

**The Role of Pragmatics in English Teaching:
A Study of Pragmatic Competence
of Students from Spanish Institutions**



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SUMMARY IN SPANISH

La globalización ha creado la necesidad de utilizar un idioma internacional para comunicarse en cualquier parte del mundo. Además, la revolución tecnológica que ha tenido lugar durante las últimas décadas hace posible la difusión de toda clase de información por todo el planeta en cuestión de segundos. Si queremos formar parte del progreso de la humanidad, es imprescindible saber este lenguaje global; el inglés. Esta investigación se ha llevado a cabo en España donde actualmente no hace falta salir del propio país para utilizar este idioma. Hoy en día es necesario para una inmensa cantidad de trabajos en los que aparentemente ni siquiera parece que vaya a usarse. Sin embargo, se exige un nivel mínimo y en muchos casos incluso títulos que lo certifiquen. Esto se debe principalmente al turismo como base de la economía española. A pesar de todo, el inglés es la asignatura pendiente de muchos españoles aún en la actualidad. La causa principal parece estar relacionada con tener un idioma natal que sea tan hablado a nivel internacional, ya que transmite la sensación de que un segundo idioma no sea necesario. La dictadura franquista y sus estrictas medidas y regulaciones respecto a los productos extranjeros, especialmente en el cine y la televisión, también siguen teniendo una repercusión en la población.

No obstante, hay una conciencia general sobre la necesidad de aprender inglés. Por esta razón, el gobierno ha promovido el bilingüismo entre los ciudadanos de todo el territorio español. Esto ha tenido lugar desde el curso académico 2004-2005, a raíz de la puesta en marcha de la LOMCE (Ley Orgánica para la Mejora de la Calidad Educativa), abriéndose una gran cantidad de centros educativos públicos bilingües, renovándose otros que no lo eran, convirtiéndose en bilingües y, además, se han aumentado las horas semanales de la asignatura de inglés en los demás. Los centros educativos públicos para adultos, tales como las Escuelas Oficiales de Idiomas (EOI), también han aumentado la

oferta de plazas en los últimos años. Sin embargo, las clases de inglés siguen centrándose principalmente en la gramática y la traducción de conceptos, especialmente en los centros que no son bilingües, sin adaptarse a las nuevas necesidades del mundo globalizado en el que viven los estudiantes. Este método de enseñanza obvia los diferentes contextos en los que se usa el inglés, así como las formas idiomáticas determinadas de cada país, cultura o grupo social.

El método para medir las habilidades lingüísticas de los estudiantes se ciñe al *Marco Común Europeo de Referencia para las Lenguas* (2001a) (MCER). En este tipo de exámenes se evalúa tan solo la competencia lingüística, estando presente la competencia pragmática de forma implícita, pero no siendo examinada como tal. Esto se ve reflejado en situaciones internacionales en las que se sufren choques culturales debido a que el hablante tiene un alto nivel lingüístico de inglés, pero no actúa adecuadamente en determinados contextos. Por todas las razones mencionadas, parece inminente la necesidad no solo de una lengua internacional sino también de una pragmática internacional.

Para aprender una lengua, sea cual sea, es un hecho aceptado y avalado por una amplia y sólida investigación, que tanto la competencia lingüística como la competencia pragmática son totalmente necesarias y complementarias. El objetivo principal de este proyecto ha sido evaluar la competencia pragmática de los participantes para comprobar si realmente se corresponden con su competencia lingüística y ambas se adquieren al mismo tiempo. La hipótesis inicial, basada en la experiencia en el sistema educativo español, establece que no se corresponden, y que las habilidades pragmáticas deberían enseñarse y evaluarse explícitamente junto con las competencias lectoras, escritas, orales y auditivas.

Esta investigación se ha realizado en dos centros públicos educativos de Madrid en los que se enseña el inglés como lengua extranjera; un instituto de educación secundaria y bachillerato, y una escuela oficial de idiomas, ambos situados en la ciudad de Móstoles. El instituto no es bilingüe, por lo que ha tenido que adaptar las escasas horas de la asignatura de inglés a los nuevos tiempos. En el caso de la Escuela Oficial de Idiomas, las clases se imparten en inglés desde los primeros cursos, pero los objetivos han tenido que ser modificados, ya que los escenarios en los que actualmente se usa el inglés han aumentado y variado mucho en los últimos años. La principal razón para elegir estos dos tipos de instituciones es la variedad en sus métodos de enseñanza de idiomas, así como la diversidad del alumnado en cuanto a edad, ocupación, objetivos, etc.

Este proyecto se ha llevado a cabo mediante unos cuestionarios que fueron distribuidos entre los alumnos durante las clases de inglés. Los profesores les explicaron las instrucciones, sin ayudarles con las preguntas que iban a ser evaluadas, y les dieron entre diez y quince minutos para rellenarlos. Los cuestionarios constaban de diez situaciones en las cuales el fallo pragmático suele ser común. Se les preguntó qué contestarían a ciertos enunciados dándoles a elegir entre tres posibles respuestas de las cuáles una o dos, según el caso, era considerada(s) pragmáticamente correcta(s), y el resto incorrecta(s).

Los resultados obtenidos de las respuestas a los cuestionarios apoyan en gran parte la hipótesis inicial, ya que parecen no corresponderse la competencia lingüística y pragmática en un gran número de ocasiones. En algunos casos incluso ambas competencias dan resultados opuestos; los participantes con más competencia lingüística demuestran un mayor grado de competencia pragmática, que los de menos competencia lingüística y viceversa. Esto está principalmente justificado por la falta de ciertos

conocimientos gramaticales y léxicos, que aún no han sido adquiridos en los niveles más básicos, y permiten contestar al alumno con respecto al contexto real y no al académico.

De este estudio se puede concluir que el sistema educativo español, en cuanto a la enseñanza de lenguas, y específicamente del inglés, necesita adaptarse a los nuevos tiempos y a las nuevas aplicaciones del idioma en cuestión. En relación a las instituciones que han sido evaluadas en este estudio, el mecanismo sería la implementación de la enseñanza de la competencia pragmática mediante diversidad de ejercicios y conceptos teóricos. A su vez, esto debería ser promulgado por la propia Unión Europea (UE) mediante la integración de esta rama en los exámenes de nivel que hacen referencia al MCER. En definitiva, la competencia pragmática no está plenamente desarrollada entre los estudiantes a pesar de ser una parte esencial del aprendizaje de lenguas extranjeras y hacer posible y exitosa la comunicación.

ABSTRACT

The high speed at which the world develops has created the need for a language that makes communication possible at an international level. English has achieved this position due to being the most spoken language by non-native speakers. This phenomenon has resulted in globalization and internationalization in almost all aspects of life. Consequently, the number of speakers and learners of English increases every day. Spain, and particularly Madrid, where bilingualism has been making its way into educations for the last decade, is the scenario in which this study has been carried out. Even though the hours of English classes have increased, language teaching methodologies appear not to be updated and adapted yet to the new world and the new role of English. This can be observed in international situations in which misunderstandings take place very often due to the lack of pragmatic competence of the speakers. The aim of this paper is to assess if linguistic and pragmatic competences are learnt simultaneously and unconsciously or if, as hypothesized, pragmatics needs to be integrated into language courses. For this purpose, near one hundred and a half students from two Spanish educational institutions were asked to fill in a questionnaire in which they had to answer to several linguistic situations in which pragmatic failure is likely to happen. They were classified by their level of English according to the *Common European Framework of Reference for Language* (2001b) (CEFR), ranging from A1 to B2. The theoretical framework which this study draws on as well as the results obtained support this hypothesis. Moreover, they demonstrate that language exposure is a key factor for the acquisition of pragmatic skills.

KEYWORDS: pragmatic competence, linguistic competence, CEFR, pragmatic failure, public high school, public language school.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Internationalization is one of the greatest challenges and focus of attention and discussion nowadays in many of the aspects of life (Altbach & Knight, 2007). Due to the phenomenon of globalization and the internet, people can travel around the globe without even leaving their houses. The world is becoming a huge country in which English is the indubitable international language (Crystal, 2003; Canagarajah, 2006; Eichhorst, 2010). For this reason, among others, the importance and interest in learning English are growing every day, as well as the number of English users. Consequently, the citizens of the world share not just a common language, but new “global cultures” or even “global identities” are being built during the last decades.

As it is widely known, the major mechanism to achieve social change is working on the basis of society; through education. As Mandela (2003) said “Education is the most powerful weapon we can use to change the world”. This is the main reason why governments and citizens are investing time, money and effort on schools and universities as they mean the future. Therefore, the role of English teachers is gaining value and their methodologies and materials need to be adapted to the same speed as the language spreads. This is due to the fact that the contexts in which English is used as well as its speakers have changed and varied on a large scale. However, in spite of the growth of English around the globe, language teaching has not been completely modified to assume its role and survive in the current situation.

In general, four skills are taught, classified as the productive ones which are speaking and writing production and the receptive ones which are reading and listening comprehension (Usó-Juan & Martínez-Flor, 2006). The main problem, specifically in Spain, is that the traditional method of English teaching is focused on grammar and

vocabulary (Alcalá & Lirola, 2012), as students are corrected according to what is grammatically correct and context is not always taken into account (Richards, 1985; Duranti & Goodwin, 1992; Halliday, 1999; Bax, 2003). These four skills are the ones that students are asked to pass the exams that classify their level of languages in accordance with the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR) (2001b). It must be emphasised the belief that, in spite of being necessary, these exams are not based on real situations, as real life does not consist of fillings other's gaps, and actually it is more about avoiding gaps (Walker, 1982; Sacks, 2004). As a consequence, students tend to study to pass exams, to obtain certificates, improve their CVs and be more competitive in the future.

Notwithstanding, despite attending bilingual schools, holding official certificates or even language degrees, linguistic misunderstandings still happen, even sharing the same language. This can be observed in intercultural situations in which all of the interlocutors have a high degree of linguistic level of the lingua franca, but they do not understand each other due to the incapability to act properly in certain contexts (Bührig & Jan, 2006; Barron & Schneider, 2009).

It is assumed that not all students can afford to travel abroad and face real situations¹; for this reason, real English must be taken to the classroom. Teachers are in charge of preparing students to avoid misunderstandings, to be able to communicate as efficiently as possible; in a fluent way without clashes, given that this is the objective of learning a language. Nonetheless, this purpose cannot be achieved without mastering at least two main competences; linguistic and pragmatic. At this stage, it must be accepted

¹ For example, the last statistics about the Erasmus program, that are from 2013-2014 academic course (since that year, the program is named Erasmus+), show that just 27,401 out of 211,995 students, who represent 12.92%, went to the United Kingdom, considered as the main English-speaking country of Europe (European Commission, 2014).

that something is missing in these courses, as the results of bilingualism in Spain are not being as successful as expected, as they are in other countries (García, 2009; Dobson, Murillo & Johnstone, 2010; Anghel, Cabrales & Carro, 2013).

Dealing specifically with English teaching methodology, extensive research has been carried out on this field (Beheydt, 1974; Nunan, 1991; Richards & Renandya, 2002; Celce-Murcia, Brinton, & Snow, 2014; Richards & Rodgers, 2014; Farrell, 2015). Notwithstanding, there is still a lack of real practice of the language itself in the classrooms to achieve the best level of English as the international language. Taking into account the fact that what students need is to put their skills into practice, in real contexts, and pragmatics is the study of language in context, pragmatics seems to be the necessary tool that should be integrated in language courses. The reason why this has not been accomplished yet may be the difficulties to simply define pragmatics, as it is not as precise as grammar, and it is a very recent field as such. Most of the teachers do not have a clear idea of what pragmatics is and consequently, they do not take the risk to teach it in their classrooms (Candlin, 1976; Rose, 1997; Matsuda, 1999; Bardovi-Harlig & Mahan-Taylor, 2003; Fernández-Amaya, 2008).

The aim of this paper is to assess if pragmatic competence is somehow learnt unconsciously through the traditional method of English teaching or if it needs to be taught explicitly in the classrooms, as hypothesised. In order to support this idea, one hundred and forty participants from public Spanish institutions in which English is taught as a foreign language² were asked to fill in a questionnaire (see Appendix 1) measuring

² The main difference between English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) is that the first one is taught in countries in which there is predominantly an English-speaking environment (Kachru, 1992). In Spain, English is taught as a foreign language because it is used a *lingua franca* to talk to the rest of countries and/or non-speakers of Spanish. Spanish is the official language and there are several co-official languages, depending on the "Comunidad Autónoma", but none of them is English.

their pragmatic competence in particular contexts. In this vein, two general research questions are formulated in order to guide the study:

- Does the participants' level of linguistic competence correspond to their level of pragmatic competence? What are the possible reasons?

Taking these questions into consideration, the intent of this paper is to raise awareness on the importance of incorporating pragmatics to English courses in order to help students to be not just linguistically competent but also pragmatically and culturally competent.

The rest of the paper is structured as follows. After this introduction, section 2 describes the theoretical framework used as the basis of the study. Section 3 reviews the essential literature written on this topic. Section 4 explains and describes the research methodology followed in order to analyse the data. Section 5 shows the findings and the discussion. Finally, section 6 presents the conclusions, limitations and implications of this paper.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. English in Spain: Current Context and Reasons

World's globalization and internationalization has made bilingualism one of the main concerns of the Spanish population. However, despite the fact that the new generations of Spaniards are taught English since school is started, between three and six

years old³, English seems to be still problematic among citizens⁴. The most salient reasons will be briefly mentioned and commented in order to understand the current context and the rationale for the present study. There are at least three main factors that seem to have affected the role of English in Spain, namely:

Firstly, Franco's dictatorship seems to be one of the main responsible agents for the non-English bilingual situation of the country given that, during this period, all the multimedia products such as films that came from abroad were dubbed in order to be adapted to the ideology of the dictator (Gutiérrez-Lanza, 2000; Rabadán, 2000). Since 1941, when the so-called "Law of Defence of the Language" was promulgated, the Spanish public have not had the obligation to make any effort to understand any other language. Meanwhile, in other European countries such as Portugal, Sweden or Finland, among others (RedditEurope, 2016), citizens are used to listening to English, or at least to reading subtitles in English because it is the only way to fully enjoy the multimedia products from abroad (Bogaard, Lázaro & Moreno, 2013).

The Spanish educational system seems to be another important reason. On the one hand, English, or any other foreign or second language, should be learnt as the first language; listening and speaking and then, reading and writing (Bogaard, Lázaro & Moreno, 2013). However, in Spain, it is not taught in this way. A clear example is that speaking and listening are not even part of the exam to access to university. Therefore, students in general do not care about developing these skills (Bogaard, Lázaro & Moreno, 2013). It must be also emphasised the large number of students per class and the few

³ English in Spain, taught a foreign language, is a compulsory subject since primary education as the educational law establishes (Gobierno de España, Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte, 2003).

⁴ The level of English among the Spanish population has fallen by 0.38 points during the last two years, decreasing from 57.18 in 2014 to 56.6 in 2016, according to EPI (English Proficiency Index) 2016, a study carried out annually by Education First (Education First, 2016).

hours of English courses in the non-bilingual compulsory education, and consequently, there is no time for every student to practise these skills in the English classroom.

The role of Spanish in the world is another factor for not feeling the need for speaking another language as Spanish is spoken by more than 472 million of people, being the second most spoken language in the world, behind Chinese (Instituto Cervantes, 2016).

Finally, the reasons mentioned above may result in lack of motivation and self-confidence. As Carter (2014) stated in an interview for the ABC online newspaper: “in Spain there are attitudes and structures that prevent us from believing in our ability to learn English”.

