continuum with which to express a particular speech act. Additionally, she argued that such a presentation of strategies is typically associated with a role-play task which is likely to result in 'a concatenation of phrasebook-type expressions'. Vellenga (2004) conducted an empirical study which aimed at determining the quantity and quality of pragmatic information included in four English as a second language and four English as a foreign language textbooks. In doing so, the author focused specifically on 1) the use of metalanguage, that is, how the activities were prefaced; 2) the treatment of speech acts, that is, how the speech acts were presented and practised; and 3) the metapragmatic information, that is, whether any commentaries on the usage of speech acts or contextual references were explicitly stated in the activities. Results showed that metalanguage in textbooks provided the learner with a poor model for pragmatically appropriate speech act realisation and that the treatment of most speech acts was not adequate, since contextual information or metapragmatic discussion was missing in the majority of the activities. In other words, speech acts were presented in isolation and decontextualised, which in itself neglects the acquisition of pragmatics since learners were not taught when it is appropriate to use a particular form depending on contextual variables.

To summarise, research on the pragmatic input presented in textbooks has targeted a variety of functions such as those used in direction-giving (Scotton and Bernsten 1988), meetings (Williams 1988), closing in dialogues (Bardovi-Harlig et al. 1991; Grant and Starks 2001) or discourse markers (Alcón and Tricker 2000; Gilmore 2004). Many studies have focused on specific speech acts and their realisation strategies, including complaints (Boxer and Pickering 1995), requests (Salazar and Usó-Juan 2001), suggestions and advice (Mandala 1999; Salazar and Usó 2002), greetings (Kakiuchi 2005) or a range of different speech acts (Vellenga 2004). It is evident from such an examination that textbooks are a poor source of pragmatic input for learners in the FL classroom, since language functions or speech act realisations presented rarely match with those used

in authentic exchanges. Whereas most studies have concentrated on the authenticity of functions and speech act samples presented in textbooks, research on how impositive speech acts are presented in textbooks, and more specifically on analysing the modification devices that either mitigate or aggravate their force, has received far less attention. In fact, the series of studies conducted by Salazar and Usó-Juan (2001, 2002) on impositive speech acts only focused on those strategies employed to perform the speech act itself, therefore providing only a partial report of how they are presented in textbooks. Additionally, little research has been conducted into how a particular speech act is practised in communicative textbooks. Therefore, the main point raised in this chapter is to examine the treatment of the communicative act of requesting in ELT textbooks. In particular, the goal of this study is twofold:

- a) To examine, from a pragmatic approach, the textbook activities learners are to carry out in order to practise the speech act of requesting, and
- b) To examine whether the speech act of requesting is presented with modifiers in textbook activities and, if so, what types of modifiers are used.

## **12.3 The Communicative Speech Act of Requesting in Textbooks**

### **12.3.1 Request Analysis**

The speech act of requesting is by nature an impositive face-threatening act, since its performance requires the hearer to carry out an act for the requester's sake (Brown and Levinson 1987). A request may vary in strategy type and level of directness. Three general strategies of requests have been identified (Trosborg 1995), namely *direct forms*, which include performatives, imperatives and expressions implying obligation; *conventionally indirect forms*, which may be either speaker or hearer oriented and include those routinised expressions denoting polite behaviour; and *indirect forms* or hints, which imply opaque language. One way for the requester to vary the politeness of a request is by employing indirect strategies rather than direct ones. However, the appropriacy of the level of directness for a given context may vary across cultures (Olshtain and Cohen 1991; Safont 2005). In addition to this, it is also possible to make the request less threatening or increase its compelling force by using peripheral modification devices, which typically consist of two major groups: internal

modifiers, i.e. those devices which appear within the same request act, and external modifiers, i.e. those devices which appear in the immediate linguistic context of the request head act, either preceding or following it.

In order to ascertain the amount and types of request modification devices offered in textbooks, we will analyse them by following the functional typology of modification devices in requests proposed by Alcón et al. (2005). As regards internal modifiers, four main subtypes of devices are identified in this taxonomy, namely *openers* (i.e. to seek the addressee's cooperation), *softeners* (i.e. to soften the impositive force of the request), *intensifiers* (i.e. to aggravate the impact of the request), and *fillers* (i.e. to fill in gaps in the interaction). Concerning external modifiers, six main subtypes of devices are identified, namely *preparators* (i.e. to prepare the addressee for the request), *grounders* (i.e. to justify the request), *disarmers* (i.e. to avoid a refusal), *expanders* (i.e. to indicate tentativeness), *promise of reward* (i.e. to offer a reward upon fulfilment of the request), and the word 'please', to signal politeness, among other functions (see Table 12.1 for examples of all the above-stated subtypes of modifiers). The strong point of this taxonomy is that it follows a socio-pragmatic approach rather than a grammatical and syntactic one.

**Table 12.1** Typology of peripheral modification devices in requests (Alcón et al. 2005: 17)

Type	Sub-type	Example	
<b>Internal Modification</b>	Openers	- <i>Do you think</i> you could open the window? - <i>Would you mind</i> opening the window?	
	Softeners	Understatement	- Could you open the window <i>for a moment</i> ?
		Downtoner	- Could you <i>possibly</i> open the window?
		Hedge	- Could you <i>kind of</i> open the window?
	Intensifiers	- You <i>really</i> must open the window. - <i>I'm sure</i> you wouldn't mind opening the window.	
	Fillers	Hesitators	- <i>I er, erm, er</i> – <i>I wonder</i> if you could open the window
		Cajolers	- <i>You know, you see, I mean</i>
		Appealers	- <i>OK?, Right?, yeah</i>
		Attention-getters	- <i>Excuse me...; Hello...; Look...; Tom ...; Mr. Edwards...; father... ..</i>

<b>External Modification</b>	
Preparators	- <i>May I ask you a favour? ... Could you open the window?</i>
Grounders	- <i>It seems it is quite hot here. Could you open the window?</i>
Disarmers	- <i>I hate bothering you but could you open the window?</i>
Expanders	- <i>Would you mind opening the window? ... Once again, could you open the window?</i>
Promise of reward	- <i>Could you open the window? If you open it, I promise to bring you to the cinema.</i>
Please	- <i>Would you mind opening the window, please?</i>

### 12.3.2 Textbook Selection

The speech act of requesting is common in natural exchanges in the field of tourism and therefore learners in the discipline of Tourism need to be explicitly taught how to produce this speech act appropriately for professional communication. Given this need, it was considered that an examination of how tourism textbooks treat the speech act of requesting would be interesting. Consequently, an informal survey was conducted among university teachers who teach English in this discipline in Spain and they were asked whether a particular book was the centre of their syllabus and, if that was the case, for the title of the book they use in their classes. Following this criterion, five textbooks were chosen for this analysis: *High Season. English for the Hotel and Tourist Industry* (Harding and Henderson 1994), *English for International Tourism* (Jacob and Strutt 1997), *English in Tourism. Checkpoint 2* (Mioduszezewska et al. 1997), *Going International. English for Tourism* (Harding 1998), and *Welcome! English for the Travel and Tourism Industry* (Jones 1998). As indicated by the publishers, all of them are intermediate or upper-intermediate level courses.

### 12.3.3 Textbook Analysis

Following a chronological order, all textbooks are examined individually, first, to analyse the type of activities learners have to carry out to practise the speech act of requesting and also to determine whether any metapragmatic information is offered in the student's textbook activities

and teachers' book. The requests offered in these activities are then analysed to find out both the range of request realisation strategies and the number and type of request modification devices presented.

*High Season. English for the Hotel and Tourist Industry* (1994) employs a topic-based approach to enable students to work effectively in the tourism industry. It is divided into twelve units, each containing a balanced variety of activities in the four language skills, including a language study section and a word study section. The language study section of Unit Five, "Hotel and Restaurant Services", focuses on requesting. The appropriate way to make polite requests is reviewed in a taped exercise in which students listen to three brief conversations between a client and a waiter ordering food and responding politely in a hotel restaurant. This exercise is followed by the presentation of the four requests that were used by the three clients when ordering. Practice work requires students to make similar requests using different prompts and to role play a client and a waiter in a hotel restaurant. The aim of these activities is simply to familiarise students with routine expressions for formulating polite requests when ordering food in a restaurant. Pragmatic information, related to culture or the contextual factors that affect the use of the speech act of requesting is missing. The following four strategies are offered (p 57):

#### Example 1

Can you bring us a bottle of water, *please*?

Could you change mine, *please*?

Could we *possibly* order, *please*?

*Do you think* you could bring us the wine list, ...?

With regard to the teachers' book, we found that in addition to answers to activities, teachers are also provided with two additional expressions to teach students how to make requests (see example 2), as well as with expressions for accepting or rejecting a request. Additionally, the teacher is recommended to stress the importance of using the word *please* at the end of every request. These expressions are presented in isolation and it is up to the teacher how to teach them to the students (p 19):

#### Example 2

*Would you mind* giving me an alarm call, *please*?

*I wonder if* you could get me a doctor, *please*.

All request strategies presented in both the textbook and teachers' book are conventionally indirect (hearer-based) in terms of the scale of directness employed and they are all modified to soften the force of the requesting move. Regarding their type, we observe that both external and internal



modifiers are employed. In example 1 the first two requests make use of the external modifier *please*; similarly the third request makes use of the same external modifier but it is also internally modified by a downtoner (*possibly*); finally, the last request is internally modified by an opener (*Do you think...*). In example 2 the two requests are doubly modified externally by the use of *please* and internally by two different openers (*Would you mind... / I wonder if...*).

The second textbook selected for the analysis, *English for International Tourism* (1997), contains fifteen units, each covering a core topic area from the tourist trade. Each unit provides students with a wide variety of activities in the four language skills and promotes grammatical accuracy with language focus sections which include grammar explanations and activities for classroom practice. None of the fifteen units in the book devote a section to the speech act of requesting. Instead, requests are treated peripherally in the language focus section of Unit Thirteen “Things to do”, which deals with conditionals. Here, grammatical aspects are the focus of teaching without paying attention to contextual or pragmatic factors. Students are required to read fifteen conditional sentences and answer which of them: a) describe a usual state of affairs, b) talk about the past, c) make an offer, d) make a recommendation, e) make a polite request, or f) describe situations which are unlikely or impossible. On the whole, the activity has the goal of getting students to notice that the sequence of tenses in conditionals is not absolutely fixed and depends on what the speaker wants to say. An inductive approach is used to achieve that aim. The grammar activity which follows has students fill in the gaps of conditional sentences with verb tenses, modals or connectors such as *unless, providing/provided that* or *on condition that*. Finally, students have to discuss what they would do if they were to make a place more attractive to tourists. All expressions are presented and practised without discourse context and information on pragmatic issues is missing. With regard to the teachers’ book, we found that it consisted of just answers to activities provided in the textbook and there were neither extra activities nor recommendations for teaching politeness issues. The following two conditional sentences are presented in the textbook to students as polite requests (p 85):

### Example 3

*I’d be grateful if you could fill in this questionnaire before you go.*

*If you’ll just fill in this registration form, I’ll make the booking for you.*

All request strategies are again conventionally indirect (hearer-based) and they are modified to decrease the force of the imposition of the request.