As the way to measure the proficiency of English in linguistic terms is the previously mentioned *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR) (2001b), it will be revised in the next section in order to understand the aim of the paper.

2.2. Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

The European Union (EU) is the force to incorporate English, as considered the global language (Crystal, 2003), into education, among other foreign languages, with the purpose of a further integration of its members (Dafouz & Hibler, 2013). In order to do so, a way of measuring and controlling the learning of languages was needed. For this reason, the *Common European Framework of Reference for Language* (CEFR henceforth) was published in 1996 by the Council of Europe in two draft versions (Council of Europe 1996a, b). The first final version was not commercially published until 2001 in English and French, the two official languages of the Council of Europe (Council of Europe 2001b, c), followed by the German translation (Council of Europe

2001d). Eventually, the Council of Europe web site (2006) reported translations into twenty-one other languages such as Spanish, Basque, Catalan and Galician, among others. The number of languages in which it has been translated has increased since then (Little, 2006).

The CEFR is a “descriptive scheme that can be used to analyse L2 learners’ needs, specify L2 learning goals, guide the development of L2 learning materials and activities, and provide orientation for the assessment of L2 learning outcomes” (Little, 2006: 167). It is based on (Council of Europe 2001b: 15, mentioned in Little, 2006: 167-168):

an analysis of language use in terms of the strategies used by learners to activate general and communicative competences in order to carry out the activities and processes involved in the production and reception of texts and the construction of discourse dealing with particular themes, which enable them to fulfil the tasks facing them under the given conditions and constraints in the situations which arise in the various domains of social existence.

The following table (Table 1) shows an illustrative global scale (Council of Europe 2001b: 74):

Proficient User

C2	Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. Can summarise information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. Can express him/herself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in more complex situations.
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C1	Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognise implicit meaning. Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.
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Independent User

B2	Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.
B1	Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes and ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.

Basic User

A2	Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.
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A1	Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has. Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.
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Table 1 - CEFR Common Reference Levels: Global Scale

As appreciated in the table, the competences that are required to achieve each level are not just related to the four basic skills previously mentioned: reading, writing, listening and speaking, as any of them would not be possible without the pragmatic competence. For example, at the most basic level, learners are asked to “understand and use familiar everyday expressions” (Council of Europe 2001b: 24). Meanwhile, advanced learners are asked to “use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes” (Council of Europe 2001b: 24). The question of what familiar is depends on the context of the situation. Moreover, the capacity to recognize and comprehend scenarios such as social, academic or professional, and behave according to them, is based on pragmatics.

Therefore, without the pragmatic competence, students would not be able to act and speak accurately. They would not have the ability to differentiate varied contexts from the ones that come from their own cultural background and they might use the target language in a non-idiomatic way. This phenomenon would consequently result in pragmatic failure (Ziran, 2006).

In the *Common European Framework of Reference for Language* (2001b), a definition of pragmatic competence(s) (Council of Europe, 2001b: 13) can be found:

They are concerned with the functional use of linguistic resources (production of language functions, speech acts), drawing on scenarios or scripts of interactional exchanges. It also concerns the mastery of discourse, cohesion and coherence, the identification of text types and forms, irony, and parody. For this component even more than the linguistic component, it is hardly necessary to stress the major impact of interactions and cultural environments in which such abilities are constructed.

Nevertheless, even though a complete definition is provided, assuming its importance, it is not specifically mentioned as an essential skill, as listening, reading, writing and speaking. Consequently, it is not explicitly taught in the classrooms, at least in the Spanish institutions in which this paper is focused (Iragui, 1993; Medina, 2012; Latha & Rajan, 2012)

To conclude this section, it must be emphasised the importance of pragmatic competences to be able to learn, acquire and make a good use of the rest of the competences (i.e. reading, writing, listening and speaking). In a few words, pragmatic knowledge seems to go unaware, unnoticed and, consequently, as taken for granted in the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (2001b).

The next section will revise and comment on two of the most conventional methods to teach languages in order to support the ideas that have been just mentioned.

2.3. English Teaching Methods

This section will briefly review the two best known and most used methods to teach English which are the Grammar-Translation Method and the Communicative Language Teaching. The reason to describe these two among all the different methodologies is that they are the ones used in the Spanish institutions in which the study

was carried out. Consequently, they are considered worthy of study and discussion for the specific topic of this paper.

- Grammar-Translation Method:

The most traditional one, also known as “the grammatical approach”, became regarded as “old fashioned” in the 1980s and early 1990s, with the advent of other approaches (Bowen, 2013). However, this approach is still frequently used in Spanish public institutions such as schools, high schools and in the basic levels of language schools (Madrid, 2001; Uribe, Gutiérrez & Madrid, 2008). One of the main requirements of this method is that the English teacher must share the same first language of the students in order to properly explain through translation the grammar rules of the target language (Bowen, 2013). Nonetheless, the first problem that the users of this method may face is the diversity of students in a classroom, which means that not all of them may share the same mother tongue as the teacher. In this specific case, Spanish is not necessarily the native language of all the participants in a classroom (Fernández-Batanero, 2004; Castaño, Gómez, & Bouachra, 2008). Another drawback is that not everything has a translation from English, or any other language, into English, or any other language, consequently, the explanation may become complex (Catford, 1965; Steiner, 1998; Gentzler, 2001). The result is that students who learn English through this method tend to translate everything from their native language into English, not just the grammar rules, but also the vocabulary. This phenomenon is known as linguistic transfer that can be positive, but also negative (Chang, 2011).

One of the theoretical linguistic bases of this traditional method is related to Chomsky’s theories (1950s-1970s) of language acquisition as a cognitive act (Costley & Nelson, 2013) and the Universal Grammar (Cook, 1985). Taking Chomsky as the model, it was thought that language teaching was a cognitive matter. In spite of the fact that

Chomsky did not take second language acquisition into account, it was believed for almost twenty years that both, first and second language acquisition work in the same way (Schachter, 1988). This affected the methods employed to teach both first and second languages. Since the 60's, linguists, psychologists and sociologists started to argue Chomsky's ideas. At that point, language teachers also started to question the language teaching methodologies that were traditionally used as the results were not the expected ones. For this reason, the focus shifted from a cognitive to socio-cognitive perspective, i.e. language can be learnt through the social process as any other ability (Skinner, 2014). Consequently, new teaching approaches emerged.

- Communicative Language Teaching

If the social process is necessary to acquire the first or any foreign language, the ability to communicate with the rest of society will be the essential part of language that needs to be learnt. For this reason, the main core of this method is based on interactions (Spada, 2007). This capacity to apply the grammatical rules to real interactions in order to communicate successfully is known as the *communicative competence* (Hymes, 1972). The main advantage of this methodology is the concept of context, which was missing in the grammatical approach. However, the variety of contexts that students might have to face when using the target language is endless.

As part of the so called *communicative competence*, Hymes (1972) included the *linguistic competence*, among other competences, which also involved the grammatical part of the language mentioned in the grammar-translation method. He added that *communicative competence* also involves knowing what to say to whom in what circumstances and how to say it, which in his model is part of the sociolinguistic competence. Nevertheless, it was not until 1990 when *pragmatic competence* was recognized as part of *language competence* (Bachman, 1990).

2.3.1. English Language Teaching in the “Post-Method” Era⁵

Brown (2002), proposed twelve principles for language learning. These principles will be listed, adapted to the aim of this paper, and briefly explain in order to suggest a new language teaching method that integrates all the essential components that were absent in the previously mentioned methods. Taking into consideration that the number of contexts is endless, there may be disagreement in the interpretation or in the difficulty in integrating these principles in the classroom. For instance, the context in which Chinese people will use English may vary from the one in which Greek citizens will. Moreover, even being in the same country, finance students and criminology students may have different purpose and reasons to learn English. There may be differences even between schools' and neighbourhoods' contexts. Nonetheless, they would be considered as central to most language acquisition contexts (Brown, 2002: 12-13).

1. Automaticity

Efficient communication in any language requires quick responses and fluency in order to avoid gaps. Therefore, overanalysing language and overthinking about its forms tend to obstruct the graduation to automaticity. For example, when having a casual and improvised conversation in any emergency situation, the interlocutors need to be prepared to provide the necessary information that s/he is being required as fast as possible. For instance, if s/he needs to go to the nearest hospital. They do not have to worry about grammar, but they just need the resources to survive; the linguistic strategy. This is what was previously mentioned as real the English that is claimed in the classrooms.

⁵ This is the title of the chapter written by Brown (2002) in which the twelve principles can be found.

2. Meaningful Learning

The goal is that our students are able to remember all the content that is taught in the classroom, for this reason, it is better to foster long-term retention than rote learning. Among others, content-centred approaches to language teaching focus on achieving this kind of learning (O'malley & Chamot, 1990; Nemati, 2010; Nemati 2013).

3. The Anticipation of Reward

As human beings, we are universally driven to act if we know there is some sort of reward, tangible or intangible, short or long-term, but we need to be sure we will receive it as a result of our behaviour (Watkins, 1989; Olson, 2015). Although, in the case of language learning, long-term rewards are the common ones, the power of immediate compensation in the class is undeniable. The goal of these rewards is to maintain students' attention by keeping classrooms interesting.

4. Intrinsic Motivation

Reward-driven behaviour may be sometimes dependent on extrinsic motivation (Krashen, 1981; Gardner, 2010); externally provided by someone else. Notwithstanding, when the reward is intrinsically driven within the learner, it becomes even more powerful. This means that when the learner actually wants, needs or desires to achieve knowledge, the behaviour itself has the potential to be self-rewarding. In this context, external rewards would not be necessary, i.e. learners would maintain their behaviour beyond the immediate presence of teachers, parents, and/or other tutors.

5. Strategic Investment

The learning of another language requires an investment of time, effort and attention by the students not just in the classroom, but also on their own and out of the

classroom. This happens in the form of individualized strategies for comprehending and producing the language. This means that, despite the fact that the teacher can help the learner, they are asked to work hard on their own in order to achieve the highest level of the target language.

6. Language Ego

This principle is the most essential one for the aim of this paper. As human beings, when we use a second language, a new mode of thinking, feeling, and acting emerged. This is, as mentioned in the introduction section, a second identity. This idea was firstly developed by Wittgenstein as his preeminent quote summarizes “‘If we spoke a different language, we would perceive a somewhat different world’” (Wittgenstein 1932-1934). Therefore, the teacher of the second language needs to work on this as the new “‘language ego’”, intertwined with the second language, can easily make the learner feel fragile, defenceless and even self-conscious and consequently unable to act in a natural way.

7. Self-Confidence

This principle is very related to principles number 3 and 4; rewards and motivation. This is given that without self-confidence and inner strength, the rest of learning factors would not work. Accordingly, learners’ belief that they are able to accomplish their tasks is a key factor of their eventual success. Self-esteem, at least as a global concept in the classroom, lies at the roots of the final achievement. This means that the language teacher has also the responsibility to make them believe in themselves, as this is the basis of any kind of purpose in life.

8. Risk Taking

Learners need to bet and risk when using the target language, as if they took part in a game, they must be willing to become “‘gamblers’”. The most successful language

learners are the ones that feel capable to do so, they attempt to produce and interpret a language that is not their mother tongue, and which is beyond their absolute certainty.

9. The Language-Culture Connection

This principle is also essential for the core topic of this paper. When teachers are teaching any language, they are also teaching, or at least they should be teaching, a complex system of cultural customs, values, and ways of thinking, feeling and acting. This implies that one of the main responsibilities of the language teacher consists of bringing the cultural part of the target language to the classroom. The absence of the target culture would result in the culturally incompetence of the students. Consequently, they would not be pragmatically competent out of their comfort zone; the classroom.

10. The Native Language Effect

Learners tend to use their native language as the basis on which they can rely to predict the target-language's system (i.e. language transfer). Nevertheless, this mechanism can have positive and/or negative effects on the learning of the second language. This means that the native language can both facilitate and interfere with the production and comprehension of the new language. The interfering or negative effects tend to be the most salient. In linguistic terms, these phenomena are named as positive and negative transfers (Durgunoğlu, 2002; Oldin, 2003), as previously mentioned.

11. Interlanguage

Most second and foreign language learners tend to go through a systematic or quasi-systematic developmental process during the process of achieving to master the target language. This process is easier and faster when the learner receives and utilizes external feedback, which means a successful interlanguage development. Language teachers can provide feedback, but they can also help learners to generate their own

feedback outside the language classroom, which is more important and useful for them. For instance, when learners have a casual conversation out of the classroom environment, they can make mistakes and automatically correct themselves (Schegloff, Jefferson & Sacks, 1977). This would represent a successful second language learning.

12. Communicate Competence

This is the final goal of any language classroom, as the aim of learning a language is acquiring the power of communication. However, teachers need to be aware of all its components: organizational, pragmatic, strategic and psychometric. Within these four components, the present paper focuses on the pragmatic factor.

To summarize these principles, it is important to stress that:

Communicative goals are best achieved by giving due attention to language use and not just usage, to fluency and not just accuracy, to authentic language and contexts, and to students' eventual need to apply classroom learning to heretofore unrehearsed contexts in the real world. (Brown, 2002: 13)

The next section will focus on the field of linguistics that studies the relationship between language and context, i.e., pragmatics. This is due to the previously mentioned hypothesis of this paper that states that pragmatics is the necessary tool that must be integrated in language courses. Ergo, this notion must be completely understood.

2.4. Pragmatics

Even though pragmatics has existed since Greek times, it was not considered an independent discipline until 1987 when the International Pragmatics Association (IPrA) was officially founded (Liu, 2005). The members of this association proposed to define pragmatics as a theory of linguistic adaptation that looks into language use from all

dimensions (Verschueren, 1985). From that moment, pragmatics started to be discussed in textbooks and, consequently, a wide variety of definitions arose. The most basic and standardize one is meaning in use, or meaning in context (Thomas, 2014). Or, more textually, “pragmatics can be usefully defined as the study of how utterances have meanings in situations” (Leech, 2014: 10). Other linguists have tried to find a proper definition, Crystal (1997), for example, defined it as “the study of language from the point of view of users, especially of the choices they make, the constraints they encounter in using language in social interaction and the effects their use of language has on other participants in the act of communication” (Crystal, 1997: 301). Yule (1996) provided a more extended definition, the one that fits the most for the aim of this paper, which involves the speaker, the listener and the context:

Pragmatics is concerned with the study of meaning as communicated by a speaker (or writer) and interpreted by a listener (or reader) [...] Pragmatics is the study of speaker meaning. [...] This type of study necessary involves the interpretation of what people mean in a particular context and how the context influences what is said. [...] Pragmatics is the study of contextual meaning. [...] This approach also necessarily explores how listeners can make inferences about what is said in order to arrive at an interpretation of the speakers’ intended meaning. This type of study explores how a great deal of what is unsaid is recognized as part of what is communicated. [...] Pragmatics is the study of how more gets communicated than is said. (Yule, 1996: 3)

Nonetheless, not all academics agree on what pragmatics is, in fact, they are traditionally divided into two groups; those who directly relate pragmatics to the *speaker’s meaning*, and those who equate it with *utterance’s interpretation*, in other words, considering what the listener understands due to his/her own context. On the one

hand, those who are more interested in the social part of the discipline are most in favour of the first term; *speaker's meaning*. Therefore, they focus on the producers. On the other hand, the term *utterance interpretation*, or “listener's meaning”, is adopted by those focused on a more cognitive approach; the receiver's interpretation (Thomas, 2014).

2.4.1. Interlanguage Pragmatics

Focusing on the participants of this study, the notion of interlanguage pragmatics is worthy to review. Interlanguage pragmatics is “the study of non-native speakers' use and acquisition of L2 pragmatic knowledge” (Kasper, 1996: 145). The study of this specific part of pragmatics by second language acquisition researchers is increasing nowadays since learners of English as a second language, despite proving a high level of linguistic competence, make communication mistakes due to their unawareness of pragmatic knowledge (Cai & Wang, 2013). These pragmatic mistakes seem even more unacceptable than grammatical mistakes. This is given that, if speakers show a high level of the target language, the pragmatic failure can be misinterpreted as made on purpose by the non-native speaker. These misinterpretations may result in undesirable situations (Blum-Kulka, 1997). The main criticism on interlanguage pragmatics is given that, until now, it has mostly focused on the comparison of the differences between L2 learners' and native speakers' production of speech acts (Kasper & Schmidt, 1996; Kasper & Rose, 2002). Nevertheless, this study will focus on the acquisition, learning and development of the pragmatic competence by non-native speakers who are learning English as a foreign language.

2.4.2. Pragmatic Competence

As mentioned before, it was not until 1990 when pragmatic competence was considered an essential part of communicative competence. In order to understand what

pragmatic competence is, the notion of communicative competence must be reviewed. Even though Hymes (1972) was the first scholar who named this concept, this paper will focus on a later approach provided by Bachman and Palmer (1996) which is illustrated in Figure 1:

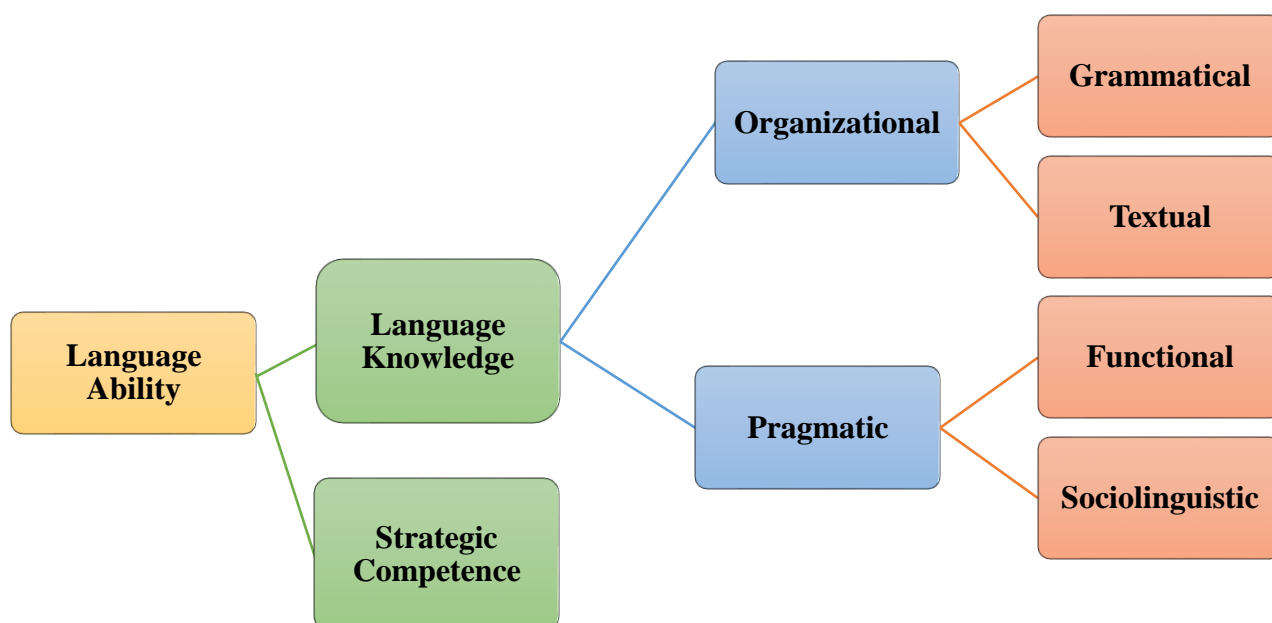


Figure 1: Language Ability (based on Bachman & Palmer, 1996: 67)

Language ability is considered the proficiency of a target language, which is English in the specific case of this paper. In order to achieve this level, language users need to master two components. The first one is **language knowledge**, defined as “a domain of information in memory that is available for use by the metacognitive strategies in creating and interpreting discourse in language use” (Bachman & Palmer, 1996: 67). In other words, to what this study has referred as *linguistic competence*. It includes two

broad categories. On the one hand, **organizational knowledge**, which is in charge of “controlling the formal structure of language for producing or complementing grammatically acceptable utterances or sentences, and for organizing these to form texts” (Bachman & Palmer, 1996: 67). It involves the **grammatical** and **textual** factors. This knowledge is what makes a text coherent and cohesive. On the other hand, **pragmatic competence**, the one on which this paper is focused. It is divided into two competences; **functional** and **sociolinguistic**. Functional competence (illocutionary) deals with the knowledge of functions (e.g. ideational, manipulative, heuristic, imaginative, etc.), while sociolinguistic competence includes aspects such as dialects, varieties, register, cultural references, etc.

The term pragmatic competence is comprised of two words. As the term “pragmatics” has been already defined in the previous section, the word competence will be briefly discussed as it is one of the most controversial terms in the field of general and applied linguistics. In linguistic terms, it has been generally associated with Chomsky, who in his very influential book *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax* (1965), drew the classic distinction, as widely known nowadays, between competence and performance. The first one is understood as the monolingual speaker-listener’s knowledge of language, while the second one is defined as the actual use of language in real situations, i.e., in context. However, those linguists interested in the communicative view, such as Savignon (1972) strongly disagree with the idea of using the concept of idealized, purely linguistic competence as a theoretical ground of the methodology for learning, teaching and testing languages, as discussed previously in this paper. Another important attempt is the distinction made by Widdowson (1983) between competence and capacity, which he applies to discourse analysis and pragmatics. In this respect, he defines competence as

the knowledge of linguistic and sociolinguistic conventions. In contrast to capacity, which is defined as the ability to use knowledge as means of creating meaning in a language.

After several distinctions and discussions, Bachman (1990) devotes special attention to the use of language in context, that is, the way language is used for the purpose of achieving a particular communicative goal in a specific situational context of communication (Bagarić & Djigunović, 2007). Years after, along the same lines, Bialystok (1993) states that pragmatic competence involves three aspects. On the one hand, the speaker's ability to use language for different purposes. On the other hand, the listener's ability to understand the speaker's real intentions (for example, implicatures, irony, sarcasm or indirect speech acts). And, finally, the knowledge of the rules by which utterances come together to create discourse (Tello Rueda, 2006).

More recently, Rose (Kasper & Rose, 1999) defines this concept as the ability to use available linguistic resources (pragmalinguistics) in a contextually appropriate fashion (sociopragmatics). In Thomas's (1983) words; how to do things appropriately with language (Thomas, 1983; Leech, 2014). This definition is widely accepted by interlanguage-pragmatic researchers (Tello Rueda, 2006).

In summary, in this paper pragmatic competence will be simply defined as the ability to use the proper language in the right context. For this reason, the utterances of the questionnaire provide a determined context by specifying who the speaker would be in those linguistic situations. Not being able to act pragmatically correct would result in pragmatic failure, that will be explained in the next section.

2.5. Pragmatic Failure

As mentioned in the previous sections, being the main purpose of learning a language communicating and interacting as successfully as possible, pragmatic

competence is one of the core skills that needs to be developed in L2 classrooms. This is given that, if any of the interlocutors in a conversation does not possess this ability, communication might fail. As a result, pragmatic failure would occur. As stated by Jingwei (2013: 75):

ESL learners have to attach importance to the cultivation of pragmatic competence; mastering a variety of pragmatic rules is a premise for the ESL learners to conduct decent, effective and successful communication and avoid failure of communication activities caused by the pragmatic failure.

Thomas (1983: 91) defined pragmatic failure as “the inability to understand what is meant by what is said”. Therefore, linguistic knowledge is not enough to make communication completely effective in the L2 (Rose and Kasper, 2001; Jung, 2002). The term “pragmatic error” is also widely used to refer to the same phenomenon (Wang, 1997; Benz, 2011). Riley (1989: 234) states that “pragmatic errors are the result of an interactant imposing the social rules of one culture on his communicative behaviour in a situation where the social rules of another culture would be more appropriate”. Nevertheless, this latter term will not be used in this paper as the pragmatic (or illocutionary) force of a sentence is not considered to be correct or incorrect, but it appears when the speaker has not been able to communicate his/her intention successfully (Fernández-Amaya, 2008).

There are two types of pragmatic failures: pragmalinguistic failure and sociopragmatic failure. In Thomas' (1983) terms, the first one takes place when the pragmatic force intended by the speaker in a given utterance is different from the most frequent force used by the native speakers of the target language. This also happens when certain speech act strategies are transferred in a different way from the mother tongue to

the target language, e.g.⁶ when speaker A says: “See you tomorrow!” as a farewell, and speaker B answers: “When?” as it has been wrongly interpreted as a commissive speech act.

Sociopragmatic failure takes place when the social conditions influence the use of the target language (Thomas, 1983). Sociopragmatic failure “stems from the different intercultural perceptions of what constitutes appropriate linguistic behaviour” (Fernández-Amaya, 2008: 13). For example, when speaker A says: “You look so pretty in that dress!” as a compliment, and speaker B answers: “No way!”. In other words, pragmalinguistic failure is caused due to the lack of language competence while sociopragmatic failure is related to the influence of personal circumstances (society, culture, first language, etc.) on the use of the target language (Thomas, 1983). Both, pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic failure can happen simultaneously and even overlap. It must be pointed out that they can also take place between members of the same culture who share the same language, but they are more likely to take place when people from different cultural backgrounds interact (Tsutsui, 2009; Padilla-Cruz, 2013; Nuchi, 2014).

The concept of pragmatic failure has been re-defined through the years. For example, Ziran (2006: 26) argues that “pragmatic failure does not refer to the general wording and phrasing errors that appear in language use, but rather refers to the failure to reach the expected result because of speaking improperly, expressing ideas in unidiomatic way”.

⁶ These examples have been directly taken from the questionnaire answered by the students for this study. It can be found in Appendix 1. They will be deeply analysed in the specific section for analysis and discussion of results.

The notion of “pragmatic transfer” should be also taken into account when discussing pragmatic failure (Fernandez-Amaya, 2008). This notion is defined by Kasper (1992: 207) in the following terms: “pragmatic transfer in interlanguage pragmatics shall refer to the influence exerted by learners’ pragmatic knowledge of languages and cultures other than L2 on their comprehension, production and learning of L2 pragmatic information”.

When defining and analysing pragmatic failure, it is also necessary to briefly revise Brown and Levinson’s Politeness Theory (1978, 1987) and the concept of “face” as the public image that adult people want to show to society (Goffman, 1959, 1967). This notion was lately divided by Brown and Levinson (1987: 67) into “negative face”, which is the desire to be free to act and not be interrupted and/or unimpeded by anyone, and “positive face”, which is the desire of being accepted and approved in a positive way by, at least, part of the members of the society. According to Brown and Levinson (1987), when speakers are having a conversation, they try to preserve this image and not to damage the rest’s image. However, sometimes this is not possible since there are certain speech acts that by definition “intrinsically threaten the public image (positive or negative) of the speaker or the listener: FTA (Face Threatening Acts)” (Fernández-Amaya, 2008: 15). One of the main criticism on Brown and Levinson (1987) is due to they conclude that all human beings act in a similar way, stating that politeness is a universal issue. Notwithstanding, cultural studies show that the expression of politeness is far from universal (Ide, 1989; Holtgraves & Joong, 1990; Zamborlin, 2007; Fernández-Amaya, 2008; among others). Moreover, taking into consideration the definition provided by Foley (1997: 270), politeness is “a battery of social skills whose goal is to ensure everyone feels affirmed in a social interaction”. Thus, it depends on the society and its members.

2.5.1 Pragmatic Dissonance

Since Thomas (1983), other authors have tried to innovate this terminology by renaming and redefining it in order to adapt it to the role of English in the current society. The main reason to abandon the word “failure” is due to its negative connotations. For this reason, other denominations have recently been put forward such as “pragmatic dissonance”, defined by Zamborlin (2007: 22) as “circumstances in which speakers, deliberately or not, organize the linguistic action in such a way that hearers perceive it as conflicting with the harmonious flow of the conversation”. Hence, pragmatic dissonances represent intentional or unintentional unexpected occurrences of verbal behaviour that take place when the speaker wants to alter, or does not have the ability to conform the norms of “linguistic etiquette⁷”. However, the scope of this phenomenon is much broader. Kasper (2005: 58) defines it in linguistic terms as “the practice in any speech community of organizing linguistic action so that it is seen as appropriate to the current communicative event”. This means that English speakers must be able to engage with a variety of audiences who have either the intention of helping us or not, to understand us and be understood, or not.

Another reason for using the term “dissonance” is that it also implies different degrees, whereas the terms “pragmalinguistic failure” and “sociopragmatic failure” are limited (Zamborlin, 2007). Moreover, there is no a clear-cut distinction and, rather than a dichotomy, they should be considered as a continuum (Thomas, 1983: 109). For Zamborlin (2007: 25) “the boundaries between the two dimensions quite often appear to be indistinguishable”. One of the linguistic basis that supports this criticism is the use of speech act strategies, which are normally classified as pragmalinguistic failures, while

⁷ Linguistic etiquette is defined as “the formal rules of proper behaviour” (Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, 1978: 373).

they are a question of societal beliefs in most of the cases, and not of lack of linguistic competence (Zamborlin, 2007).

To conclude this section, it must be emphasised that, even though this paper is focused on Spain, each EFL classroom is a cross-cultural or even intercultural scenario. For this reason, the concept of culture must be taken into account, as “a complex set of shared beliefs, values and concepts enabling a group to make sense of its life and providing it direction for how to live” (Fay, 1996: 132). Therefore, the setting of this study “posits inherent risks of communication failure” (Fay, 1996: 132, mentioned in Mulyanah & Hum, 2013: 77).

2.6. Speech Act Theory

As previously seen, the traditional definition of pragmatics relates language with its context (Yule, 1996). Moreover, the relationship between language and context have been widely discussed throughout history. In this section, some perspectives will be briefly reviewed in order to understand Speech Act Theory (Austin, 1962). On the one hand, some scholars since Frege (Dummett, 1981), to more recent authors, state that the literal meaning of a sentence is a context-free notion, also known as the “null context”, or the “zero context” (Speaks, 2008). This means that the literal meaning would not vary in any context. Nevertheless, ambiguity is the key to prove the importance of context, because it is absolutely necessary to understand the real meaning of any sentence. The conclusion is that this axiom needs to be abandoned since, as Searle (1980: 227) argues, “The literal meaning of a sentence only determines a set of truth conditions given a set of background practices and assumptions”. This set is known as “the background” and makes the interpretation possible.

A situation becomes a communicative situation depending on the intention of the speaker to influence the mind(s) of the listener(s) by means of an utterance. The speakers, in this case students, plan a language action in order to convey their intentions to the mind of the listener(s). This implies the assumption that the listener is using the same kind of knowledge. Therefore, the speaker makes assumptions about the ability of the listener to specify the situation. In an ideal case, the speaker only supplies the information in the utterances which the hearer is expected to be unable to gain from the situation. In many cases, though not in all, this will be information about the speaker's intention and attitudes (Motsch, 1980).