The first sentence is internally modified by the use of an opener (*I'd be grateful if...*), whereas the second one is modified both internally by use of a downtoner, that is, a type of softener (*just*), and externally by use of a disarmer (*I'll make the booking for you*).

In *English in Tourism. Checkpoint 2* (1997), each of the nine units also comprises a balanced variety of activities in the four skills as well as a section devoted to the functions of the language. Requests are dealt with in the function section of Unit Six, "Timeshare". Students are presented with four formulaic expressions as a means of making polite requests (see example 4) and then these strategies are briefly reviewed by the students in a taped exercise in which they are simply asked to listen to them. Finally, students are required to practise them by using hints such as "Your pen has just run out of ink" (p 76). Analogous to what we have observed in the previous textbooks, requests are presented and practised in isolation, that is, without any information on pragmatic issues. This textbook is not accompanied by a teachers' book. The following requests are presented to students (p 75):

#### Example 4

*Would you mind filling in the registration card?*

*I wonder if you would mind changing this £5 note for me?*

*I wonder if you could give me a lift to the airport?*

*I have forgotten my glasses. Do you think you could read the menu for me?*

The request strategies presented are conventionally indirect (hearer-based) strategies and all of them are modified to soften the illocutionary force of the request. Regarding the type of modification, we observe that the first three requests are internally modified by the use of openers (*Would you mind.../I wonder if...*), whereas the last one is modified both externally by the use of a grounder (*I have forgotten my glasses*) and internally by the use of an opener (*Do you think...*).

*Going International. English for Tourism* (1998) has a topic-based organisation similar to the textbooks already examined. There are twelve units, each including a wide range of activities in the four language skills as well as language focus sections with explanations and activities to help understand the use of language. Requests are dealt with superficially in the first language focus section "telephone language – requests and responses" of Unit Ten, "Guiding". Practice activities require students to complete six written requests after listening to them on tape, the requests being used to ask if a person is available (see example 5). After that, students have to decide which expressions are more formal. Freer practice follows this controlled exercise in which students are to act out in pairs whether a

person is or is not free to do a particular job. Surprisingly, emphasis is given to different levels of formality. However, pragmatic explanation on what makes a request more or less formal is again missing. It was found that the teachers' book consists of little else than answers to the activities and a recommendation to present the sentences as formulaic request expressions. The requests presented in textbook are the following (p 140):

#### Example 5

*I was wondering if you were able to do a half-day panoramic tour for us?*

Any chance of a repeat this year?

Call us soon *if you're interested*.

*Do you think* you could do another job for us?

Would you be interested?

*I wanted to know if you could do a Hampstead Sunday tour for us?*

All requests, with the exception of the third one, are conventionally indirect (hearer-based) strategies, whereas the third request is a direct one. Four out of the six requests are modified to soften the force of the request. The first, fourth and sixth requests are internally modified by the use of openers (*I was wondering if ... / Do you think... / I wanted to know if...*), whereas the third one is externally modified by use of a disarmer (*if you are interested*). Perhaps the reason why not all requests are modified could have to do with the activity, in which students are required to select the most formal requests. In fact, the first, fourth and sixth requests (the conventionally indirect modified request strategies) are regarded by the textbook's authors as the most formal ones whereas the third request (the direct strategy) and the second and the fifth (the unmodified strategies) are regarded as being less formal.

The last textbook *Welcome! English for the Travel and Tourism Industry* (1998) is organised differently to the previous books. There are ten modules on specialised themes, each containing from four to six lessons. Particular emphasis is placed on oral communication tasks. Lesson thirty-seven is devoted to "Offering and requesting". Students are first presented with two request structures (see example 6) and then they have to use them to ask a client to do the following five things: "move her car", "pay in cash", "show you his driving license", "wait a moment" and "move to another table" (p 81). The lesson goes on to present two reasons why students would like the client to do the above-mentioned things and then they must decide which of the two reasons sounds more polite. The request structures presented to students are the following (p 81):

## Example 6

*Excuse me. Would you mind + ing ...?*

*I'm sorry, but could I ask you to..., please?*

To conclude the lesson, students are presented with six different pictures in which a client is doing something that is not allowed, for instance parking the car in a strictly forbidden area, and then students are to take the role of a member of a staff and make polite requests to clients. This exercise depicts the following structure to formulate polite requests (p 81).

## Example 7

*I'm sorry to have to ask you this, but ... would you mind moving your car, please?*

A distinguishing feature of this textbook is that it includes 'advice' on how to deal with clients. More particularly, it recommends students to sound polite whenever asking clients to do something and explain why they want the clients to do what they ask if they are requested to do something they do not want to. On the whole, emphasis is placed on giving reasons for requesting a client to do something and because of this it could be considered the richest textbook in terms of metapragmatic information provided to students. However, practice exercises are restricted to little else than repeating the request structures that are being taught. In fact, the structures are presented in isolation and the focus is on making students acquire such structures as grammatically correct chunks that should be employed when requesting. In the first structure of example 6, for instance, students are told that after the expression 'Would you mind', the verb has to be written with an 'ing' form. This fact indicates that the important point is to teach grammar rather than a variety of contextualised expressions that can be employed when modifying requests. With regard to the teachers' book, it is found that, like the majority of textbooks examined, it consists of answers to the activities and a recommendation to add 'please' in most requesting situations.

The request strategies provided in this textbook are again conventionally indirect (hearer-based) strategies and they are all modified to make requests extra polite, an aspect which is constantly reiterated in this textbook. As regards the type of modifiers, we observe that in example 6 the two requests are doubly modified: the first one, internally by the use of a *filler*, more specifically an attention getter (*Excuse me*), and an opener (*Would you mind...*), whereas the second one is modified externally by use of a disarmer (*I'm sorry but...*) and 'please'. Similarly, the request presented in example 7 appears modified both externally by the use of a

disarmer (*I'm sorry to have to ask you this, but...*) and 'please', and internally by the use of an opener (*Would you mind...*).

### 12.3.4 Summary of Findings Regarding Request Modification Devices

A total of 21 request realisation strategies were presented in the textbooks examined. As regards their strategy types, all of them except one were conventionalised requests, that is, polite realisations through modal forms (e.g. *Would you...? Could you...?*), whereas the remaining one was a direct request realised by means of an imperative (i.e. *Call us soon ...*). As regards modification devices, all request moves except two were modified either internally (16 cases) or externally (13 cases). Starting with internal modification devices, we found that the most frequent type of modifier employed by textbooks was the *openers* type (13 cases) followed by *downtoners*, which is a type of *softeners* (2 cases), and to a lesser extent *attention-getters*, a type of *fillers* (1 case). No instances of *intensifiers* were found. In relation to external modification devices, we found that 'please' was the most frequent type of modifier employed (8 cases), followed by *disarmers* (4 cases) and to a lesser extent *grounders* (1 case). There were no occurrences of *preparators*, *expanders* or *promise of reward* in the data analysed. Additionally, modifiers occurred individually (10 cases) and in combination (9 cases). The primary combination which occurred in the data comprised an *opener*, as an internal modifier, and 'please', as an external modifier.

## 12.4 Discussion

The goal of the present study was to provide more insights into the treatment of the communicative act of requesting in ELT textbooks. Specifically, our aim was to examine from a pragmatic approach: 1) the activities learners had to carry out to practise the speech act of requesting, and 2) the speech act of requesting with its internal and external modification devices. As regards activities on requests, we found that textbooks concentrated almost exclusively on the acquisition of linguistic competence since practice work required learners to drill, either individually or in pairs, a list of 'useful expressions' for request realisations in either a written or a spoken mode. Accordingly, little or no information regarding situational and contextual variables in which the requests were embedded was given to the learners except for the explicit information that the requests took place in a workplace setting between a

client and a worker. However, information regarding interlocutors' age, social status, degree of intimacy or the degree of imposition of the request necessary for selecting the appropriate request form in a particular situation (Brown and Levinson 1987) was neither mentioned nor implicit. With regard to the teachers' books, we found that the majority of them consisted of little else than answers to the activities. This lack of pragmatic information in the description of the activities confirms the contention that textbooks serve as a poor model to foster the pragmatic competence learners need to achieve successful communication (Boxer and Pickering 1995; Kakiuchi 2005; Mandala 1999; Salazar and Usó-Juan 2001, 2002; Vellenga 2004).

Concerning requests and the modification devices accompanying them, we observed that all textbooks showed a clear preference for the conventionally indirect request strategies rather than the direct or indirect ones, the request moves being modified in all cases except two. As explained in the analysis, the lack of modification in these two request strategies could be related to an exercise learners had to perform, since they were required to select the most formal request out of a list of six. In relation to the type of request modification, we found a preference for internal modification over the external one, and in particular *openers* were by far the most widely selected type. As stated by Alcón et al. (2005), the use of *openers* is a conventionalised way of introducing requests and it is closely associated to formality. External modification also occurred but emphasis was almost exclusively on the politeness marker *please*, which textbooks recommended adding to the request head act in final position rather than in initial or embedded position (a position which also takes place in authentic language use as reported by Martínez-Flor, this volume). Finally, only a brief reference to other types of external modifiers was made without providing contextualised examples of when they are used.

On the whole, the aim of what was presented was to teach learners to make polite requests not only by selecting a conventionally indirect request strategy capable of expressing a high degree of politeness by itself, but also by including modifying devices that help to minimise the imposition involved in a request. However, both the request head act and the modifiers were presented as fixed chunks in single written sentences with no discourse context. This fact explains why occurrence of other types of external modifiers was minimal or non-existent, since they require longer contextualised utterances in order to carry out actions such as 1) prepare the hearer for the incoming request; 2) give reasons to support the speaker's request; 3) use strategies to disarm the hearer from the possibility of a refusal; 4) expand the request, which has been claimed by Alcón et al. (2005) as taking place in consecutive turns rather than single

acts; or 5) offer a reward upon fulfilment of the request. Furthermore, these types of external modification devices, unlike the internal ones, cannot be taught as a mere list of ‘useful strategies’ since their realisation is heavily conditioned by interactional and situational/contextual variables (Nikula 1996). In focusing almost exclusively on internal modification of requests, textbooks omit the important role that external modification has in persuading the hearer to perform the request – something which is normal in authentic language use (see Martínez-Flor, this volume).