In Thomas' (1983) terms, pragmalinguistic failure takes place when speakers inappropriately transfer speech acts, strategies or utterances from their native language that convey a different pragmatic force in the target language (Thomas, 1983: 102–103). Thus, Speech Act Theory (Austin, 1962) will be taken as the point of departure to understand this concept in depth. This theory states that words do not have meaning in and of themselves; they are affected by the situation and the participants. Following Austin's initial theory, Searle (1969) developed a taxonomy widely known as Searle's Taxonomy of Speech Acts (1969, 1975) that classifies illocutionary acts into five macro categories, namely:

- Representatives: the speaker states what s/he believes to be the case.
- Directives: the speaker wants the listener to do something.
- Commissives: the speaker commits him/herself to future action.
- Expressives: the speaker states what s/he feels.
- Declaratives: the speaker changes the world by the very utterance of the words.

All in all, due to the endless variety of contexts and their boundaries, classifying language is not a simple task, for this reason, it has been a controversial issue through the years. Bearing this in mind, Wunderlich (1980: 301-302) summarizes the main problems found in a language specific investigation of speech acts:

- a) *The demarcation problem*: One has to delimit individual speech acts from the continuous flow of speech.
- b) *The identification problem*: One has to identify the delimited speech acts as belonging to one or another speech act type.
- c) *The classification problem*: One has to establish a workable classificatory scheme for speech acts which can be found in a certain kind of discourse.
- d) *The specification problem*: For each class of speech acts, one has to deal with a whole range of subtypes that may differ in various respects.
- e) *The (de)composition problem*: One has to distinguish between simple and more complex speech acts which may be composed of simple speech acts.
- f) *The projection problem*: One has to relate the verbal means, words and constructions, with the sentence meaning, described in terms of possible speech acts performed by the utterance of that sentence.

There have been attempts to create a unique formula that should be followed in order to classify speech acts. Nevertheless, language is not a mathematical issue because it deals with real life and people. In order to understand speech act verbs completely, it is necessary to add something to the formula; it must be completed for each individual. The list of relations is the following (Verschuren, 1980: 58-60):

- I. *The relation with the language (L)*. Many types of speech acts impose conditions on the structure of the utterance that can be used to perform them.

- II. *The relation with the world (W)*. Most speech acts can be expected to reflect characteristics of their cultural setting.
- III. *The relation with the speaker (S)*. Every speech act is the expression of an attitude, a psychological state, on the part of the speaker.
- IV. *The relation with the hearer (H)*. Whereas I to III describes the speech act, here we want to capture ‘ACCEPT (y, SA); i.e., the effect typically intended by the speaker.

2.6.1. The Mixed Game by Edda Weigand

Every theory has loopholes that attract criticism. Geis (1995) makes an objection to the concept itself, as “speech acts” could have been seen as misleading because the actions (illocutionary acts) carried out by speech can also be done non-linguistically or non-verbally, and have the social part that is absolutely necessary to make communication possible. For this reason, he proposed a more appropriate term for “speech acts” that is “communicative acts” because communication is social and can be verbal or non-verbal (Geis, 1995).

Taking this criticism among others into consideration, Weigand (2010) proposed a new conception of Speech Act Theory (Austin, 1962) and a reformulated taxonomy of speech acts by describing human dialogue as a “game” based on action and reaction rather than on isolated speech acts. Therefore, these new speech acts are interdependent and they consider the reaction of the interlocutor. As she explained: “Based on human beings’ nature as social individuals, speech acts are dialogically related [...] The minimal game consists of an initiative and a reactive speech act which are interdependent” (Weigand, 2010: 207).

Weigand's speech act taxonomy (2010: 154) is based on action types labelled as:

- Declaratives: create a world.
- Directives: change the world.
- Representatives: express the world.
- Exploratives: ask questions about the world.

With the purpose of creating a more extensive taxonomy that is able to cover all kinds of speakers' intentions and listeners' interpretations, these categories include more specific subtypes that are adapted to the contexts of situations. This classification will be more extensively explained and explored in the analysis section since the utterances of the questionnaires and their possible answers have been classified according to Weigand's (2010) taxonomy. The main reason to use this classification instead of the traditional Searle's Taxonomy of Speech Acts (1969, 1975) is that listener's interpretation must be considered given that it is the role that the participants take in this questionnaire.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

In this section, the most relevant research related to the topic under scrutiny in this paper will be briefly summarized and discussed. The purpose of this selection of articles is to set the reader in context.

One of the main papers that deals with the core topic of this study is Zamborlin's (2007), whose main objective is to expand Thomas' (1983) definition of pragmatic failure. She provides several examples of unintended misunderstandings in intercultural settings and examines their causes and effects on communication. In order to do so, she

prefers to use the term “dissonance” previously defined. Zamborlin (2007) carries out a case study focused on the interaction between herself as an Italian speaker and a Japanese speaker. Her main argument is based on the differences of politeness strategies between them. In contrast to the idea of politeness being universal, she offers the description of her approach provided by Nwoye (1992: 312, mentioned in Zamborlin, 2007: 27) in a study on politeness in Igbo, a language of Nigeria:

In the social norm view, politeness is seen as arising from an awareness of one’s social obligations to other members of the group to which one owes primary allegiance, while the face view [Brown & Levinson’s model] espouses the notion that politeness is a strategy acquired and manipulated by individuals to attain specific objectives, goals or intentions.

Zamborlin (2007) concludes that, as dissonances are marked forms of behaviour, they cannot go unnoticed. The term “dissonance” could be applied to a broader range of language users, and, consequently, to cross-cultural and intercultural communication studies. This paper embraces a large variety of instances of misunderstandings and/or communication breakdowns caused by lack of linguistic, sociolinguistic, and/or pragmatic competence. She agrees with Thomas (1983) on the fact that ethnic stereotypes should probably be seen “as a reason for calling in the pragmatic or the discourse analyst!” (Thomas, 1983: 107).

In a similar vein, Fernández-Amaya (2008) also defends the importance of teaching pragmatics in L2 courses. She points out that students may be surprised when, despite having a high level of L2 communicative competence, they are not able to communicate successfully. The author provides a wide variety of examples to defend her hypothesis. Regarding the issue of teaching pragmatics, she reaches the conclusion that

that the first step to teach pragmatics in L2 courses is to explain the difference between pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic failure. In this way, students could choose to break the rules if they wish, but they need to have, at least, the pragmatic awareness. The results of her investigation show that teaching pragmatic concepts explicitly in the classroom, in a “metapragmatic” way, helps to develop the pragmatic abilities of the students. She shows a more comprehensive program to carry out the objective of developing pragmatic competence in L2 courses provided by Jud (1999: 158, mentioned in Fernández-Amaya, 2008: 20). These techniques are grouped in three categories summarized in:

1. Cognitive-awareness raising activities, such as presentation, discussion, and pragmatic-consciousness-raising techniques.
2. Receptive-skills development by using teacher generated materials or natural data.
3. Productive-skills teaching through role playing.

Fernández-Amaya concludes highlighting the importance of role playing exercises in order to achieve an effective competence of linguistic and pragmatic skills.

Fang (2010) researches on pragmatic failure in cross-cultural communication. His method is based on the comparison of anecdotes of pragmatic failure in cross-cultural communication that are later applied to intercultural communication. These anecdotes are classified in terms of lexicon, syntax and discourse. He finally reaches the conclusion that the formula to be effective at communication implies not just a proficiency of the language, this means, of grammatical rules (and lexis), but also a high knowledge of cultural norms and conventions. He proposes a cultural-linguistic approach to improve language teaching courses.

Qiao (2014) carries out a similar investigation of pragmatic failure in China. The participants of his study are English major students of four grades. Results show that students from second grade have a high level of pragmatic competence than students from fourth grade. From these results, he concluded that pragmatic and linguistic competence are not learnt or acquired simultaneously.

Bardovi-Harlig & Dörnyei (1998) study to what extent instructed L2 students of English are aware of their differences with the target language production of grammar, which involves the accuracy of utterances, and pragmatics, which addresses the appropriateness of utterances given specific situations, speakers, and content. They use a videotape with twenty scenarios to test five hundred and forty-three learners and their fifty-three teachers in Hungary and the U.S. The second sample is composed of one hundred and twelve EFL speakers in Italy. They conclude that, on the one hand, EFL learners and their teachers consistently identify and rank grammatical errors as more serious than pragmatic errors. On the other hand, ESL learners and their teachers rank pragmatic errors as more serious than grammatical errors.

The aim of this paper, as one of the areas not covered by previous research, is to assess if linguistic and pragmatic competences are learnt simultaneously or if pragmatics needs to be explicitly taught in language courses, as hypothesised. The final intent of this study is to raise awareness in order to avoid pragmatic failures and be successful at communicating using English as an international language.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research data used for the present study will be detailed in this section. After briefly explaining the procedure and, more specifically, the questionnaire, the two

institutions where they were launched as well as the participants that took part will be described. Finally, the specific data utilized for the analysis will be presented.

First of all, it must be mentioned that “I.E.S Manuel de Falla de Móstoles” and “Escuela Oficial de Idiomas de Móstoles” were selected because the author of this paper was a student at both institutions and made her internship at the public high school during 2015-2016 course. For this reason, she was informed about how the educational system works there and she has been present in all the degrees of both schools.

4.1. Procedure

The data that has been used in this study was collected through a questionnaire (see Appendix 1) that was conducted during the English class time in both institutions. The students had between ten and fifteen minutes to fill the questionnaire in. It was decided to use questionnaires as the research method due to the easiness that they offer to the participants and collaborators. In comparison with other research methods that were taken into account, such as, for example, recorded interviews or DCT's, they were too time-consuming and this would have made the collection of data more difficult to gather. The main idea was that it had to be simple and fast for the teachers and for the students so they did not need to invest too much time of their classes. Given that the level of English of the students vary widely, closed answers gave them the chance to reflect and use the strategies that they have been taught during the years they have been learning English.

The questionnaire is divided into two sections. The first part is about their personal details such as gender, age, nationality, level of studies, etc., in order to determine the possible variables. Nonetheless, the only variables that have eventually been considered are the institution from which they came and their level of English according to the CEFR.

The reason is that the rest of factors do not represent an actual variation that is worthy of research related to the topic of this paper. The second part is composed of ten situations in which pragmatic failure may take place. The author provided the specific context, speaker and addressee to whom they had to answer. They could choose among three possible options in order to analyse their reaction to these linguistic situations.

4.2. Institutions

“Manuel de Falla” secondary public school is not a bilingual institution; therefore, the general regulations instructed by the “Boletín Oficial de Estado” (BOE, 2016) have been followed during 2016-2017 course in which the research has been carried out by its students. In spite of this fact, regular English courses try to be conducted in English. Nevertheless, English does not work as the medium of instruction because Spanish is continuously necessary to explain and make the content clear for all the students given that most of them do not have enough level of listening and speaking English skills to receive classes completely in English. Moreover, they do not have to pass an oral exam, as in the case of the rest of skills. In consequence, speaking activities are not taken as seriously as the rest. Notwithstanding, several language assistants from English-speaking countries have been working with them in order to improve this competence. Regular English classes take place four days per week, fifty minutes per session, which is nearly four hours of English learning each week. The head of the English department was in charge of distributing the questionnaires (see Appendix 1) together with another English teacher during class time.

The public language school (EOI) is regulated by the same official document (BOE, 2016), but this kind of institution is considered of “especial teaching” in which English is used as a medium of instruction. Classes take place two days per week and last

two hours and a half. This means that students receive five hours of English speaking, listening, reading and writing classes per week. This happens given that most of the teachers try to work on all the skills every session to make them more dynamic. The academic secretary of the language school, who is a French teacher, was in charge of dealing with the English department. Four English teachers distributed and collected the questionnaires during regular class time.

Finally, it must be emphasized the fact that none of the English teachers helped the students to fill in the questionnaires to avoid any possible bias.

4.3. Participants

The participants of this project have been divided into two groups according to their institutions. On the one hand, public high school students are between 12 and 20 years old, attending from the first course of secondary education to the last course of the bachelor's degree ("bachillerato"). On the other hand, those from the language school were between 16 and more than 40 years old, attending from the fifth course, which is intermediate 1 (B1 level according to the CEFR), to the seventh course, which is advanced 3 (B2 level students, studying to reach the C1 level, according to the CEFR). Given that some of the participants were under eighteen years old, their parents had to fill in an authorisation (see Appendix 2) to give them official permission to participate in the project.

4.4. Data Description

The data consists of the answers obtained from the questionnaires carried out by the participants that sum up a total of 70 of each institution, which are 140 questionnaires in total. Each questionnaire was composed of 10 utterances, therefore, a total of 1,400 answers have been analysed. It must be mentioned that a total of 29 questionnaires had to

be previously excluded due to their intelligibility, mistaken answers and blank spaces that made impossible to consider them as part of the data collection. Despite the limitations encountered throughout the data gathering procedure, such as some invalid questionnaires and the necessary collaboration of the underage students' parents, the data available is valuable thanks to the wide variety of students with different linguistic levels of English. The following figure illustrates the corpus description more visually:

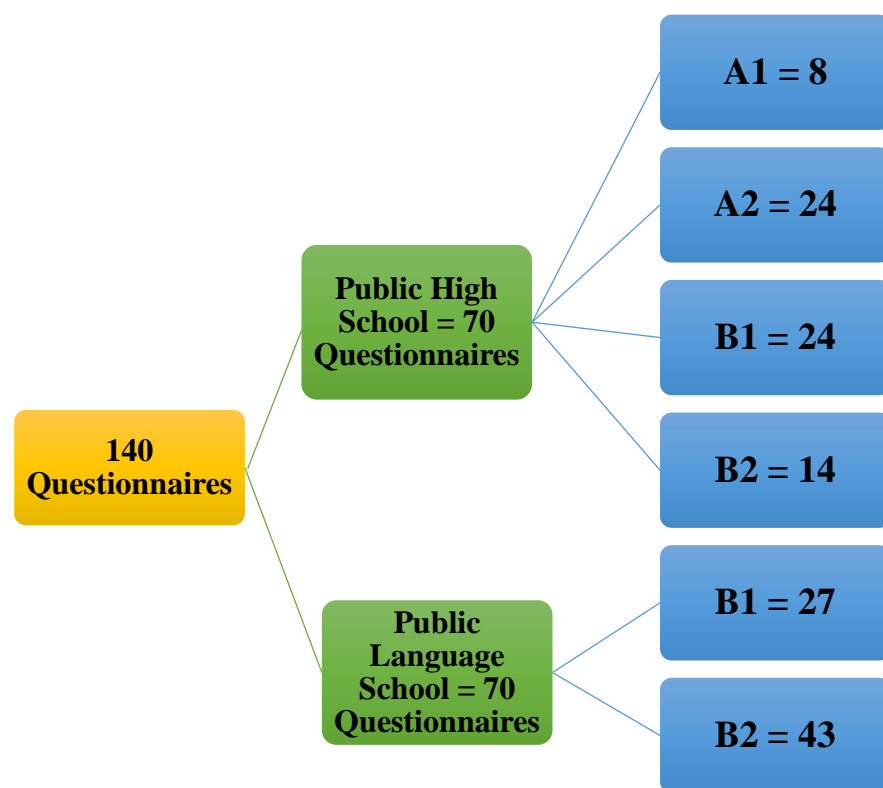


Figure 2: Corpus Description

5. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The results obtained from the answers provided by participants to the questionnaires are presented in this section. They will be analysed in terms of Weigand's (2010: 154) taxonomy of speech acts. The order followed will be the same the author establishes in her own classification of speech acts: declaratives (questions 2 and 6 in the questionnaire: "How are you doing?" and "See you soon!"), exploratives (5: "Are you feeling blue?"), directives (1: "We need to talk"; 8: "Do you want a piece of cake?"; 9: "Don't you think it would be rather a good idea to go to the party together?"; 10: "My lord/lady, would you be willing to tidy up your room at some point of history?") and representatives (3: "You look thinner"; 4: "You look your age"; 7: "You look so pretty in that dress!").