Considering all the pitfalls involved in making an exclusive use of textbooks for the presentation of pragmatic knowledge in the FL classroom, and on the basis of previous research in interlanguage pragmatics (Kasper 2001), the teaching of the speech act of requesting should take into account the three conditions necessary for developing pragmatic competence, namely, 1) exposure to pragmatic input; 2) opportunities for collaborative practice; and 3) metapragmatic reflection. A possible way to incorporate these three aspects for the practice of the speech act of requesting in the FL classroom is presented in the following section.

## **12.5 Alternative Activities for Practising Requests**

Researchers in the field of interlanguage pragmatics have suggested different activities and approaches to foster learners’ pragmatic competence (Bardovi-Harlig and Mahan-Taylor 2003; Boxer and Pickering 1995; Judd 1999; Kasper 1997b; Koester 2002; Martínez-Flor et al. 2003; Olshtain and Cohen 1991; Rose 1994, 1997, 1999; among others). Based on these proposals, we have devised the following explicit method to present and practise the speech act of requesting and subsequently aid students in fostering their pragmatic competence. The method consists of three main stages: presentation, recognition and production.

### **12.5.1 Presentation**

This first stage has a theoretical approach. Teachers explain the importance of developing pragmatic competence in communication to learners. The presentation focuses on the two elements of pragmatics (Leech 1983): pragmatolinguistics (i.e. linguistic manifestations for conveying the speech of requesting) and sociopragmatics (i.e. social factors that qualify a request as being appropriate). Here, it should be interesting to refer to the

power-distance-imposition parameters of Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory. The analytical framework employed in the present study could be a useful tool for sharpening learners' understanding of request strategies (Trosborg 1995) and modification devices (Alcón et al. 2005). Ideally, these manifestations should be collected from naturally occurring interactions and they should be presented to learners in context, eliciting who is requesting to whom and under what conditions. These explanations should be used as the basis for discussion on how modification devices vary across situational and contextual features (Nikula 1996). If natural data is not readily available, especially in FL contexts where direct contact with the target language is quite unlikely, teachers could use scenes from films, which also offer great possibilities to provide learners with authentic and contrasting samples (see Martínez-Flor, this volume, for contextualised examples of all request modification devices).

### **12.5.2 Recognition**

This second stage focuses on developing learners' understanding of the speech act of requesting by providing them with practice in recognising both its pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic elements. Practice is aimed at developing both 1) learners' awareness of cross-cultural and cross-linguistic differences between their native language and the target language, and 2) learners' pragmatic awareness (Judd 1999). As regards the first type of practice, learners could be asked, for example, to collect naturally occurring requests in their mother tongue, focusing on its linguistic manifestations and the sociopragmatic features in which the request was embedded (i.e. interlocutors' age and gender, social status, degree of intimacy, occupation, the degree of imposition of the request, setting, and so forth). In class, learners could compare data in their mother tongue with the data presented by the teacher in the first stage. This activity could help learners to understand that the way requests are realised may vary across languages and even across speech communities (Yates 2003).

With regard to the second type of practice, a variety of activities could be designed. In an attempt to widen the scope of the request strategies and their modification devices presented in textbooks, teachers could provide learners with the context of a situation, which should be rich in pragmatic information, and four requests for response to that situation, which could be presented on a scale of directness and with a variety of modifiers. Learners could then be asked to rank the requests from the most to the least appropriate realisation for the given context. Other activities could be



presented with the aim of eliciting learners' metapragmatic reflection. By way of example, the teacher could provide learners with the whole context of a situation and a request for response to it and then ask them to apply the principles discussed in the first stage to rate what they believe is the level of suitability on a scale ranging from 1 to 5. The proposed activities are mere examples of those teachers could design to help learners to understand the communicative act of requesting.

The main purpose of these first two stages is to push learners to notice the importance of employing modifying devices to soften the impositive force of the request and how the form they may take depends on situational and contextual variables. Once they have a clear understanding of these issues, they can be presented with opportunities for collaborative practice, which has been regarded as essential in fostering pragmatic competence (Kasper 2001), and is the aim of the third and final stage.

### **12.5.3 Production**

In this final stage, learners practise the use of the speech act of requesting in conversational interaction in simulated contexts. As noted by many researchers (Judd 1999; Kasper 1997b; Olshtain and Cohen 1991), role-play activities are particularly suitable here. We fully agree with Judd (1999) that the important thing to remember is that learners should be provided with scenarios (rich in pragmatic information) with differing sociopragmatic features in order to observe whether these variables affect the form of the request strategy and its modifiers. This practice should be followed by the teacher's feedback and metapragmatic reflection on the learners' performance so as to drive them to produce more appropriate and accurate request forms.

These kinds of activities are an alternative to those presented in textbooks to aid learners in fostering their pragmatic competence in the target language. With such activities and teacher's feedback, learners could be provided with the necessary conditions for the acquisition of pragmatic competence to enhance their overall communicative competence.

## **12.6 Concluding Remarks**

The findings of this study reveal that models offered in textbooks on how requests are realised fail to provide learners with enough appropriate input to promote learners' communication. In fact, language input on requests was presented to learners in a simplistic way, and opportunities to practise

it did not include either contextually rich information to help them make a request appropriately for a given situation or metapragmatic information regarding its appropriate use in other situations. The study is, of course, limited by the selection of a small sample of textbooks. However, despite this limitation, we believe its results can help teachers whose teaching goal is to develop learners' communicative competence to consider the need to supplement the input of textbooks with real-world materials as well as to develop learners' awareness of the sociopragmatic rules of the target language. To achieve this aim, the suggested activities proposed in this chapter may be of help.

## Notes

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## **Analysing Request Modification Devices in Films: Implications for Pragmatic Learning in Instructed Foreign Language Contexts<sup>1</sup>**

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### **13.1 Introduction**

Learners' exposure to rich and contextually appropriate input has been regarded as a necessary condition for the development of their pragmatic competence in the target language (Kasper 2001; Kasper and Roever 2005). However, in foreign language contexts, learners lack the opportunities to face authentic pragmatic input and chances for interaction outside the classroom. Therefore, different researchers have already praised the use of audiovisual material as a valuable source that can present learners with samples of appropriate language use in a variety of contexts (Alcón 2005; Rose 2001; Washburn 2001). In an attempt to expand this line of research, this paper explores whether the use of films can be regarded as a suitable source of authentic input in the foreign language setting by analysing the occurrence of a particular pragmatic feature, that of request modification devices, in a corpus of ten films. To do so, the paper begins with a theoretical review of the role that audiovisual input has played in developing pragmatics in foreign language contexts on the one hand, and the description and function of the pragmatic aspect under study (i.e. request modification devices) on the other hand. A detailed analysis of the number and types of modification devices identified in the films is then presented in full conversational examples. Finally, some pedagogical implications for the integration of these film excerpts in instructed foreign language pragmatics are suggested.

## **13.2 Theoretical Background**

### **13.2.1 The Role of Audiovisual Input in the Foreign Language Context**

The presentation of rich and contextually appropriate input has been regarded as a necessary condition for developing learners' pragmatic ability in the target language (Kasper 2001; Judd 1999; Bardovi-Harlig 2001; Kasper and Roever 2005). In this regard, the context in which a language is learned is essential in terms of both the quantity and quality of the kind of input to which learners are exposed (Barron 2003). Learners immersed in the second language community have more opportunities to come into contact with the target language, so exposure to it can facilitate their pragmatic ability. In contrast, learners in a foreign language context are in a disadvantageous position, since they depend exclusively on the input that arises in the classroom (Kasper and Roever 2005). According to LoCastro (2003), learners are exposed to three types of input in this particular setting, namely those of the teacher, the materials, and other learners. Focusing specifically on how materials can be used to develop learners' pragmatic competence, it has been claimed that most textbooks and other written manuals are based on native-speakers' intuitions rather than on empirical studies of pragmatic norms (Boxer 2003; LoCastro 2003). Moreover, research on the analysis of this type of written materials has demonstrated an inaccurate and decontextualised presentation of the different pragmatic aspects examined, as well as a lack of natural conversational models representing the real use of language (see Usó-Juan this volume for a review of this research). Therefore, the use of video, films and TV has been considered an alternative way of bringing authentic pragmatic input into the foreign language context.

Video input has long been used as a valuable resource that enhances the language learning process in the classroom, as it provides learners with realistic models to imitate for role-play, as well as enabling them to strengthen their audio/visual linguistic perceptions in a simultaneous fashion (Arthur 1999; Canning-Wilson 2000; Sherman 2003). The use of video sequences has also been employed as a way to raise learners' motivation towards a particular instructional target feature and to lower their anxiety when practising the skill of listening (Larimer and Schleicher 1999; Martínez-Flor and Usó-Juan 2006a; Ryan 1998; Stempleski and Tomalin 1990). Moreover, Canning-Wilson (2000) reports that video provides a contextualised view of language that can help learners visualise words and meanings and get them to understand how the setting reveals the norms for appropriate language use. Therefore, the use of video can be

regarded as an ideal medium for introducing pragmatic issues in the classroom (Rose 1993, 1994, 1997, 1999), as well as increasing learners' awareness of other cultures (Arthur 1999; Charlebois 2004; Summerfield 1993; Williams 2001). From this perspective, research has been conducted to support the fact that authentic audiovisual input provides ample opportunities to present learners with a wide range of pragmatic features in a variety of social and cultural contexts (Alcón 2005; Grant and Starks 2001; Kite and Tatsuki 2005; Martínez-Flor and Fernández-Guerra 2002; Rose 1994, 1997, 1999, 2001; Tatsuki and Nishizawa 2005; Washburn 2001; Weyers 1999).

On the one hand, the studies by Alcón (2005), Grant and Starks (2001), Tatsuki and Nishizawa (2005), Washburn (2001) and Weyers (1999) addressed the value of using TV to introduce pragmatics in the foreign language classroom. The focus of Grant and Starks' (2001) study was that of closings. The authors compared closings in twenty-three EFL coursebooks with closings from fifty episodes of the soap opera *Shortland Street*, and concluded that TV conversations imitate natural conversations, provide a wide variety of functional conversational English, imitate natural speech and follow the cultural and linguistic behaviour of both the language and the participants. The potential of soap operas or sitcoms was also examined by Washburn (2001) and Weyers (1999). Particularly, Washburn (2001: 22) noted that "sitcoms present many models of appropriate pragmatic language use among various characters of differing status, familiarity, gender, and in varied settings, such as at work, at home, in public places, and at formal gatherings". Focusing on the presentation of particular speech acts, Alcón's (2005) study dealt with learners' exposure to requests included in different excerpts from the series *Stargate*. After a period of instruction, the author provided positive evidence of the value of employing this type of audiovisual material as the instructional base to make learners aware of the sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic aspects involved in making requests. Similar findings regarding the use of TV interviews as a reliable model for presenting the pragmalinguistic forms typical of compliments were also obtained by Tatsuki and Nishizawa (2005). However, after comparing the occurrence of this speech act in 40 videotaped TV interviews, film data and naturally occurring data, the authors observed that some sociopragmatic features, such as gender, did not correspond with natural language use, which may have been influenced by the gender of the data collectors who gathered the corpus from natural language use for that study.

On the other hand, the potential of films as a way of presenting language input in rich cultural contexts has also been examined by researchers such as Kite and Tatsuki (2005), Martínez-Flor and

Fernández-Guerra (2002) and Rose (1993, 1994, 1997, 1999, 2001). In fact, Rose (1997: 283) has praised the use of scenes from films as opportunities to observe pragmatic language use, since “in foreign language contexts, exposure to film is generally the closest that language learners will ever get to witnessing or participating in native speaker interaction”. He therefore conducted a good number of studies involving activities designed to implement the use of film in the classroom (Rose 1993, 1994, 1999), and to determine the authenticity of film excerpts when compared to naturally occurring data (Rose 1997, 2001). In his 1997 study, Rose compared the occurrence of compliments in forty-six American films with a corpus of compliments (collected by Manes and Wolfson 1981), and found that, for global categories, such as the distribution of syntactic formulae, the film data closely matched naturally-occurring speech. Later, Rose (2001) supported this finding in a follow-up study which showed that syntactic formulae, compliment topic and compliment strategy responses were found to be similar in film data and in naturally-occurring speech (i.e. pragmalinguistic forms), although some differences were identified regarding gender distribution (i.e. sociopragmatic features). Focusing on a different speech act (i.e. apologies), Kite and Tatsuki (2005) obtained similar results to those reported by Rose (2001), since the pragmalinguistic strategies employed to express apologies in both films and naturally-occurring discourse were equivalent, whereas sociopragmatic factors, such as the gender of participants, also appeared to differ in both sources. Finally, Martínez-Flor and Fernández-Guerra (2002) adopted a different perspective and compared the occurrence of three exhortative speech acts, namely requests, suggestions and advice acts, in coursebooks and films. The authors found that in contrast to the artificial and inappropriate presentation of these speech acts in the textbooks analysed, the occurrence of them in the films that were examined appeared highly contextualised and displayed a wide variety of linguistic formulae.

From the previous review of research, which has addressed the benefits of employing audiovisual material for introducing authentic language use in the foreign language classroom, it can be claimed that a range of pragmatic features has been examined (e.g. closings and speech acts, such as advice, apologies, compliments, suggestions or requests). Nevertheless, focusing specifically on requests, a partial account of this speech act was reported in the study conducted by Martínez-Flor and Fernández-Guerra (2002), since the analysis only centred on those linguistic formulae employed to express the request head act, without considering the modification devices that accompany it. In order to account for this fact, the present paper analyses whether audiovisual input can also be



considered a good source of material with which to raise learners' pragmatic awareness about these particular modification devices. Before presenting the analysis, however, a description of these elements is provided in the next subsection.

### 13.2.2 Request Modification Devices

Request modification devices have been regarded as one of the main parts into which the speech act of requesting is divided into, that is, the head act and these same devices (Trosborg 1995; Sifianou 1999; Márquez Reiter 2000; Safont 2005). Whereas the head act, or the core request, consists of the main utterance which has the function of requesting and can stand by itself, modification devices are optional elements that may follow and/or precede the request head act. These elements can be further classified into two groups, namely internal (i.e. items that appear within the same request head act) and external (i.e. devices that occur in the immediate linguistic context surrounding the request head act). The use of these modification devices does not change the propositional content of the request speech act itself. However, considering that requests are one of the most face-threatening speech acts (Brown and Levinson 1987), these elements play an important role in either mitigating or intensifying the requestive pragmatic force. In fact, speakers' use of these items (or their failure to do so) may be crucial for the actual fulfilment of their request moves. Therefore, for an appropriate use of these modification devices, speakers need to master not only pragmalinguistic knowledge (i.e. which particular linguistic choices can be used to express a mitigating device), but also sociopragmatic knowledge (i.e. which factors influence the appropriateness of a given pragmalinguistic choice).

According to Nikula (1996), these sociopragmatic factors are of paramount importance to make language fit appropriately in the social situation in which it is used, and they involve the topic of a given situation, the relationship between the participants in such a situation, and the contextual constraints involved in that particular situation. More specifically, the contextual factors that affect the appropriate use of these modification devices are based on Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory and Brown and Yule's (1983) different types of discourse interaction. On the one hand, Brown and Levinson (1987) identify three sociopragmatic parameters which refer to *power* (i.e. the social status of the speaker with reference to the hearer), *social distance* (i.e. the degree of familiarity between interlocutors), and *rank of*

*imposition* (i.e. the type of imposition the speaker is exerting over the hearer). On the other hand, Brown and Yule (1983) distinguish two main types of interaction that may influence the use of modification devices (or their failure to do so) for an appropriate requestive performance. The first refers to an interaction for *transactional* purposes (i.e. the mere transmission of information), in which the request does not need to be softened, since the main result of the request act does not threaten the hearer's face (e.g. a surgeon's direct order to a nurse during an operation). The second type of interaction is for *interactional* purposes (i.e. maintaining relationships) and the request is usually mitigated, since the speaker may exert an impositive force over the hearer (e.g. a conversation between relatives).

Bearing in mind the importance of using these modification devices for appropriate request performance, learners should be exposed to the various linguistic forms that can be employed to express them. Similarly, they should be aware of how the particular setting in which they are used also influences their appropriateness. Therefore, considering the potential of employing audiovisual material for exposing learners to authentic samples of appropriate language use in a variety of contexts, this paper attempts to shed light on whether the use of films could also be considered as a valuable resource to present these devices in the foreign language classroom. More specifically, the aim of the present paper is (i) to analyse whether request modification devices appear in films and, if so, (ii) which types they adopt, as well as (iii) in which situations they appear.

### **13.3 The Study**

#### **13.3.1 Data**

The selection of films for the present study was made on the basis of criteria and recommendations set up by Rose (2001) and Sherman (2003), who pointed out the need to choose films that represent realistic life in a setting that is as close to modern times as possible. On this account, cartoons, musicals, period films, and films made earlier than the 1990s were avoided, and the ten films chosen for this analysis were related to the genre types of drama, comedy and romance (see Appendix A for the complete list).

### 13.3.2 Procedure

All films were viewed in their entirety and different request situations were identified. Then, each request situation was transcribed in its full conversational context after viewing each film repeatedly. After having transcribed all the request situations, we proceeded with the identification of the modification devices employed with each request head act. In order to classify the different types of modification devices, we followed the typology proposed by Alcón et al. (2005), since it is based on previous research from the fields of cross-cultural and interlanguage pragmatics (House and Kasper 1981; Trosborg 1995; Hill 1997; Márquez Reiter 2000; Achiba 2003). Additionally, this typology adopts a socio-pragmatic approach that pays attention to interactional and contextual factors that affect the appropriate use of these devices (Nikula 1996; Sifianou 1999), and takes into account the analysis of data about Spanish EFL learners' oral production as regards their use of these modification devices when requesting (Martínez-Flor and Usó-Juan, 2006b, 2006c). Finally, bearing in mind the fact that two main types of modifiers, namely internal and external, have been regarded as a universal phenomenon of language use (Nikula 1996; Hill 1997), this typology was divided into these two main groups, which in turn were further classified into different subtypes:

- a) *Internal modifiers*, which are classified into openers, softeners (i.e. understatement, downtoner and hedge), intensifiers, and fillers (i.e. hesitators, cajolers, appealers and attention-getters).
- b) *External modifiers*, which are classified into preparators, grounders, disarmers, expanders, promise of a reward, and please.

### 13.4 Results and Discussion

A total of 113 request situations, which contained 134 request moves, were identified in the ten films analysed. From these request moves, only seven did not contain any modification devices, whereas the rest of them contained a variety of modification devices that amounted to a total of 342. Table 13.1 shows the number of modifiers belonging to each subtype of both internal and external modification groups and, as can be observed, instances from all types of modifiers were found in the data.

**Table 13.1** Numbers of the different types of internal and external modification devices identified in the films analysed

Type	Sub-type	<i>N</i>	%
Internal Modification			
	Openers	16	4.68
	Softeners		
	Understatement	14	4.09
	Downtoner	49	14.33
	Hedge	3	0.87
	Intensifiers	3	0.87
	Fillers		
	Hesitators	23	6.73
	Cajolers	29	8.48
	Appealers	16	4.68
	Attention-getters	59	17.26
External Modification			
	Preparators	11	3.22
	Grounders	32	9.35
	Disarmers	21	6.14
	Expanders	28	8.19
	Promise of reward	2	0.58
	Please	36	10.53
<b>Total</b>		<b>342</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Additionally, it is important to point out that most of the request moves ( $n=102$ ) contained a combination of two or more different types of internal and/or external modification devices, which is considered to be how they typically occur (Trosborg 1995). In the next two sections, a descriptive analysis of each subtype of modification device included in Alcón et al.'s (2005) taxonomy is provided with the support of contextualised examples from the films that were analysed. Therefore, although a combination of different modifiers can be observed in each example, only one particular modifier, which has been underlined for quick identification, is discussed in turn.

### 13.4.1 Internal Request Modification Devices

The first type of internal modification device is the *opener*, which refers to those opening words and expressions that introduce the intended request. A total of 16 occurrences of openers were found in the selected films. They were employed in different situations illustrating a variety of participant relationships, that is either addressing a person who is known to the speaker and, consequently, there is a close social distance between them (example 1), or a person who is a stranger to the speaker and, thus, the social distance between them is greater (example 2). Therefore, these examples illustrate the use of this particular mitigating device in two situations that reflect one of the sociopragmatic factors proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987), namely that of social distance.