5.1. Declaratives

The function of *declarative* speech acts is to create a world (Weigand, 2010: 154). However, in Austin's (1962) and Searle's (1969, 1975) terms, "the declarative function is restricted to specific states of affairs and, in some cases, requires a specific status function of the speaker" (Weigand, 2010: 145). This means that they are regulated by a legal basis in most of the cases. Nevertheless, declarative games are not related to institutional games, but to certain politeness conditions of utterance routines. Weigand (2010: 143) considers these conventionalized expressions of everyday talk to be declaratives because "they create what is expected as civilized behaviour", that is, pragmatically correct. The next two utterances (questions 2 and 6 in the questionnaire) are considered adjacency pairs as conversational turn-taking expressions because the utterance produced by the first speaker provokes the expected answer from the second speaker; a responding utterance. These conventionalized formulas that expect an

automatic answer, such as the ones offered, are classified in Weigand's (2010) terms as declarative games.

2. How would you answer if someone that you know asks you:

“**How are you doing?**”?

- a) I'm just waiting for the bus.
- b) I'm OK, thank you.**
- c) I'm not doing anything actually.

This utterance is a greeting, a usual way to start a conversation or to show interest in the listener. Greetings are classified as declarative speech acts because they follow the previously mentioned “expected behaviour” (Weigand, 2010: 143); when someone greets someone else, a greeting back is expected. According to the declarative games, the right answer to this question would be option (b): “I'm OK, thank you”, since it is a different construction to ask “How are you?”.

For the sake of clarity, the results of the questionnaires will be firstly summarized in pie charts before analysing them in depth:

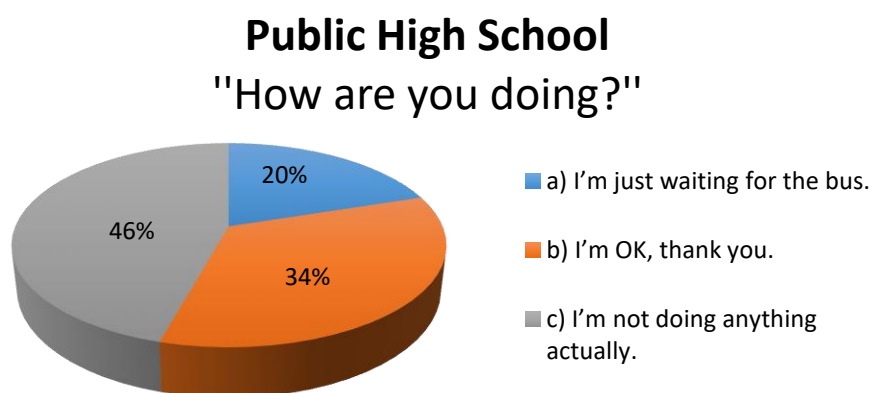


Figure 3: Public High School - "How are you doing?"

Among the students of English from the **public high school**, a total of 24 out of 70 participants, who represent 34.28%, selected the correct answer, which is option (b). A total of 14 participants, who are 20% of the students, chose option (a). Finally, a total of 32 participants, who are 45.72% of the subjects, preferred option (c).

These results are illustrated in Table 2:

	Students' level (according to the CEFR)			
	A1	A2	B1	B2
Option A	12.5%	25%	12.5%	28.57%
Option B	37.5%	29.16%	41.66%	28.57%
Option C	50%	45.84%	45.84%	42.86%

Table 2: Public High School - "How are you doing?"

The reason why most of the students from the high school opted to answer ‘‘I’m not doing anything actually’’ to the question ‘‘How are you doing?’’ may be a negative transfer from Spanish, or it might have been mistaken with the question ‘‘What are you doing?’’. If they utilized the translation method from Spanish, which is widely used at basic levels of English, the question would not make sense for them. Grammatically, students understood the question, as they were able to identify the structure ‘‘To be + verb-ing’’ in the question and the answer, that is how grammar works and how they have been taught. However, pragmatic competence is necessary to understand the utterance, as context is essential. Answers (a) and (c) would thus result in pragmalinguistic failure, since it is caused by lack of linguistic competence. Nevertheless, most of students with a high intermediate level of English (B2), the highest among our participants, failed to

answer correctly despite being grammatically competent enough. This phenomenon may be caused by the lack of linguistic competence; those students with lower levels of English grammar were not even able to identify the grammatical structure of the phrase, which gave them the chance to think beyond grammatical rules and recognize this expression as a usual greeting that they may have heard before.

Public Language School "How are you doing?"

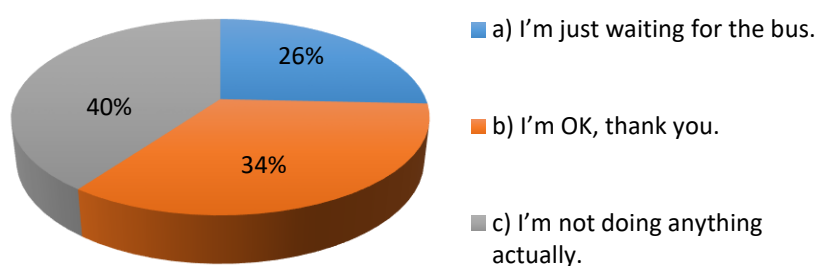


Figure 4: Public Language School - "How are you doing?"

Among the students of English from the **public language school**, 24 participants out of 70, who represent 34.28% of the total, selected the correct answer, which is option (b). A total of 18 participants, who are 25.72% of the students, chose option (a). Finally, a total of 28 participants, who are 40% of the subjects, preferred option (c).

These results are illustrated in Table 3:

	Students' level (according to the CEFR)	
	B1	B2
Option A	37.04%	18.6%
Option B	25.92%	39.53%
Option C	37.04%	41.86%

Table 3: Public Language School - "How are you doing?"

As a comparison between both institutions, it is noticeable how a larger number of students from the high school than from the language school chose the correct answer despite the latter having a higher linguistic competence. A2 students from high school show a higher degree of pragmatic competence than B2 students, in the case of the language school both competences seem to agree. These results may be caused by the unawareness of some grammatical structures that allow students to comprehend real conventionalized formulas that are far from being “grammatically correct”, but rather “pragmatically correct”.

The next utterance is the second declarative speech act of the questionnaire that will be analysed:

6. How would you answer if someone tells you before leaving:

“See you soon!”?

a) Bye!

b) When?

c) Looking forward to it!

This utterance is a farewell, a frequent way to say goodbye among interlocutors after having a conversation in written (e.g. colloquial emails) or oral format. Farewells are also classified as declarative speech acts because of being conventionalized formulas, the same as greetings. This means that the expected behaviour after having a conversation is to close it by saying goodbye instead of directly leaving. This routine is followed by an expected reaction; a farewell back. Therefore, these utterances are considered, as mentioned before, adjacency pairs.

According to the declarative games, this expression would expect two possible answers from the interlocutor. The most appropriate option would be (c) "Looking forward to it!" given that it is the most polite and thus, it accords with the context provided by the author. However, option (a) would also be possible depending on the relationship between the listener and the speaker and the exact context in which the situation is taking place (e.g. if the interlocutors are close friends that see each other very often, or if they are a boss and an employee after a meeting). Notwithstanding, the answer given by native speakers of English would be option (c) as it is the most used in this kind of interactions⁸.

Option (b) would result in pragmalinguistic failure due to the misinterpretation of the speech act. As mentioned before, the intended meaning (i.e. illocutionary force) of the speaker is to say goodbye before leaving. Nevertheless, speakers who chose option (b) understood the expression as a promise for a future meeting. Promises are classified as *commissive* speech acts in Searle's (1969, 1975) terms, and *directives* -that will be discussed later in this paper- in the mixed game given that promises are future intentions,

⁸ The British National Corpus shows that "Looking forward to it!" is more widely used in this context, exactly 3,717 times.

and intentions are not yet actions; they just provide information to the listener (Weigand, 2010: 152).

Public High School "See you soon!"

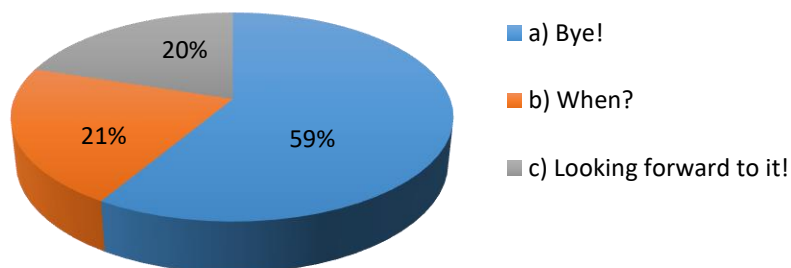


Figure 5: Public High School - "See you soon"

Among the students of English from the **public high school**, 14 out of 70 participants, who represent 20% of the total, selected the most appropriate answer, which is option (c). A total of 41 participants, who are 58.57% of the students, chose option (a). Finally, a total of 15 participants, who are 21.43% of the students, preferred option (b).

These results are illustrated in Table 4:

	Students' level (according to the CEFR)			
	A1	A2	B1	B2
Option A	75%	58.34%	50%	64.28%
Option B	0%	20.83%	29.16%	21.43%
Option C	25%	20.83%	20.83%	14.28%

Table 4: Public High School - "See you soon"

The reason why most of the participants chose option (a) may be related to the familiarity with this expression since it is taught from the most basic levels of English⁹. Even though it would not be the most appropriate one from the pragmatic point of view, it has been considered as correct. It must be emphasized that, the difference between “See you!” and “See you soon!” is that the first one is more colloquial¹⁰, and could be answered with a simple “Bye” as most of students decided to do. Nevertheless, the second one implies a higher degree of politeness since it emphasises the desire for seeing the other person. For this reason, native speakers would answer “Looking forward to it!” as a sign of politeness in return.

Public Language School "See you soon!"

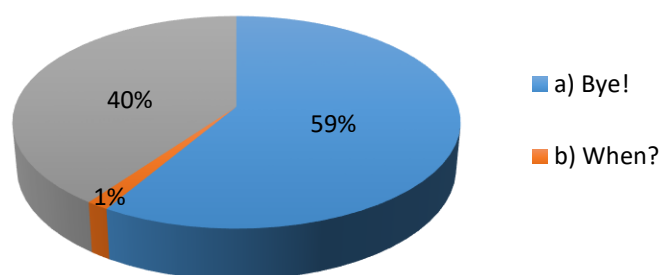


Figure 6: Public Language School - "See you soon"

⁹ For example, Cambridge English textbooks include the topic of greetings and farewells from the basic levels such as training for KET and PET exams (KET for Schools Trainer Six Practice Tests with Answers, Teacher's Notes and Audio CDs (2) (Authorised Practice Tests) (Saxby, 2011), Preliminary for Schools Trainer Six Practice Tests with Answers, Teacher's Notes and Audio CDs (3) (Authored Practice Tests) (Elliott & Gallivan, 2011), among others).

¹⁰ The British National Corpus of English show that, even though "See you" is widely more used (3717 times), in comparison with "See you soon" (just 54), the second one is used in more colloquial contexts.

Among the students of English from the **public language school**, a total of 28 out of 70 participants, who represent 40% of the total, selected the most appropriate answer. A total of 41 participants, who are 58.57% of the students, chose option (a), considered also correct. Finally, just 1 participant, who is 1.43% of the subjects, preferred option (b).

These results are illustrated in Table 5:

	Students' level (according to the CEFR)	
	B1	B2
Option A	55.55%	60.47%
Option B	3.70%	0%
Option C	40.75%	39.53%

Table 5: Public Language School - "See you soon!"

Among all the results, it must be highlighted that none of the students who had the lowest level of English (A1) chose the wrong answer. However, a remarkable percentage of participants with higher linguistic competence selected option (b). Among students with the highest levels (B2) of both institutions, a greater number of students chose option (b) rather than option (c) at the public high school, while at the public language school none of them selected answer (b). This may be caused by the emphasis that is done on idiomatic expressions at the language school due to the obligation to pass an oral exam. Most of students who have reached this level have been attending classes at language school at least for six years, and this is reflected in the final results.

These figures show the differences in teaching in both institutions. Even though language schools are more focused on interactive activities which may be the reason why

its students identify easily greetings and farewells, politeness strategies still seem to be missing in both cases. All things considered, most of the students were able to infer the pragmatic meaning, understanding the utterance as a farewell instead of an order, which are Searle's (1969, 1975) *directive* speech acts. This demonstrates, as mentioned before, more familiarity with farewell expressions and, consequently, a higher level of pragmatic competence.

5.2. Exploratives

Explorative speech act is one of the new terms introduced by Weigand (2010). In the mixed game, the function of *exploratives* is to fulfil one of the basic needs of human beings; the need to be informed, to gather information. As we are innately curious beings, we need to find explanations to conceive the world, to search on the past in order to understand the present. Human beings “need knowledge not for their own minds but in order to share what is in their minds with their fellow beings and to achieve an understanding of the world” (Weigand, 2010: 147).

Searle's (1969, 1975) classification of speech acts labels all kind of questions that require an immediate answer from the listener as *directive* speech acts. Exploratives and directives have something in common: the claim to volition. Nevertheless, exploratives are directed at knowledge, whereas Searle's (1969, 1975) directives refer to practical actions by interlocutors. Explorative minimal games expect a reactive act, a response. A response is “every action that takes up the claim to knowledge even by stating ignorance” (Weigand, 2010: 147).

In order to differentiate speech acts and responses, it must be mentioned that explorative speech acts are initiative because they are in charge of asking, of achieving knowledge from the world. Responses, on the contrary, are reactive because they work according to the initiative one. Reactive speech acts are not necessarily the last speech act

in a sequence. They can be followed by other reactive acts (Weigand, 2010: 148). For example, if the first interlocutor initiates the conversation by saying “Did you go the beach last weekend?”, and the second one answers: “Yes, I went with my husband”. The conversation may continue by adding another explorative “Where did you go?”. Or just by commenting: “Lucky you”¹¹.

The next utterance (question 5 in the questionnaire) is considered an example of the explorative game because its aim is to obtain some information from the listener. This kind of questions normally arises after a sign or evidence. In this particular sequence, the first interlocutor who asks the question may have seen some evidence of sadness in the addressee, such as a sad face or the tone of voice. The purpose of the speaker is to find an explanation to conceive his/her own world and understand the situation.

5. How would you answer if someone asks you: “Are you feeling blue?”?

- a) No, I'm not ill.
- b) Yes, it's definitely not my day today.**
- c) I'm wearing black.

As can be observed, this utterance is a question by which the speaker is showing interest for the listener in order to gather new information that helps him/her to interpret the signs. According to the mixed game (Weigand, 2010), the expected response to this question would be option (b): “Yes, it's definitely not my day today.”. The reason is that this utterance is considered as a metaphorical way to ask if someone is feeling sad -i.e. it is an idiom.

¹¹ Tsui (1989), among other authors doing conversation analysis, would consider this a follow-up move.

For a better understanding, the results of the questionnaires will be firstly summarized in pie charts before analysing them in depth:

Public High School "Are you feeling blue?"