Example 1 from *The Bourne Identity*:

[Jason and Marie enter in Jason's house in Paris. They are looking around the apartment searching for clues that may help Jason know who he is and what job he has]

- Marie: Hello? Are you sure this is all yours?  
 Jason: I guess [...] This is my kitchen.  
 Marie: Any clues?  
 Jason: I think I'm in the shipping business.  
 Marie: So, it's all coming back [...] eh? [...] Do you mind if I use the bathroom?  
 Jason: eh [...] sure  
 Marie: Okay

Example 2 from *Pretty Woman*:

[It is 3 o'clock in the morning and Edward is playing the piano downstairs. He is alone with some waiters. He finishes and they applaud him. Then Vivian arrives]

- Edward: Thank you. Thank you very much.  
 Vivian: I didn't know you played.  
 Edward: I only play for strangers.  
 Vivian: I was getting lonely upstairs all by myself.  
 [he looks at her and then he addresses the waiters]  
 Edward: Gentlemen, would you mind leaving us, please?  
 [the men get up and leave the place]  
 Edward: Thank you.  
 Vivian: People always do what you tell them to do? [...] I guess so.

The next type of internal modification device is that of *softeners* which, as the name indicates, serve to soften the impositive force of the request head act. This particular type of mitigating device includes three subtypes that are each going to be analysed in turn: understatement, downtoner and hedge. The *understatement* is a type of softener that includes a series of fixed expressions, such as “a second”, “a minute” or “a little bit”, which are employed by the requester with the aim of understating or minimising some aspects of his/her desired act. In the films analysed, 14 instances containing understatements were found. The following film extracts include two different understatements (e.g. *a second* and *a moment*, respectively) that are employed in an attempt to play down the impact of the request being made to a colleague (example 3) and to a clerk (example 4). Thus, different participant relationships can also be observed in these two conversations, as well as the use of this type of modifiers in different settings (e.g. a courtroom and an official institution, that is, the American consulate in Zurich). In addition, example 4 shows a request situation in which different request moves have been made by both the clerk and Marie. First of all, Marie is asking for her visa, and the clerk asks her to calm down and keep her voice down. Then, Marie asks for the person she talked to the last time she was there, and the clerk asks to have her attention. As can be observed, this situation reflects a kind of conversation for *interactional* purposes (Brown and Yule 1983), in which the different request head acts are softened and mitigated through the use of a wide variety of modification devices.

Example 3 from *A Few Good Men*:

[It is the decisive day in which Danny is going to put Colonel Jessep on the stand. He arrives at the courtroom where Jo is waiting for him]

- Danny:           Where is Sam?  
 Jo:                He’s on his way.  
 Danny:           Did he get the guys?  
 Jo:                Yeah. Listen [...] eh [...] can I talk to you for a second?  
 Danny:           Yeah

Example 4 from *The Bourne Identity*:

[Marie is asking the clerk working at the visa desk in the American consulate in Zurich for her visa]

- Marie:           No. Excuse me. No. This is not my current address, okay? This was my current address until two days ago, when I started standing in line outside. Now, I lose my apartment, okay? That means no address, no phone, no money, no time. And I still have no visa!

- Clerk: Miss Kreutz, please. I must ask you to keep your voice down.
- Marie: Excuse me. But where's the guy that I talked to last week?  
Every week it's a new person. How am I supposed to [...]
- Clerk: I don't know who you saw last week.
- Marie: Well, let me help you. I'm sure I have it. Hang on.
- Clerk: Could I have your attention for a moment, please?
- Marie: Look, I have it right here. Just look at it.

The next type of softener, the *downtoner*, consists of adverbs and modal particles that serve to make what the requester is saying more tentative in order to downtone the impact of the request. A high occurrence of this type of modifier, amounting to 49 instances, was identified in the films analysed. Moreover, it is important to point out that the positioning of this type of modifier can vary, as it can appear in an embedded position (example 5) or at the beginning of the request move (examples 6, 7 and 8). The next two situations (examples 5 and 6) show a type of interaction in which the interlocutors maintain a conversation for *interactional* purposes (Brown and Yule 1983). However, the relationship that exists between the participants, as well as the rank of imposition involved in the requests performed in each situation, differs to a considerable extent. To put it in Brown and Levinson's (1987) terms, the requests performed by Mr. Lewis in example 5 do not threaten Mr. Thompson's face, whereas the request performed by Phil to Vivian in example 6 is very impositive and, consequently, he tries to mitigate it with the use of different modification devices, among which "maybe", a *downtoner*, is employed.

Example 5 from *Pretty Woman*:

[Edward leaves the hotel and is talking to Mr. Thompson, the hotel manager]

- Mr. Thompson: Mr. Lewis.
- Edward: You don't have any messages for me, do you?
- Mr. Thompson: No, I'm afraid not, Sir.
- Edward: I'll need a car to the airport also.
- Mr. Thompson: Of course. Darryl will take you wherever you need to go.  
[addressing Darryl]  
Darryl, the limousine out front, please.
- Darryl: Yes, sir.
- Mr. Thompson: Thank you, Darryl.
- Edward: One last thing.
- Mr. Thompson: Yes.

- Edward: If you could possibly return this to Fred's for me, please.
- Mr. Thompson: Yes, of course, Sir.  
[he grabs the box where the collar is with the intention to have a look at it]  
May I, sir?
- Edward: Of course, please.
- Mr. Thompson: It must be difficult to let go of something so beautiful [...] you know, Darryl also drove Miss Vivian home yesterday  
[looking again at the collar]  
I'll take care of it.
- Edward: Thank you, Mr. Thompson.

Example 6 from *Pretty Woman*:

[Edward and Vivian have gone to a polo match. While she is standing alone observing the match, Phil, Edward's lawyer, approaches her after Edward has told him that Vivian is a hooker. He has told him so because Phil thought she was an industrial spy]

- Phil: Having a nice time, Vivian?
- Vivian: Yeah, I'm having a great time.
- Edward: Must be quite a change from Hollywood Boulevard, hmm?
- Vivian: What?
- Edward: Yeah, Edward told me, but don't worry. Your secret is safe with me. Listen, maybe [...] uh [...] you and I could get together sometime after Edward leaves.  
[she looks like very confused and disappointed to hear these words, so she doesn't know what to answer]
- Vivian: Yeah, sure. Why not?
- Phil: Well, then we'll just have to do that, hmm?  
[and he goes because his wife is calling him]

In contrast to these two previous conversations for interactional purposes, the following two situations (examples 7 and 8) have been made for *transactional* purposes (Brown and Yule 1983), and both make use of the combination of the *downtoner* "just" with an imperative. The use of this combination together with the loud tone of voice in which the request is performed reflects the power of the speaker (e.g. a police officer) over the hearer (Brown and Levinson 1987). Moreover, in both situations the action being requested is urgent.



Example 7 from *Angel Eyes*:

[There is a car accident and Sharon is calling someone to get ambulances and doctors sent to the place where the accident has occurred]

Sharon: Major accident. We'll need more ambulances.

Man: All units have been deployed. I don't have an ETA  
[...]

Sharon: I need those medics.

Man: I'll do the best I can.

Sharon: Just get them over here.

Example 8 from *Ocean's eleven*

[There is a robbery in a building and Basher, the man Rusty is looking for to become one of the eleven members of the band, is arrested. A policeman, who is pretending to be an inspector, is talking to him when Rusty arrives. He asks this policeman to look for another man]

Rusty: Booby traps aren't Mr. Tarr's style. Isn't that right? Basher?

[then addressing to the policeman and showing him his identification]

Peck. ATF. Let me venture a guess. Simple G-4 mainliner, back wound, quick fuse with a drag under 20 feet.

Basher: Yeah.

Rusty: Let me ask something else. You search this scumbag for booby traps? Not something else? I mean, really searched?

[then addressing Basher and with a loud angry tone of voice]

Rusty: Stand back

Basher: All right

Rusty: Here we go [now addressing the police officer]

Rusty: Go find Griggs. I need him.

Police officer: Who?

Rusty: Just find him, will you?

Regarding the third type of softeners, the *hedge*, only 3 occurrences were found. By using this modifier, the requester can be intentionally vague about certain aspects of the act to be carried out. In the following situation (example 9), Sharon is indirectly requesting her addressee, Catch, not to go to the bar where they had to meet because she is cancelling their date.

Example 9 from *Angel Eyes*:

[Sharon phones Catch to tell him that she is not going to go to the bar where they had to meet]

Sharon: Hi. Don't pick up. Look [...] mmm [...] I didn't get much sleep [...] and maybe this was a bad idea anyway. I was feeling kind of weird last night and [...] anyway, I'm fine now. So, let's just leave it where it's at.

The occurrence of the third type of internal modification devices, that of *intensifiers*, was also very low, since only 3 instances were identified in the films examined. This is likely to have been due to the fact that this sort of modifiers are rarely used (Sifianou 1999), since their function is to intensify the impact of the request instead of softening its illocutionary force, which is what the speaker usually desires to do in order to get his/her request fulfilled. The use of intensifiers in the following two conversations (examples 10 and 11) is totally different due to the kind of situation in which they are employed. Although the participants' social distance is very close in both situations as they are relatives and have the same relationship (e.g. brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law, respectively), the contextual factors illustrate the informal atmosphere that surrounds the situation in example 10, whereas the conversation in example 11 is very tense and Cathy's use of lexical intensification may be regarded as rude and impolite. In fact, the role the participants play in this situation is not that of sisters-in-law, but rather police officer and victim. This fact indicates the importance of considering the interactional and contextual factors that characterise a given situation for an appropriate understanding of the language being used (Nikula 1996).

Example 10 from *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*:

[There is a party at Toula's house because Ian's parents have gone to meet Toula's family. They are going to have dinner together. Then, Nick, Toula's brother, wants to play a joke on Ian and asks him to say something in Greek]

Nick: Hey, Ian.