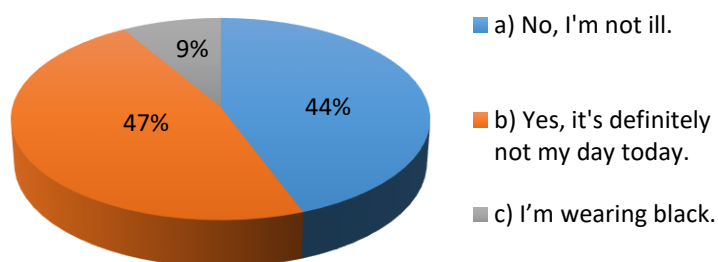


Figure 7: Public High School – "Are you feeling blue?"

Among the students of English from the **public high school**, 33 out of 70 participants, who represent 47.14% of the total, selected the correct answer, which is option (b). A total of 31 participants, who are 44.28% of the students, chose option (a). Finally, a total of 6 participants, who are 8.58% of the subjects, preferred option (c).

These results are illustrated in Table 6:

	Students' level (according to the CEFR)			
	A1	A2	B1	B2
Option A	37.5%	75%	25%	28.57%
Option B	50%	20.83%	62.5%	62.28%
Option C	12.5%	4.16%	12.5%	7.14%

Table 6: Public High School – "Are you feeling blue?"

In general terms, almost half of the students from the high school chose the correct answer, which was option (b). It is relevant to mention that 50% of the students with the lowest level of English (A1) recognized this idiom and answered successfully. In comparison with those belonging to A2 level that opted for answering “No, I’m not ill.” in its vast majority. This demonstrates that A1 students possess a higher level of pragmatic competence than A2 students from the public high school. This may be caused again by the lack of grammatical knowledge, or even lexicon. Students who answered option (a) related the colour blue on a person’s face to illnesses, and those who chose option (c) to the colour of the clothes. Nevertheless, participants with A1 level may have selected the correct option just because it was the only one that they understood, as the vocabulary is more basic, and they did not think of the grammatical structure. Consequently, it seems that they answered correctly by accident.

Public Language School "Are you feeling blue?"

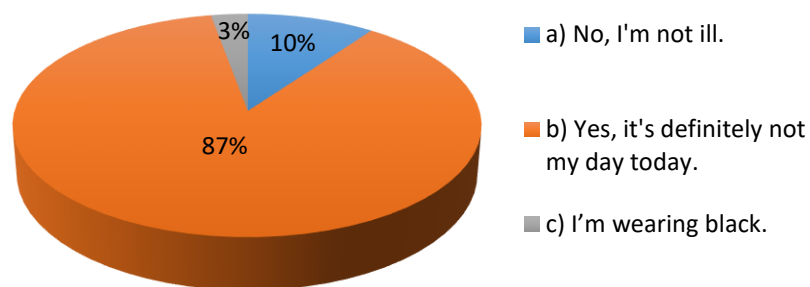


Figure 8: Public Language School – "Are you feeling blue?"

Among the students of English from the **public language school**, 61 out of 70 participants, who represent 87.14% of the total, selected the correct answer, which is option (b). A total of 7 participants, who are 10% of the students, chose option (a). Finally, just 2 participants, who are 2.86% of the subjects, preferred option (c).

These results are illustrated in Table 7:

	Students' level (according to the CEFR)	
	B1	B2
Option A	11.10%	9.3%
Option B	72.9%	87.04%
Option C	0%	4.65%

Table 7: Public Language School – "Are you feeling blue?"

In order to compare the results obtained from both institutions, it must be emphasized the fact that almost double of the number of students from the public language school compared to those from the high school chose the correct option, being selected, in its majority, by B2 students. Nevertheless, a great number of B1 students from the high school chose option (c) that corresponds to the clothes' colour, in comparison with the B1 language school students, in which none of the interlocutors selected this option. Language school students most probably already knew the idiom. This phenomenon remarks the idea that despite having the same level of linguistic competence, the method of teaching and learning English vary within the public system.

5.3. Directives

The intent of *directive* speech acts is to change the world, in contrast with declaratives whose purpose was to create it. They are defined by "a claim to volition",

which means that they aim at a “future action or behaviour” by the interlocutor. The expected reaction by the listener is a speech act of content or practical action that fulfils the initiative claim (Weigand, 2010: 150). For example, if one of the interlocutors says “Can you help me?” and the other one answers “Of course”. The formula is a claim followed by consent, which can be also negative if, for example, the speaker answers “I have to leave, sorry”. The expected behaviour is an answer; accepting or explaining why the claim of the first interlocutor is not going to be fulfilled. Another reaction can be a practical action that fulfils the claim. For example, if the speaker says: “Please, open the window” and the listener opens the window; a practical action that completely fulfils the claim.

Speakers can include themselves in the claim, such as for example, if s/he says “Let’s go to the mountain”. In this specific case, the directive is very similar to a proposal. However, proposals are normally classified as *representatives*, and will be discussed later in this paper. They would be directive speech acts in an indirect way. The distinction between both types depends on the intention of the speaker. These problems demonstrate that speech acts can overlap, not in definition but in expression. This overlap can be intended by the speaker in order to mitigate the directive claim (Weigand, 2010: 150).

Directive speech acts of this taxonomy are very close to Searle’s (1969, 1975) *commissives*, which are missing in Weigand’s (2010) classification. The reason is that, in Searle’s terms, this kind of speech act commits the speaker to a future action, and plans are not considered actions, but information for the listener. Moreover, he states that they can work as initiative speech acts. Notwithstanding, starting a conversation by promising is not usual (Weigand, 2010: 150). For example, by saying “I promise to stop smoking”.

Nonetheless, the most common way would be if one of the interlocutor says “You should stop smoking” and the other one answers a consent “I will, I promise”.

The next four utterances (questions 1, 8, 9 and 10 in the questionnaire) are considered directive speech acts in the mixed game since all of them are questions that claim something from the speaker in a direct or indirect way. The aim of these questions is not just to obtain information, but to change the world at the level the speaker is able to do it.

For the sake of clarity, the results of the questionnaires will be firstly summarized in pie charts before analysing them in depth:

1. How would you feel if someone that you know tells you:

“**We need to talk**”?

a) **Panicked.**

b) **Worried.**

c) Relaxed.

This utterance was classified as a directive speech act because it requires something from the listener, in this particular case, time and attention. It is true to say that there may be emotional involvement with the speaker and affect the emotional part of the listener as well and therefore, it could be classified as an *emotive* speech act -that will be discussed later in this paper. Nevertheless, in general terms, it is considered a directive speech act since the interlocutor is asking the listener for time. It must be emphasised that this question does not include the answers of the participants, but their feelings. Therefore, in this case, the interpretation of the utterance (i.e. its illocutionary force) will be analysed instead of the possible answers, as in the previous questions.

The most conventionalized reaction to this statement would be a feeling of worry, ergo, option (b). Notwithstanding, option (a), panic, is also considered as correct depending on the relationship between the interlocutors. It must be mentioned that in some languages and cultures this utterance does not have the same meaning, and it may not even vary the feelings of the addressee, as in option (c), which is not considered pragmatically correct according to the English language. This is given that the intention of the speaker when pronouncing these words, taking for granted his/her pragmatic competence, is to make the listener feel worried, panicked, or at least interested in what s/he has to say. The implied meaning of the utterance is widely-known in the English-speaking environment. Therefore, opposite reactions would result in sociopragmatic failure as despite understanding the utterance linguistically, the implied meaning would be misunderstood.

Public High School "We need to talk"

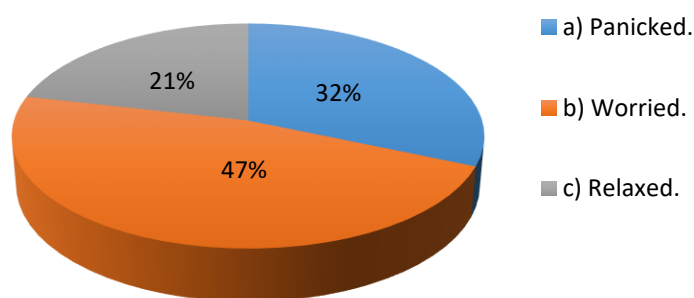


Figure 9: Public High School - "We need to talk"

Among the students of English from the **public high school**, a total of 33 out of 70 participants, who represent 47.14%, selected the most adequate answer, which is

option (b). A total of 22 participants, who are 31.43% of the students, chose option (a), which is also considered correct. Finally, a total of 15 participants, who are 21.43% of the subjects, preferred option (c).

These results are illustrated in Table 8:

	Students' level (according to the CEFR)			
	A1	A2	B1	B2
Option A	12.5%	25%	16.66%	78.57%
Option B	50%	54.16%	54.16%	21.42%
Option C	37.5%	20.83%	29.16%	0%

Table 8: Public High School - "We need to talk"

The reason why most of the students from the high school chose option (b), the correct one, and therefore they would feel “worried”, may be caused by the similar expression used in Spanish “Tenemos que hablar” (We have to talk). Notwithstanding, it must be emphasised that despite conveying similar feelings, the verb used is different. In Spanish, a modal “have to” verb is utilized, consequently, it is related to an obligation that requires an immediate reaction and answer, not just a consent. While, in English, literally, there is a need to talk, but the listener seems to have more options. Therefore, this expression in Spanish is more direct, whereas in English there is an intended implicature that depends on the speaker. This may be the reason why some of the students chose option (a) “panicked”, due to the translation from English into Spanish.

It is also remarkable that some of the students from the high school admitted feeling relaxed when told “We need to talk”. At this point, it must be mentioned the variable of age when understanding the implied meaning of words. This is mainly because age provides background knowledge and experiences. Therefore, common knowledge is

learned with the passing of the years and is considered absolutely necessary to infer the intended implicatures that some utterances have.

Public Language School "We need to talk"

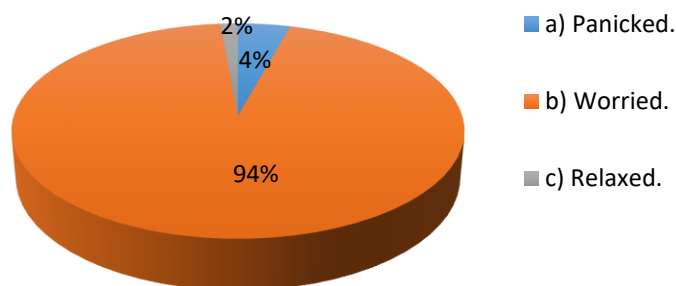


Figure 10: Public Language School - "We need to talk"

Among the students of English from the **public language school**, 66 participants out of 70, who represent 94.28% of the total, selected the correct answer, which was option (b). A total of 3 participants, who are 4.29% of the students, chose option (a). Finally, just 1 participant, who is 1.43% of the subjects, preferred option (c).

These results are illustrated in Table 9:

	Students' level (according to the CEFR)	
	B1	B2
Option A	11.11%	0%
Option B	88.89%	97.67%
Option C	0%	2.33%

Table 9 – Public Language School - "We need to talk"

There are some similarities and differences between the results from both institutions that need to be mentioned. For example, the fact that almost all the participants (94%) from the language school opted to choose the most adequate answer (b) while in the high school less than half (47%) did so. This may be caused by a factor previously mentioned that takes an important role in understanding beyond words; age. Just 2% of participants from the language school, belonging to B2 level, would feel the opposite, relaxed, while at high school this option represents 21%, and none of the students who chose it had B2 level of linguistic competence. The reason may be the interactive activities that take place at language school because students must pass an oral exam, as mentioned before, while at high school they do not have to. Consequently, language school students are more used to idiomatic expressions, such as “We need to talk”, and they would react in a more standard way.

The next utterance is the second example of directive game used in the questionnaire:

8. How would you answer if you are starving and someone that you know asks you: “**Do you want a piece of cake?**”?
- a) **Yes, please, I’m starving.**
 - b) No, thank you (waiting for another offer).
 - c) “Maybe later”

This question is very close to a proposal and, as mentioned before, proposals are normally classified as representatives. Nevertheless, it has been finally considered as a directive speech act because its aim is to modify the world instead of claiming the truth. The speaker may have different intentions by asking this question that depend on the context of the situation. For example, the speaker may want the listener to taste the cake

that s/he has just cooked, or to invite him/her to go to a coffee shop. In any case, the speaker is requiring something from the listener that may be a consent or a practical action, by accepting the piece of cake.

The most suitable answer to this question in this context would be option (a); being honest and accepting the cake without thinking twice. Option (b) ‘‘No, thank you (waiting for another offer)’’, in an English-speaking context, would result in sociopragmatic failure as if the answer is negative, the speaker will not ask again; s/he would not make another offer. Option (c) (‘‘Maybe later’’) may be also misunderstood, as if the speaker did not want cake, but s/he is acting politely, and most probably the speaker would not make another offer.

Public High School "Do you want a piece of cake?"

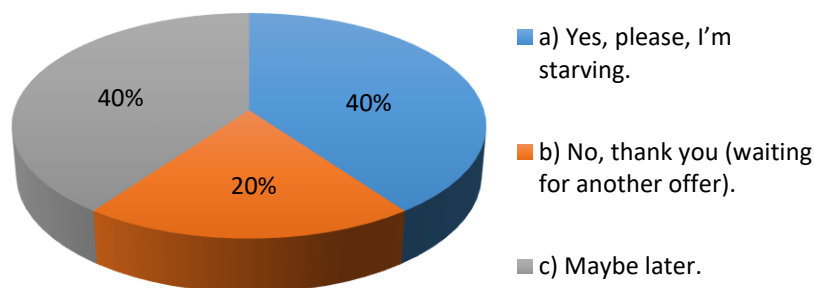


Figure 11: Public High School - "Do you want a piece of cake?"

Among the students of English from the **public high school**, a total of 28 out of 70 participants, who represent 40%, selected the correct answer, which is option (a). A total of 14 participants, who are 20% of the students, chose option (b). Finally, a total of 28 participants, who are 40% of the subjects, preferred option (c).

These results are illustrated in Table 10:

	Students' level (according to the CEFR)			
	A1	A2	B1	B2
Option A	25%	33.34%	37.5%	64.28%
Option B	50%	20.83%	12.5%	14.28%
Option C	25%	45.84%	50%	21.43%

Table 10: Public High School - "Do you want a piece of cake?"

The fact that the same percentage of students chose option (a) ‘‘Yes, please, I’m starving’’ and (c) ‘‘Maybe later’’ may be caused by politeness reasons. Since British English, the standard English taught at both institutions, is generally related to a high degree of politeness, and students differentiate between being honest and being polite. Nevertheless, it is remarkable that few students (20%) chose option (b). This means that, in this particular case, the Spanish background of most of the students would not affect their use of English. In Spanish contexts, denying offers and waiting to be asked again is the usual thing to do, being actually connected to politeness. Speakers normally offer something several times until the listener accepts it. In English contexts, the offer is made once, and the most appropriate answer is to accept it; consent. In general terms, if the addressee does not accept it, the speaker will not try it again.

Public Language School "Do you want a piece of cake?"

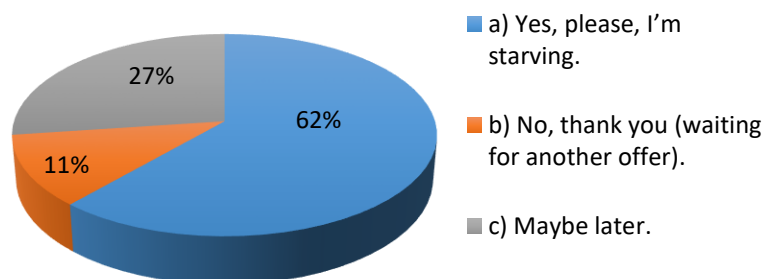


Figure 12: Public Language School - "Do you want a piece of cake?"