Ian: Nick

Nick: Good to see you, man. Listen, you know I really think you should say

[he says something in Greek]

It means "everyone, let's come in the house" I think everybody will really like it

Ian: [repeats the same words in Greek]

Nick: That's good. Very good, you got it.  
 Ian: I'm not falling for that again.  
 Nick: Why?  
 Ian: Yeah, why? [...] Angelo! How do you say "everyone, let's go in the house"?  
 Angelo: [he says those words in Greek]  
 Ian: [then, Ian says those words in a loud voice for everyone, which in fact mean "I have three testicles"]  
 [everybody looks astonished at him]

Example 11 from *Angel Eyes*:

[Sharon goes to her brother Larry's house. The police have received a call from his neighbours because they heard voices. Larry was hitting his wife, Cathy, so the police come. When Sharon arrives, she talks to Cathy]  
 Sharon: Are you okay?  
 Cathy: Yeah. Neighbors moved in two weeks ago, and they're calling the police. Welcome to the neighborhood.  
 Sharon: Must've gotten pretty loud.  
 Cathy: Well, yeah. We had a fight. People fight you know.  
 Sharon: Why don't you tell me ...?  
 [she stops talking because she sees Cathy's face]  
 Sharon: Oh, my ... Shit!  
 Cathy: Please, do make me a favour. Don't make it worse.  
 Sharon: Oh, does it get worse?  
 Cathy: He didn't mean it, okay? It's never happened before.  
 Sharon: Oh, first time for everything.  
 Cathy: Don't fucking patronize me, Sharon. I don't need this shit from you.  
 Sharon: Cathy, look at you.  
 Cathy: Look at you, in my house! Policing my family! Where do you get off?  
 Sharon: It's me Cathy. I didn't hit you.  
 Cathy: I don't want your fucking pity Sharon, okay? It happened, all right? He's torn up about it.  
 Sharon: He's torn up about it? Fuck him! He's torn up? I mean ... has he hit Larry, Jr. yet?  
 Cathy: He'd never do that. He's a good man, Sharon.  
 Sharon: That's exactly what my mother said to us. "Your father's a good man. He didn't mean it. He's torn up about it"  
 Cathy: Get out of my house. Get the fuck out of my house!

The last type of internal modification devices belongs to the group of *fillers*, that is to say, those optional lexical items that perform a sociopragmatic function and are used by the requester to fill in the gaps that occur during an interaction. A large number of them were identified in our analysis, which may indicate the important role they play in all situations, given their interactive nature. Regarding the first subtype, that of *hesitators*, a total of 23 occurrences were found that illustrated how often speakers hesitate before making a request, if such a request may cause a great impact on the addressee. The following two conversations (examples 12 and 13) show two face-threatening situations which illustrate the importance of considering the three sociopragmatic factors proposed by Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory for an appropriate use of modification devices. On the one hand, in example 12 the request made by Jo (i.e. a Commander) is a delicate matter that must be discussed with a superior (i.e. a Captain), whom she has not met before. Therefore, her request is highly mitigated and she hesitates a lot because she does not know what the Captain's reaction to her request will be. On the other hand, the situation in example 13 reflects a different participant relationship, since it is between a father and his daughter (i.e. close social distance). However, given the customs in their family, the request Toula has to make to her father, a person of superior power, is very face-threatening and involves a high degree of imposition. Thus, her request is highly mitigated and she hesitates a lot because she is afraid of her father's reaction to her request.

Example 12 from *A Few Good Men*:

[Jo, Lieutenant Galloway, goes to the Captain's office to talk to him about the two men that are charged with the murder of a soldier in the military base of Guantamo Bay, Cuba. The captain is in his office with two other Commanders]

Man: Jo, come on in!

Jo: Thank you sir.

Man: Captain Bless. This is Lieutenant Commander Galloway. Jo, you know Commander Lawrence?

Jo: Yes sir. Captain, I appreciate you seeing me, that's such an honour.

Captain: Will you sit down?

Jo: Ah, I'm fine, sir.

Captain: Have a sit!

Jo: Okay [...]

[she sits down and then they talk about what has happened. Jo explains all the details ...]

- Jo: It sounds like a Code Red.  
 Captain: Christ!  
 Jo: So, I'd like to have them moved to Washington and assigned up counsel. Someone who can really look into this, someone who possesses not only the legal skill but a familiarity with the inner works of the military. In short, Captain, I'd like to suggest that [...] eh [...] I be the one who that [...] eh [...] who that it be me [...] eh [...] who is assigned to represent them [...] myself.  
 Captain: Lieutenant Galloway, why don't you get herself a cup of coffee?  
 Jo: Thank you, sir. I'm fine  
 Captain: May I ask you to leave the room, so that we can talk about you behind your back?  
 Jo: Certainly, sir.  
 [she stands up and goes out of the room]

Example 13 from *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*:

[This is a conversation between Toula and her father. She wants to talk to him because she would like to go to college]

- Toula: Dad? I've been going through our inventory and I've noticed that we've been doing a lot of unnecessary ordering [...] So, I was thinking that maybe we should update our system [...] like, we could get a computer [...] I don't know if you remember, but I got all A's in computers but there's a lot of new staff to learn now, so [...] eh [...] if you want, I could go to college and take a few courses.  
 Father: Why? Why you want to leave me?  
 Toula: I'm not leaving you. Don't you want me to do something with my life?  
 Father: Yes. Get married, make babies. You look so old!

Frequent use of *cajolers* was also identified, since 29 occurrences included this type of modifier. These modification devices also illustrate the importance of establishing interpersonal relationships and are used to attract the addressee's attention in an attempt to invite him/her to participate in the subsequent request event. Example 14 shows two instances of the same cajoler (i.e. *you know*), one in each turn. In this situation, quite a large social distance can be observed between the two interlocutors, since they have just met each other, and the degree of imposition involved in his request is also high.

Example 14 from *Before Sunrise*:

[Jesse and Celine have just met in the train and have been talking for a while. However, the train has already arrived in Vienna. Here, Jesse has to get off, whereas Celine goes on to Paris. He has already got off the train, but comes back to talk to Celine]

Jesse:            All right. I have an admittedly insane idea, but if I don't ask you this, it's just [...] you know [...] it's gonna haunt me the rest of my life.

Celine:            What?

Jesse:            *eh* [...] [he sits down] I want to keep talking to you [...] you know [...] I have no idea what your situation is but [...] *eh* [...] but I feel we have some kind of connection, right?

Celine:            Yeah, me too.

Jesse:            *Yeah*, look, great. So, listen, here's the deal. This is what we should do. You should get off the train with me here in Vienna and come check out the town.

Celine:            What?

Jesse:            Come on. I'll be fun.

[she laughs]

Jesse:            Come on.

[he keeps talking and gives her different reasons why she should accept. She listens to him very carefully and finally she accepts]

Celine:            Let me get my bag

[they stand up and go together]

Similarly, *appealers*, that is to say those devices employed by requesters to appeal directly to the hearer's consent, have also been identified in 16 occurrences. In the previous situation (example 14), Jesse's use of the *appealer* "*right?*" triggers Celine's immediate response. In example 15 the use of a different *appealer*, "*okay?*", is also employed with the same intention. In this particular situation, the status-relationship between the participants can be clearly observed, since he has the power to do what he wishes in that moment.

Example 15 from *Pretty Woman*:

[Edward and Vivian are in Edward's suite in the hotel where he's staying. He has invited Vivian to go there with him and she is asking him what he is going to do with her. As he did not have the intention of going back to the hotel with a hooker, he does not want to do anything in that moment]

Edward:            Why don't we just talk for a little bit, okay?

- Vivian: Talk. Yeah. Um, okay [...] Edward, are you in town on, uh, business or pleasure?  
 Edward: Business, I think.  
 Vivian: Business, you think [...] well, let me guess ...

The last subtype of internal modification devices is that of *attention-getter*, the main function of which is to attract the addressee's attention and alert him/her before the actual request is made. This device was the most frequently identified type with a total of 59 occurrences. Moreover, it was found to appear in all the films and in a variety of different forms. The following examples illustrate this variety, that is, the use of a formulaic entreaty (i.e. *excuse me*) in example 16, the use of an imperative construction (i.e. *look*) in example 17, the addressee's names (i.e. *Oscar*, *Captain Algren*) in examples 18 and 19 respectively, and a kinship term of address (i.e. *Aunt Sharon*) in example 20. The participant relationships in each situation can therefore be clearly identified by the use of these attention-getters (i.e. strangers, friends, relatives).

Example 16 from *Pretty Woman*:

[Edward is driving his car. He's going to Beverly Hills, but he doesn't know how to get there. Since he's lost, he stops and asks a stranger, a vagrant, for directions]

- Man: Ah, this stuff. There's nothing but garbage.  
 Edward: Uh, excuse me.  
 Man: Huh?  
 Edward: Can you tell me how to get to Beverly Hills?  
 Man: You're here! That's Sylvester Stallone's house right there!  
 [laughing]  
 Edward: Thank you.  
 Man: You're welcome.

Example 17 from *Before Sunrise*:

[Jesse and Celine are sitting in a train reading a book. They have just started to talk to each other]

- Jesse: Look, I was thinking about going to the lounge car sometime soon. Would you like to come with me?  
 Celine: Yeah.  
 Jesse: Okay.

Example 18 from *The Last Samurai*:

[Algren has been kept in captivity by the samurais. He has now been liberated and he goes with Colonel Bagley and the Ambassador to talk to

Omura, the Japanese minister. After they talk about the documents related to the arms agreement that Omura has to sign, he wants to talk to Algren alone]

Omura: Good afternoon, gentlemen. Captain Algren, perhaps you and I might have a word in private. Please, sit down. May I offer you whiskey?

Algren: No, thank you.

Example 19 from *Ocean's Eleven*:

[Rusty and Ocean are talking about robbing three casinos. They are inside a building looking at some plans of the casinos. It is night. Then, the officer, who is called Oscar and is Ocean's friend, arrives with a lantern]

Oscar: Hey

Ocean: Oscar, lower it a bit, would you?

Oscar: Sorry. You guys done? Find what you want?

Ocean: Yes, we'll take these home for the night and make some copies. Is it all right?

Oscar: Whatever you need.

Ocean: Appreciate it.

Example 20 from *Angel Eyes*:

[Sharon goes to visit her mother and when she arrives, she meets Cathy, her sister-in-law and Larry Jr., her nephew]

Larry Jr.: Aunt Sharon, can I see your police car?

Sharon: Yes

### 13.4.2 External Request Modification Devices

The first type of external modification device examined is that of *preparators*. The function of these is to prepare the addressee for the subsequent request that is going to be made. A total of 11 occurrences of these modifying items were found in the films analysed. In example 21, Danny employs a preparator as a kind of device to ask for permission and prepare the Colonel for the requests he has to make. This fact illustrates the power relationship between the participants, since the Colonel is a person of superior rank and status who has to be respected and even feared. Therefore, once he agrees to answer some questions, Danny starts with his inquiry, which involves a series of requests related to the case he is investigating.



Example 21 from *A Few Good Men*:

[Danny, Jo, Sam and other commanders are having lunch together at Colonel Jessep's house. The Colonel is talking about something else. Then, Danny interrupts him]

Danny: Colonel, I do have to ask you a couple of questions about September the 6<sup>th</sup>.

Colonel: Shoot!

Danny: An NIS agent contacted you and told you that Santiago knew about a fenceline shooting.

Colonel: Yes.

Danny: Santiago was going to reveal the person's name in exchange for a transfer.

Colonel: Yes.

Danny: If you feel there are any details that I miss it, you should feel free to speak up.

Colonel: [after some seconds]

Thank you.

[Danny realises he is not going to talk, so he follows with his inquiry]

Frequent use of *grounders* was also identified in the data, which amounted to 32 occurrences. These mitigating devices consist of reasons used to support the request being made and have been regarded as one of the most typical types of external modification devices employed by requesters (Trosborg 1995; Hill 1997; Achiba 2003). Example 22 below illustrates a request situation in which two different request moves can be observed. Each request is addressed to a different person and supported by a grounder, in which Bill explains the reasons of why the requests are being performed. In the first one, Bill addresses his secretary, Jennifer, and asks her to call his family because he wants to have dinner with them. She immediately agrees and follows his orders. In the second request move, Bill asks Joe to wait in his office during the meeting because he is not a member of the board. However, Joe refuses and asks him in turn to make it possible for him to attend the meeting with him. Therefore, this situation illustrates the different role relationships between the participants that interact in it (i.e. boss/secretary, mortal human being/Death personified in the shape of a man, respectively), and how the power that the requester has over the two addressees influences the positive fulfilment of his request in the first move, but fails to produce his desired effects in the second one.

Example 22 from *Meet Joe Black*:

[Bill and Joe go together to Bill's company. Bill has an important meeting with the rest of his board. When they arrive, he addresses his secretary]

Bill: And, call my family, I'd like them to have dinner with me tonight.

Secretary: Didn't the family get together last night?

Bill: Jennifer  
[with a rising tone]

Secretary: Of course, Mr. Parrish, right away.  
[Then Bill addresses Joe]

Bill: Uh, perhaps you'd like to wait in my office.

Joe: No.

Bill: What I'm trying to say is this is a board meeting and you're not a member.

Joe: [interrupting]  
I'm sure you'll find a way to make it all right.  
[Then Joe addresses the secretary]

Joe: Nice to meet you.

The following type of external modification device identified in the films analysed is that of the *disarmer*, of which a total of 21 occurrences were found. As its name indicates, this modifier is used by a requester in an attempt to disarm the addressee of the possibility of a refusal. The situation presented in example 23, which is the continuation of the conversation held in example 21 above, illustrates the importance of paying attention to the hearer's social status when making a given request in order not to threaten his face and give the impression of being impolite (Brown and Levinson 1987). Specifically, this situation shows how Colonel Jessep feels agitated after hearing Danny's request for a document (i.e. Santiago's transfer order), which he needs to include in his report about the murder he is investigating. The Colonel finds Danny's words very arrogant and says authoritatively, "you have to ask me nicely". This face-threatening situation makes Danny repeat his request with a softer and lower tone of voice and with a far more mitigated request that includes, among other modifiers, the *disarmer* "if it's not too much trouble".

Example 23 from *A Few Good Men*:

[Danny, Jo, Sam and other commanders are having lunch together at Colonel Jessep's house. After Jo has asked Colonel Jessep several important questions that have to do with the practice of Code Reds, they are just going to leave]

- Danny: Let's go  
[he stands up and the three of them are ready to go]  
Colonel, I just need a copy of Santiago's transfer order.
- Colonel: What's that?
- Danny: Santiago's transfer order, you guys have papers of that kind [...] I just I just need them for the file.
- Colonel: For the file?
- Danny: Yeah
- Colonel: Of course you can have a copy of the transfer order for the file. I'm here to help any way I can.
- Danny: Thank you.
- Colonel: You believe that, don't you, Danny? That I'm here to help you in any way I can?
- Danny: Of course.
- Colonel: The Corporal will take you by Personnel and you can have all the transfer orders that you want  
[Danny turns back and says "let's go"]
- Colonel: But you have to ask me nicely.
- Danny: I beg your pardon?
- Colonel: You have to ask me nicely. You see, Danny, I can deal with the bullets, and the bombs, and the blood. I don't want money and I don't want medals. What I do want is for you to stand up there and with your faggoty white uniform and with your Harvard mouth to extend me some fucking courtesy  
[they look perplexed at each other]  
You got to ask me nicely.
- Danny: [after some seconds]  
Colonel Jessep, if it's not too much trouble, I'd like a copy of the transfer order, Sir.
- Colonel: No problem

Moving on to the next type of external modification devices examined in our analysis, that of *expanders*, a total of 28 occurrences were identified. This particular modifier has been related to repetition and it is used by the requester to indicate tentativeness. Moreover, a typical feature of expansion involves the fact that it occurs in different consecutive turns rather than in single acts. This aspect is clearly illustrated in the previous situation (example 23), in which Danny has to repeat his request (e.g. a copy of Santiago's transfer order) in two different request moves by making use of a different expander each time. In the first request move, he repeats his request after the Colonel's question "*what's that?*" by using the same words

(i.e. *Santiago's transfer order* [...] *I just need them* [...]), whereas in the second request move, Danny's request is repeated by means of an expander that includes further elements, as it is far more mitigated (i.e. *I'd like a copy of the transfer order*). The use of an expander to externally modify a request head act can also be observed in the following situation (example 24), which shows an informal conversation between two participants who share a close social distance (i.e. husband/wife). In particular, Lucy is asking Jack to bring their son to the airport the next morning, and she repeats her request three turns later to make sure he will do it.

Example 24 from *The Day of Tomorrow*:

[This is a phone conversation between Jack and his wife, Lucy, about their son Sam's grades]

- Lucy: Are you gonna get that? [addressing her son Sam, then she picks up the phone] Hello?
- Jack: I just saw that Sam got an F in calculus.
- Lucy: I'm aware, Jack. I get a copy of his report card too.
- Jack: Sam is a straight A student. He doesn't fail classes.
- Lucy: I don't have time to talk about this now.
- Jack: Well, maybe you ought to make time.
- Lucy: Excuse me, I'm not the one who's away for months and months at a time.
- Jack: I just don't understand
- Lucy: I'll let him explain it. Can you take him to the airport in the morning?
- Jack: Sam's getting on a plane?
- Lucy: He joined the Scholastic Decathlon Team. They're competing in New York.
- Jack: Sam joined a team.
- Lucy: Yeah, I think there's a girl involved.
- Jack: Oh.
- Lucy: Look, can you pick him up at 8.30? I gotta go because I'm on call tonight. Jack, please don't be late. I don't want him taking a taxi again.
- Jack: All right. Okay. I'll be there. Okay? I'll be there.

The following type of external modifier is that of *promise of a reward*, in which the requester promises something so that his/her request may be accomplished. Only 2 occurrences of this type of modifier were identified in the films analysed. The following situation (example 25) is one of them, in which Jesse wants to get a bottle of wine but he does not have any money to buy it. More specifically, this situation involves two participants

who do not know each other (i.e. large social distance) and the degree of imposition implied in the request Jesse makes is very high. Consequently, the use of modification devices that soften and mitigate his request is necessary in order to have it fulfilled. Among them, Jesse promises to send him the money for the bottle.

Example 25 from *Before Sunrise*:

[Jesse and Celine enter a pub to get a bottle of wine and two glasses. She sits at a table and, while he tries to persuade the barman to let them have a bottle, she steals the glasses]

- Jesse: Hello  
 Man: Hello  
 Jesse: eh [...] do you speak English?  
 Man: a bit  
 Jesse: yeah? a bit? Well, all right. I'm having a kind of an odd situation which is that [...] eh [...]  
 Man: uh [...]  
 Jesse: [...] eh [...] this is [...] eh [...] you see that girl over there?  
 Man: Yeah  
 Jesse: [...] yeah, well, this is our only night together [...] eh [...] and she [...] eh [...] all right [...] here is the problem [...] the problem is that she wants a bottle of red wine [...] and [...] I don't have any money [laughing] [...] eh [...] but what I was thinking was that you might want to [...] eh [...] give me the address of this bar, and [...] I know [...] I would promise to send you the money [...] and you'd be making our night complete  
 Man: You would send me the money?  
 Jesse: Yes  
 Man: [he looks at Celine and then at Jesse again]  
 Your hand?  
 [they shake hands]  
 Man: Okay  
 [he goes for a bottle [...] and comes back with the bottle]  
 Man: For the greatest night in your life  
 [they both laugh]  
 Jesse: Thank you very much

Finally, the use of *please* as an external modification device was identified in 36 occurrences. This device has been regarded as one of the commonest modifiers in requests, since it explicitly signals politeness by softening the

imposition involved by this directive speech act. Moreover, it is important to point out that it can be positioned in different places in the request move, and it can perform different functions. Regarding its positioning within the request move, the politeness marker *please* can appear at the beginning of the request move (example 26), in an embedded position (example 27) and at the end of the request move (example 28).

Example 26 from *Pretty Woman*:

[Edward leaves the party and he is looking for a car to go back to the hotel. Then, he addresses some men, who are parking the cars]

- Edward: Is this Mr. Stuckey's car?  
[one of the men says "Yes"]
- Phil: Edward, where ya goin'?
- Edward: You got the keys to your car?
- Phil: Why? What's wrong with the limo?
- Edward: Look, the limo is buried back there. Darryl can't get it out.  
Please give them the keys.
- Phil: All right, look. I don't think you should drive. You're a little excited. Don't drive my car. Let me work something out here. Fellas, what kind of system is this? Can you move these cars out of there?  
[addressing the men]  
[addressing again Edward]  
Look, Edward. Edward. Are you familiar with a stick shift?
- Edward: Oh, yeah.
- Phil: Have you driven a shift?
- Edward: Yeah, yeah.
- Phil: Listen, all right. Just, just be ginger with it. Don't hit ... it's a new car. Don't ...
- Edward: Okay, I can do it.
- Phil: It's just a little ... Edward. Give me a break, please?
- Edward: I love this car.
- Phil: I love it too. Look, you don't even know where you're going. You ... you're gonna get lost in the dark! Beverly Hills is down the hill!

Example 27 from *Meet Joe Black*:

[Bill is having dinner with his family when he starts hearing a voice saying, "I'm waiting outside the front door, Bill. Won't someone let me in?"]

- Bill: [Bill calls the stewardess]  
Lillian? Is there somebody at the front door?

Lillian: I didn't hear a ring, sir.  
 Bill: Have a look, would you, please?  
 [she goes to have a look]

Example 28 from *Angel Eyes*:

[Sharon phones Catch]

Catch: Hello

Sharon: Do you have a machine?

Catch: What?

Sharon: Do you have an answering machine?

Catch: Yes

Sharon: Would you hang up please and I'll call your machine?

Catch: Why?