Among the students of English from the **public language school**, a total of 43 out of 70 participants, who represent 61.43%, selected the correct answer, which is option (a). A total of 8 participants, who are 11.43% of the students, chose option (b). Finally, a total of 19 participants, who are 27.14% of the subjects, preferred option (c).

These results are illustrated in Table 11:

	Students' level (according to the CEFR)	
	B1	B2
Option A	62.96%	60.46%
Option B	14.84%	9.3%
Option C	25%	30.23%

Table 11: Public Language School - "Do you want a piece of cake?"

In order to compare the results obtained from both institutions, it must be mentioned that more than half of students (62%) from the language school would be honest from the very beginning and accept the piece of cake, in comparison to 40% of students from the high school. In the case of the highest linguistic levels from both institutions (B2), the pragmatic level seems to concord, as most of them answered correctly. Notwithstanding, B1 students from both institutions seem to have a lower pragmatic competence and still be influenced by their Spanish background. In general terms, participants would have acted successfully at a pragmatic level in this situation. This may be caused by the word “starving” in the context provided as it has a strong meaning and may have influenced the listener.

The next utterance is the third example of directive game used in the questionnaire:

9. How would you answer if your partner asks you: “**Don’t you think it would be rather a good idea to go to the party together?**”? (You are tired and you don’t want to go to the party).
- a) No, I don’t think it would be a good idea.
 - b) **It'd be lovely but I'm afraid I don't really feel too much like it today.**
 - c) Yes, of course, that would be lovely.

This question, as the previous one, is close to a proposal. Nevertheless, it has been considered as a directive instead of a representative because it not claiming any kind of truth, but something directly from the listener to change his/her own world. In this specific case, what the speaker wants to change is to go alone to the party. Therefore, apparently, it seems a proposal as it gives options to the listener through asking “Don’t you think...?”, in order to save the negative face of the listener (Brown and Levinson, 1987).

Nonetheless, it is a linguistic formula to sound more polite and mitigate the claim that is implied. In this case, the implicature is: “Come with me to the party”. As a directive, the expected answer is a consent, accepting to go to the party or giving explanations for not going. According to the mixed game, the most appropriate answer is (b) “It'd be lovely but I'm afraid I don't really feel too much like it today”. The reason is that, even though the person who is asked does not want to go to the party, s/he respects the colloquial register in which the other person asked him/her and elaborates a proper answer for the context and the addressee, avoiding misunderstandings.

Those who chose option (a) would provoke pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic failure. On the one hand, participants who did not understand the formula of politeness to ask for something in a mitigated way, committed pragmalinguistic failure due to the lack of linguistic competence. On the other hand, those who understood the formula, but did not infer the implicature, incurred into sociopragmatic failure because they did not know how to act in this particular context. Both kinds of failures are caused by the misinterpretation of the speech act; understanding this question as an offer instead of a claim.

Participants who chose option (c) understood the intended implicature, but lied and accepted the invitation to avoid clashes with their partners. Thus, they broke the maxim of quality (Grice, 1975), not making communication efficient.

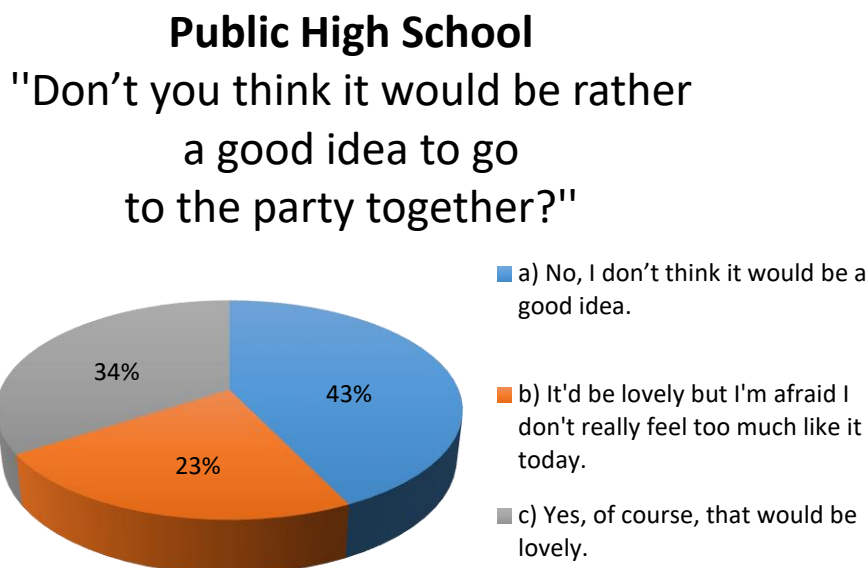


Figure 13: Public High School - "Don't you think it would be rather a good idea to go to the party together?"

Among the students of English from the **public high school**, a total of 16 out of 70 participants, who represent 22.86%, selected the correct answer, which is option (b). A total of 30 participants, who are 42.86% of the students, chose option (a). Finally, a total of 24 participants, who are 34.28% of the subjects, preferred option (c).

These results are illustrated in Table 12:

	Students' level (according to the CEFR)			
	A1	A2	B1	B2
Option A	50%	33.34%	37.5%	64.28%
Option B	50%	37.5%	12.5%	0%
Option C	0%	25%	50%	42.85%

Table 12: Public High School - "Don't you think it would be rather a good idea to go to the party together?"

As can be observed in the pie chart, the correct option (b) was the least chosen by high school students. It is surprising that none of the B2 participants selected this option, as most of them would commit pragmatic failure by answering option (a). In this case, the linguistic competence and pragmatic competence do not correspond at all, they go in opposite directions indeed. Half of the A1 students, those with the lowest level of linguistic competence, show the highest level of pragmatic competence. This may be due to the lack of grammatical knowledge that affects them positively by allowing them to understand beyond the grammatical rules, and answer in a pragmatically correct way. None of the A1 participants would lie, choosing option (c), while almost half of the B2 students would do it to avoid any kind of misunderstanding. It must be mentioned, as before, the key role that age plays when inferring implicatures due to the lack of enough background knowledge.

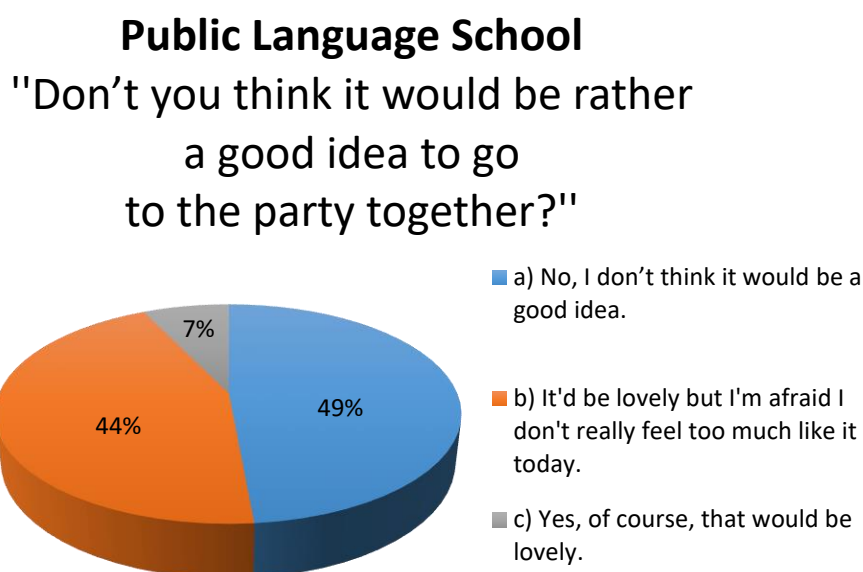


Figure 14: Public Language School - "Don't you think it would be rather a good idea to go to the party together?"

Among the students of English from the **public language school**, 31 participants out of 70, who represent 44.29% of the total, selected the correct answer, which was option (b). A total of 34 participants, who are 48.57% of the students, chose option (a). Finally, a total of 5 participants, who are 7.14% of the subjects, preferred option (c).

These results are illustrated in Table 13:

	Students' level (according to the CEFR)	
	B1	B2
Option A	25.92%	62.8%
Option B	62.96%	32.55%
Option C	11.11%	4.65%

Table 13: Public Language School - "Don't you think it would be rather a good idea to go to the party together?"

Comparing both institutions, it must be mentioned the higher level of pragmatic competence among B2 students from the language school, as it corresponds with their linguistic level. Notwithstanding, more students from B1 than from B2 level answered correctly, which shows the same situation as at the high school; more linguistic competence resulting in less pragmatic competence and vice versa. These general results may be caused by the lack of teaching politeness strategies and formulas in the classrooms in both institutions. All in all, language school students demonstrate a higher pragmatic level in general, according to the interactive teaching method they receive.

The next utterance is the last example of directive game used in the questionnaire:

10. How would you answer if your mother/father asks you: “**My lord/lady, would you be willing to tidy up your room at some point of history?**”?

- a) **Yes, of course, right now.**
- b) Maybe next month.
- c) No, I don't think so.

The last utterance that will be analysed as a directive speech act has the appearance of a proposal as the previous ones. Nevertheless, the main difference is that this question is fully ironic, which requires a high level of pragmatic competence to understand and act accordingly to the context and the interlocutors. This indirect directive has a strong implied meaning, which is an order. This is due to the power relation between interlocutors, as the context provided establishes the familiar hierarchy in which parents seem to be above their children. This power gives them the chance to play with words in order to fulfil their claim. Age will be again a determining variable as hierarchies and power relations tend to change with time.

According to the mixed game, the expected answer is a consent, thus, option (a) “Yes, of course, right now”, or the functional action of tidying up the room without saying anything. Answering option (b) “Maybe next month” would result in sociopragmatic failure due to the lack of respect for the parents that could feel offended for laughing at them. This situation is similar to what would happen to those who chose option (c) “No, I don't think so”, as it is not a real question, but an order; they are misinterpreting the speech act of the utterance. The act of denying an order from parents would be considered pragmatically incorrect.

Public High School
 "My lord/lady, would you be willing to tidy up your room at some point of history?"

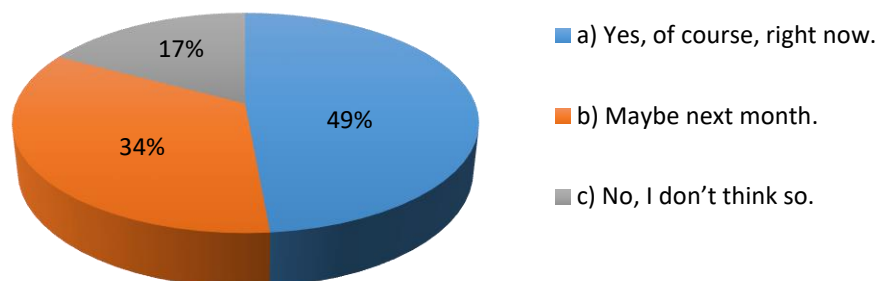


Figure 15: Public High School "My lord/lady, would you be willing to tidy up your room at some point of history?"

Among the students of English from the **public high school**, a total of 34 out of 70 participants, who represent 48.57%, selected the correct answer, which is option (a). A total of 24 participants, who are 34.28% of the students, chose option (b). Finally, a total of 12 participants, who are 17.15% of the subjects, preferred option (c).

These results are illustrated in Table 14:

	Students' level (according to the CEFR)			
	A1	A2	B1	B2
Option A	50%	50%	33.34%	71.42%
Option B	25%	33.34%	45.83%	21.42%
Option C	25%	16.66%	20.83%	7.14%

Table 14: Public High School "My lord/lady, would you be willing to tidy up your room at some point of history?"

The reason why almost half of the students (49%) from the high school chose the correct option (a) is the power relation previously mentioned. In this case, the linguistic and pragmatic competence agree as the vast majority of B2 participants (71.42%) acted in a pragmatically correct way. It is remarkable that a large number of participants would laugh back at them answering in the same sarcastic way. Few of them would refuse to do what their parents ask them to do. These results are mainly caused by family hierarchies still present in the current society that vary depending on the family context, background, values and beliefs.

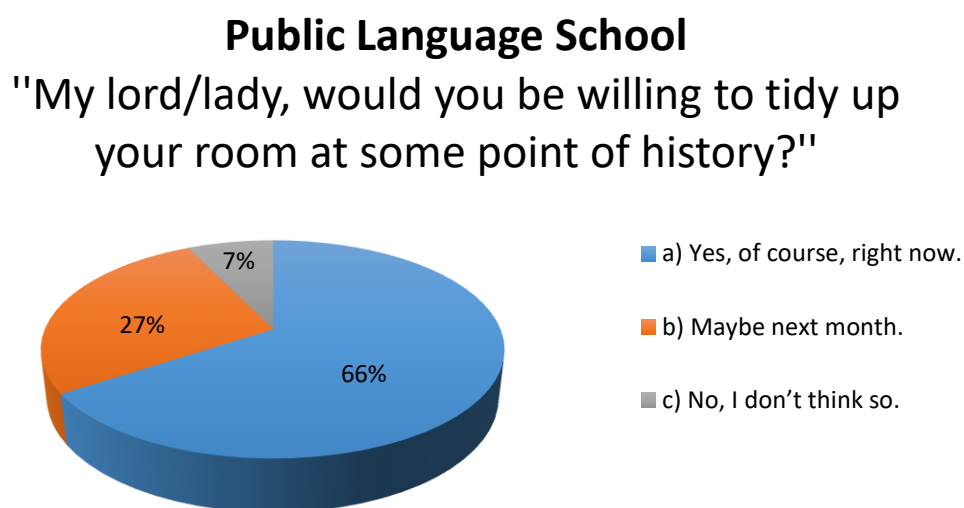


Figure 16: Public Language School - "My lord/lady, would you be willing to tidy up your room at some point of history?"

Among the students of English from the **public language school**, 46 participants out of 70, who represent 65.71% of the total, selected the correct answer, which was option (a). A total of 19 participants, who are 27.14% of the students, chose option (b). Finally, a total of 5 participants, who are 7.15% of the subjects, preferred option (c).

These results are illustrated in Table 15:

	Students' level (according to the CEFR)	
	B1	B2
Option A	70.38%	62.80%
Option B	18.51%	32.55%
Option C	11.11%	4.65%

Table 15: Public Language School - "My lord/lady, would you be willing to tidy up your room at some point of history?"

The results obtained from the questionnaires of both institutions show how power is a determining factor when speaking and behaving, as most of the participants would agree to tidy their rooms answering automatically and correctly according to the context and the addressee. In the case of language school students, B1 participants demonstrate a higher pragmatic competence than B2 participants answering politely. Few of them, as in the case of the high school, would not obey their parents. In general terms, most of the participants would act properly according to an indirect directive, showing a high level of pragmatic competence, which still does not accord with the linguistic one. All things considered, age and power relations among interlocutors are key factors that modify the way in which we speak both conscious and unconsciously (Giles, 1973).

5.4. Representatives

According to the mixed game (Weigand, 2010) *representatives* are based on the mental state of belief; “a claim to truth” and “aim at acceptance”. Taking this premise into consideration, the absolute truth does not exist, but only the speaker’s claim or what they believe to be true. Claims depend on the degree of conviction, ranging from definite

to uncertain conviction (Weigand, 2010: 153). Therefore, there is a wide variety of representatives' subtypes. This paper will focus on the category of *emotives* since all the representative utterances used in the questionnaire are examples of this subtype.