[then she hangs up and calls again]

[Answering machine: Please leave a message after the tone]

Sharon: Hi. It's Sharon. Maybe we can have breakfast or something. I usually get up early to run in Lincoln park and there's a coffee shop across the street. Like 8 or so? If you're there, you're there.

Concerning the different functions that the modifier *please* can fulfil, it may be claimed that its use in the three previous examples is precisely that of an external modification device that accompanies the main request head act. In contrast, the use of *please* in the next three examples illustrates that a whole request move can be substituted by employing just this device. In example 29, Saul's utilising *please* replaces the request head act, which could be rephrased as "*Could you carry the briefcase for me?*" In fact, he employs two other modification devices to soften his request (i.e. an attention-getter and a grounder). Similarly, the sole use of *please* in example 30 also performs the function of substituting a whole request "*go out*". However, in this situation no other modification devices are employed, since Edward's power over Phil, his lawyer, allows him to use *please* as a substitute for a direct unmitigated request. Finally, Sam's use of *please* directed towards his friend Brian at the end of the situation illustrated in example 31 is to substitute another direct request to make Brian shut up. In fact, as Brian keeps talking, Sam resorts to an expander by repeating his request again, although this time using an imperative form "*shut up*".

Example 29 from *Ocean's Eleven*:

[Saul, who is pretending to be Mr. Zerga, an important businessman, has told Terry Benedict that he is expecting a very important briefcase which contains something very valuable to him. He asks him to keep this briefcase in a very safe place. When the briefcase arrives, both of them go together to pick it up]

Saul: Mr. Benedict, please, I have never enjoyed the touch of steel to my skin.

Example 30 from *Pretty Woman*:

[This is the day when Edward has a meeting with Mr. Morse and other men because Edward is going to buy Mr. Morse's company. However, he wants to talk to Mr. Morse alone]

Phil: Mr. Morse, you said this morning you wish to speak to Mr. Lewis. Mr. Lewis is now listening.

Mr. Morse: I've reconsidered my position on your acquisition offer. On one condition. I'm not so concerned about me, but the people who are working for me.

Phil: It's not a problem. They'll be taken care of. Now then, gentlemen, if we could address ourselves to the contracts in front of you. If you look [...]

Edward: Excuse me, Phil. Gentlemen, I'd like to speak to Mr. Morse alone. Thank you.

Phil: [he is a little bit disoriented]  
All right, gentlemen. You heard the man. Please, wait outside.

[all the men in the room get up except for David and Phil]

Edward: You too, Phil.

Phil: What do you mean?

Edward: I mean I would like to speak to Mr. Morse alone.  
[Phil rises]

Phil: Why does he get to stay  
[addressing David, Mr. Morse's grandson]

Edward: Please [...] Please  
[directly to Phil]

Phil: I'll be right outside.

Edward: Good.

Example 31 from *The Day After Tomorrow*:

[Sam and Brian are in a pub in New York after the competition in the morning. Then, Laura and finally J.D., a boy from the other school team, come]



- Sam: This place is so retro, it might actually be cool if it were on purpose.
- Brian: Yeah, look at all these nerds.
- Laura: Hey.
- Sam: Hey. You look beautiful!
- Laura: Thanks. This place is incredible. Do you believe this is their cafeteria?
- J.D.: You played a great first round.
- Laura: So did you. These are my teammates, Sam and Brian. I'm Laura.
- J.D.: Oh, I'm J.D.
- Laura: Your school's amazing.
- J.D.: Would you, would you like a tour?
- Laura: Sure. That'd be great [then addressing Sam] Could you hold this for a second?
- Sam: Yeah, sure.
- Laura: Thanks.
- Brian: Man, you got some serious competition.
- Sam: Please [with a rising tone of voice]
- Brian: And I'll bet he's really rich too.
- Sam: Shut up.

After reporting the total number of modification devices identified in the ten films analysed and providing contextualised examples for each particular type of modifier examined in this study, two important points can be raised in relation to the two central sides of pragmatics, that is, pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics (Leech 1983; Thomas 1983). On the one hand, occurrences of all types of both internal and external modification devices were found in our data. This finding indicates that film scenes seem to be a good source of pragmatic input that may be used to present learners with all the different types of devices to be employed when modifying the speech act of requesting (i.e. different pragmalinguistic types). On the other hand, all the request modification devices identified in our data took place in fully contextualised situations. This fact also illustrates the potential that films can have in foreign language contexts to help learners raise their pragmatic awareness towards those interactional and contextual factors that need to be considered for an appropriate use of these modifiers (i.e. sociopragmatic factors). These two aspects therefore bear important pedagogical implications for the use of films in the teaching of pragmatics.

### 13.5 Pedagogical Implications of Using Films for the Teaching of Pragmatics

An appropriate and effective use of films in the foreign language classroom has been regarded as a powerful pedagogical tool to develop learners' pragmatic competence in the target language, since "it offers the possibility for repeated viewings which can be used to uncover multiple layers of pragmatic particulars from a single scene" (Rose 2001: 283). Moreover, the potential of this tool is that it can be used with different teaching approaches, such as explicit versus implicit or deductive versus inductive approaches. In this way, language teachers have the possibility of choosing those segments that best represent the pragmatic aspects they want to cover and integrate them in their current teaching syllabus. To this respect, several researchers have already proposed activities to be implemented with films in order to raise learners' awareness of a wide range of pragmatic functions, such as speech acts or politeness issues (Charlebois 2004; Fujioka 2003; Martínez-Flor and Fernández-Guerra 2002; Meier 2003; Rose 1993, 1994, 1997, 1999; Rylander 2005; Tatsuki 1998). Among these activities, Rose (1994, 1997, 1999) has proposed what he calls the "pragmatic consciousness-raising" technique, which is a type of inductive approach to fostering awareness of how language forms are used appropriately in context. In contrast, other researchers prefer to start with an explicit description of the various means of making a particular speech act, and then support their explanations with examples from film segments (Charlebois 2004; Rylander 2005).

Although it should be very interesting to test these two different approaches empirically in order to ascertain their effectiveness, we believe that both may be useful in raising learners' awareness of pragmatic functions in language by presenting them with contextualised examples from different film scenes. On that account, a combination of activities from both teaching approaches, namely inductive and deductive (Martínez-Flor 2005), could be adopted and modified in order to cover the particular pragmatic feature to be taught with our film excerpts, that is request modification devices. The different steps that could be therefore taken, if adopting an inductive-deductive teaching approach for the integration of films in the foreign language classroom, are as follows:

1. Selection of two different film scenes (e.g. those presented in examples 4 and 13 above).
2. Elaboration of two written situations that display the same conversations as those taking place in the film scenes selected.

3. Distribution of those situations to the learners with the explanation of what they have to do: “write what you would say in the following two situations.”
4. Distribution of the transcripts of the film scenes with the instructions learners have to follow: “compare your own responses with what actually takes place in these two conversations.”
5. Class discussion and teacher’s description of the speech act performed in both situations (e.g. request), with the presentation of the different pragmalinguistic forms for both the request head act and the internal and external modification devices.
6. Presentation of the two film scenes on the DVD.
7. Second presentation of the two film scenes together with the distribution of a video worksheet in which learners have to pay attention to the participants’ relationship (e.g. Do they know each other?; Has one a superior status over the other?), the setting where the situation is taking place and other non-verbal behaviour aspects, such as tone of voice, body language or facial expressions.
8. Class discussion and teacher’s explanation on the importance of the sociopragmatic factors involved in a particular situation for an appropriate use of the speech act of requesting (i.e. how to modify it when necessary given its impositive and face-threatening nature).
9. Selection of two other film scenes (e.g. those presented in examples 25 and 26 above).
10. Elaboration of follow-up activities, such as role-plays, in which learners have to orally perform similar conversations to those taking place in the new film scenes that have been selected.
11. Class discussion about learners’ performance in terms of the pragmalinguistic forms chosen to express their requests, as well as the sociopragmatic factors considered for the appropriate use of this speech act in those situations.
12. Presentation of the two new film scenes on the DVD and final discussion.

As can be observed in the suggested steps that have just been outlined, a combination of activities that involves learners’ inductive and deductive learning processes is proposed. First, learners follow an inductive learning process about the pragmalinguistic forms that may be employed to express the speech act of requesting, both the head act and its modification devices (steps 3 and 4), as well as the sociopragmatic factors that influence their appropriate use (steps 6 and 7). Second, each of these steps is followed by a general class discussion together with teacher’s metapragmatic explanations on the speech act of requesting that complement their

learning process by following a deductive approach (steps 5 and 8, respectively). In this way, it can be seen how the use of film scenes present learners with contextualised examples of the particular pragmatic feature to be covered and they constitute, therefore, the basis of the suggested instructional approach presented above.

As a last remark, it also needs to be pointed out that films can be the vehicle to transport learners to other cultures and prepare them for successful communication in those new cultural settings. In fact, three of the films analysed in this paper (e.g. *Before Sunrise*, *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*, and *The Last Samurai*) can be used to raise learners' awareness of the cultural differences and typical stereotypes of the American way of life, and the French, Greek and Japanese cultures, respectively. A different type of activities exploiting how to use these scenes to develop learners' intercultural competence (Alptekin 2002; Byram 1997; Byram and Feng 2005; Coperías 2002, 2007) could also be designed and developed to to achieve this goal.

### **13.6 Conclusion**

The aim of the present paper was to examine whether the occurrence of request modification devices takes place in films, which types of internal and external modification devices appear, and in which situations they take place. Results from our analysis have indicated that (i) most of the request moves identified in the films analysed are modified by the use of these devices; that (ii) instances from all types of internal and external modifiers are found; and that (iii) different sociopragmatic variables, such as the speaker's intentions, participants' relationship or the degree of politeness, have been considered to be of paramount importance for the appropriate selection and use of these request modification devices. Considering these findings, it may be claimed that the use of films is a good source of material for exposing learners to authentic samples of appropriate pragmatic input in a variety of contexts, as well as preparing them for communication in different cultural settings. The benefits of bringing audiovisual material into the foreign language context can therefore contribute to improve learners' pragmatic and intercultural competence, which in turn may also affect the development of their overall communicative competence in the target language and culture.

## Appendix A: List of films

1. Pretty Woman (1990)
2. A Few Good Men (1992)
3. Before Sunrise (1995)
4. Meet Joe Black (1998)
5. Angel Eyes (2001)
6. Ocean's Eleven (2001)
7. My Big Fat Greek Wedding (2002)
8. The Bourne Identity (2002)
9. The Last Samurai (2003)
10. The Day after Tomorrow (2004)

## Notes

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