Emotives are focused on the speaker's emotions; on his/her emotional involvement with the utterance itself. They do not have a specific place on Searle's (1969, 1975) taxonomy, but the closer would be *expressive* speech acts. Nevertheless, they are present in other classifications such as the one made by Bühler (1934: 28, mentioned in Weigand, 2010: 166) in which their function is to announce and/or express emotions. Therefore, this subcategory implies not just simple statements, but "emotional affect or being overwhelmed by emotions" (Weigand, 2010: 166). In English, these emotions are mostly transmitted by the intonation as at the surface level they have the form of simple sentences.

It must be emphasised that, when talking about subtypes, the primary function needs to be differentiated, which is, in this case, the claim to truth. The expected answer to a basic representative is acceptance. The secondary function of an emotive speech act is transmission of emotions. The primary function is affected by the second one weakening it due to "the overwhelming emotion which dominates what is being said" (Weigand, 2010: 166). Consequently, the expected response is also modified; the reaction to emotives is expected to be empathy and compassion. For example, if the first interlocutor says: "You are the love of my life", it seems a simple utterance at the surface level, but it is full of feelings and affected by the tone of voice of the speaker. As it is connected to the emotional part of both, the speaker and the listener, the answer will also affect the first interlocutor in return. According to the mixed game, the proper response to this emotive is empathy by saying, for example: "You too", that may be also affected

by the tone of voice. Thus, they do not work in isolation, but feelings are transmitted through other linguistic features that are not necessarily words.

The next three utterances (questions 3, 4 and 7 in the questionnaire) are considered compliments. Compliments are classified in the representatives' subtype of emotives in the mixed game because they imply emotional involvement by the speaker. They do not just claim the truth, but that truth is related to the emotional part of the interlocutors, to their feelings and opinions, expecting thus empathy back.

3. How would you answer if someone that you haven't seen for a long time tells you: “**You look thinner**”?
- a) That's rude, I feel healthy.
 - b) Thank you so much, you too.**
 - c) Yeah... I've been sick for a few days...

The expected answer according to the mixed game is option (b) given that it is followed by the previously mentioned formula: “Thank you so much” (acceptance because it is a representative) + “you too” (empathy because it is an emotive). Those who selected option (a) or (c) committed pragmalinguistic failure for not understanding the utterance and/or its pragmatic purpose; complimenting the listener. On the contrary, they felt offended, threatening the first interlocutor's positive face (Brown and Levinson, 1987), being the opposite aim of a compliment; boosting the listener's positive face.

For the sake of clarity, the results of the questionnaires will be firstly summarized in pie charts before analysing them in depth:

Public High School "You look thinner?"

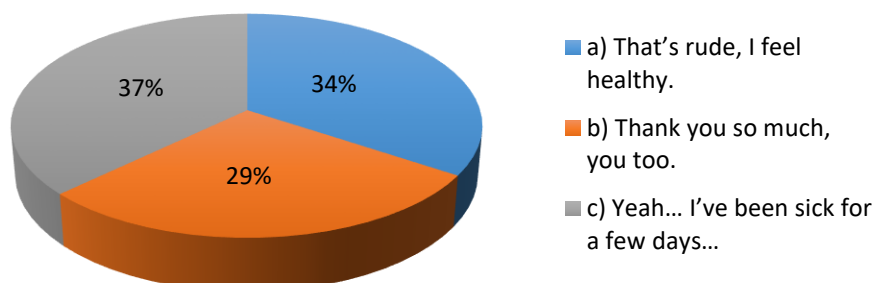


Figure 17: Public High School - "You look thinner"

Among the students of English from the **public high school**, a total of 20 out of 70 participants, who represent 28.58%, selected the correct answer, which is option (b). A total of 24 participants, who are 34.28% of the students, chose option (a). Finally, a total of 26 participants, who are 37.14% of the subjects, preferred option (c).

These results are illustrated Table 16:

	Students' level (according to the CEFR)			
	A1	A2	B1	B2
Option A	12.5%	45.84%	37.5%	21.43%
Option B	37.5%	25%	29.16%	28.57%
Option C	50%	29.16%	33.34%	50%

Table 16: Public High School - "You look thinner"

The reason why most of the students opted to choose option (c) (“Yeah... I’ve been sick for a few days...”) may be caused by the several definitions of the adjective “thin”, as it can convey positive connotations; having lost weight, or it can also work as a synonym of “weak”. Therefore, it is mostly understood as an antonym of “strong” instead of “fat”. Thus, most of the participants did not take it as a compliment, but as a negative comment on their physical aspect. It is noticeable that the same percentage of people from A1 and from B2, 50%, chose this option, despite existing a great difference of linguistic competence among them. Those who chose option (a) did it lexically right as well, as they considered the opposition between being “thin” and being “healthy”. These answers would result in sociopragmatic failure given that the interlocutors did not answer what was expected in the proper context, they did not follow the conventionalized formula of “acceptance” + “empathy”. Nevertheless, a greater number of A1 participants than B2 participants selected the most correct option. This phenomenon may be caused by not understanding the utterance. As a consequence, they decided to use the formula as a kind of “wildcard” to avoid misunderstandings.

Public Language School "You look thinner?"

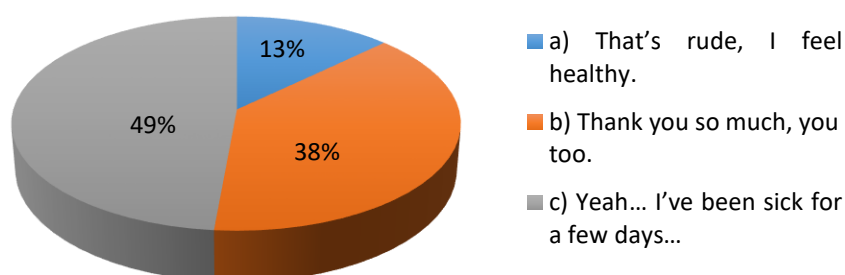


Figure 18: Public Language School - "You look thinner"

Among the students of English from the **public language school**, 27 participants out of 70, who represent 38.57% of the total, selected the correct answer. A total of 9 participants, who are 12.85% of the students, chose option (a). Finally, a total of 34 participants, who are 48.58% of the subjects, preferred option (c).

These results are illustrated in Table 17:

	Students' level (according to the CEFR)	
	B1	B2
Option A	18.51%	9.3%
Option B	37.03%	39.53%
Option C	44.46%	51.16%

Table 17: Public Language School - "You look thinner"

As a comparison between both institutions, it must be emphasised how the relationship between linguistic and pragmatic competence is more visible in students from the language school. Notwithstanding, those who chose option (c) (“Yeah... I’ve been sick for a few days...”) had a highest linguistic level of English, B2, in both educational institutions. It must be mentioned that students from the language school obtained better results, but option (c) is still predominant. The emotional part of this simple utterance is salient as most of the students did not just understand “thin” as a negative adjective, but they even felt offended.

The next utterance is the second example of emotive game used in the questionnaire that will be analysed:

4. How would you answer if someone tells you: “**You look your age**”?
- a) **Thank you so much!**
 - b) Well... That’s rude... I thought I look younger.
 - c) **You too.**

As mentioned before, this utterance is a compliment or, at least, the intention of the speaker is to compliment the listener. Nevertheless, one of the drawbacks is that the listener’s mind and interpretation cannot be controlled, but may be predicted if both interlocutors share a common background. In this specific scenario, none of the participants belonged to any English-speaking context, English is a foreign language for all of them, and they are learning it in Spain. Consequently, their reactions may be unpredictable. This means that in some cultures, “You look your age” is a compliment, while in others it can be misinterpreted and even taken as an offence threatening the addressee’s positive face (Brown and Levinson, 1987). All things considered, and according to the mixed game (Weigand, 2010), the most proper answers to this question are options (a) or (c), or a combination of both. The reason is that they are the expected responses: “Thank you so much!” (acceptance) or “You too”(empathy). Answering option (b) “Well... That’s rude... I thought I look younger” would result in sociopragmatic failure. This is given that the second interlocutor would be threatening the positive face of the first interlocutor by not acting properly when being complimented.

For the sake of clarity, the results of the questionnaires will be firstly summarized in pie charts before analysing them in depth:

Public High School "You look your age"

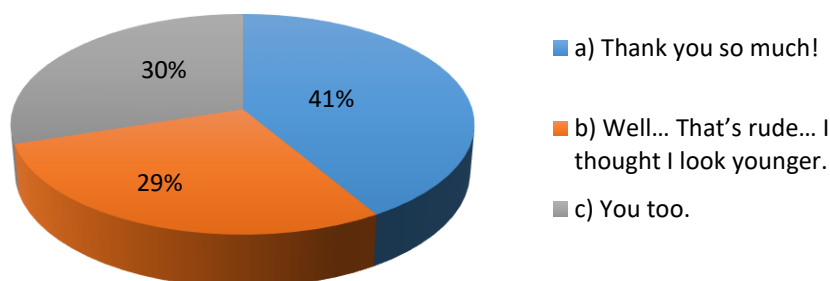


Figure 19: Public High School - "You look your age"

Among the students of English from the **public high school**, a total of 29 out of 70 participants, who represent 41.43%, selected option (a), which is considered one of the correct answers. The other one is option (c), which was selected by a total of 21 participants, who are 30% of the students, chose option (a). Finally, a total of 20 participants, who are 28.57% of the subjects, preferred option (c), which was not taken as correct.

These results are illustrated in Table 18:

	Students' level (according to the CEFR)			
	A1	A2	B1	B2
Option A	25%	37.5%	29.16%	78.57%
Option B	37.5%	29.16%	37.5%	7.14%
Option C	37.5%	33.33%	33.33%	14.28%

Table 18: Public High School - "You look your age"

The reason why most of the students opted to thank the other interlocutor may have been the intention to avoid misunderstandings by acceptance. Through this mechanism, the speaker saves his/her own positive face and the listener's. This seems to be the best strategy to avoid failures of any kind. Despite not understanding the utterance, as may be the case of students with the lowest levels of English, thanking the other person is a polite way to answer. This is illustrated in the general results. Notwithstanding, a higher number of B1 students than basic level students answered wrongly taking the compliment as an insult, which is very different from B2 students who chose this option on a few occasions. The argument for preferring option (c) may be the negative influence of the Spanish background on the use of the English language, as in Spain the usual compliment seems to be "You look younger". Few participants from the lowest level complimented back by saying (a) "You too", in comparison to B2 students who chose this option in its vast majority. This may be caused by the understanding of the utterance at a linguistic level, but not pragmatically. Therefore, they did not take it as a compliment, but they saved their own positive face.

Public Language School "You look your age"

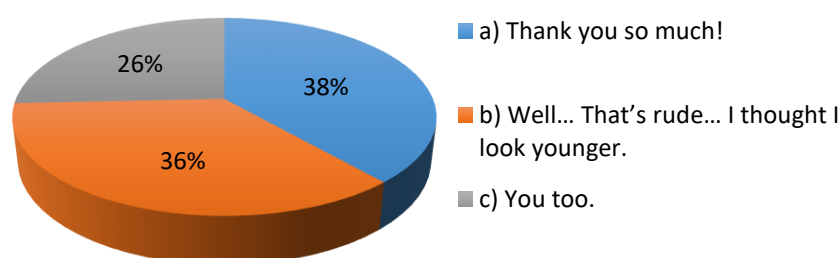


Figure 20: Public Language School - "You look your age"

Among the students of English from the **public language school**, 27 participants out of 70, who represent 38.57% of the total, selected option (a), which is considered one of the correct answers. The other one is option (c), which was selected by a total of 18 participants, who are 25.71% of the students, chose option (a). Finally, a total of 25 participants, who are 35.72% of the subjects, preferred option (b).

These results are illustrated in Table 19:

	Students' level (according to the CEFR)	
	B1	B2
Option A	37.03%	39.53%
Option B	37.03%	34.88%
Option C	25.92%	25.58%

Table 19: Public Language School - "You look your age"

With the aim of comparing both institutions, it must be emphasised that a large number of students from the language school chose the wrong answer in spite of having a higher linguistic competence. Regarding levels, B2 students from both institutions took the utterance as a real emotive speech act and opted to respond with empathy by saying (a) "You too". All in all, B1 students from both institutions, despite having an intermediate linguistic level, show a lower level of pragmatic competence than the rest of the participants. This may be caused by being in the middle of the ranking of levels. This means that they have a high level of grammatical knowledge, but they do not have the

experience and background knowledge of those with higher levels. This results in following the grammar rules most of the time without taking context into consideration.

The next utterance is the third and last example of emotive game used in the questionnaire:

7. How would you answer if someone that you know tells you: “**You look so pretty in that dress!**”?

a) No way!

b) **Thank you so much!**

c) **I bought it ten years ago.**

Utterance number 7 is also considered a compliment, and it is more visible even for speakers from different backgrounds because of the adjective “pretty” which is widely used¹² and expresses a positive evaluation, in this case amplified by the use of the modifier (“so”). According to the representative game, the right answer is option (b); accepting the compliment by thanking the other person. Option (c) “I bought it ten years ago” would also be considered as correct since, according to Holmes (1986), it is classified as an “evading” respond. This strategy is used by speakers who want to deflect or evade a compliment. Answering (a) “No way!” would result in sociopragmatic failure because is about negating the other interlocutor’s words, implying that s/he is lying, which is extremely offensive in some cultures such as the British.

For the sake of clarity, the results of the questionnaires will be firstly summarized in pie charts before analysing them in depth:

¹² The British National Corpus shows 7418 examples of the use of "pretty" in formal and informal contexts.

Public High School

"You look so pretty in that dress!"

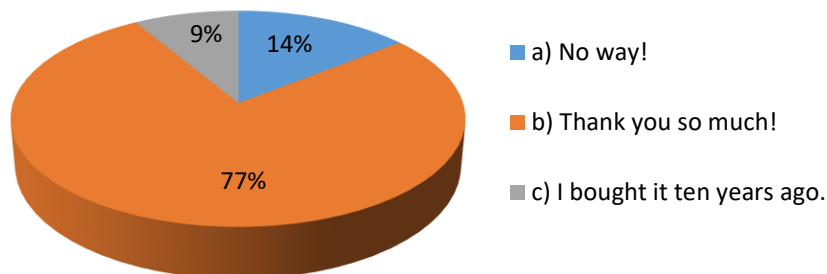


Figure 21: Public High School - "You look so pretty in that dress!"

Among the students of English from the **public high school**, a total of 54 out of 70 participants, who represent 77.14%, selected option (b), which is one of the correct answers. The other possible one is option (c), it was chosen by a total of 6 participants, who are 8.5% of the subjects. Finally, a total of 10 participants, who are 14.28% of the students, preferred option (a).

These results are illustrated in Table 20:

	Students' level (according to the CEFR)			
	A1	A2	B1	B2
Option A	50%	12.5%	8.33%	7.14%
Option B	37.5%	70.83%	87.5%	92.85%
Option C	12.5%	16.66%	4.16%	0%

Table 20: Public High School - "You look so pretty in that dress!"

Most of the students from the high school answered “Thank you so much!” to the compliment. The reason may be the same as in the previous example, to save both the speaker’s and the listener’s positive face, which is the best mechanism to avoid misunderstandings. Few students would provide further information to the addressee to evade the compliment, none of them belonging to B2 level. Even though it is another way to look humble, and very typical in Spanish language. The reason is that this answer would cause the conversation to continue, and this may not be their aim, as they just wanted to end it as soon as possible in order to avoid any kind of pragmatic failure. Some of them, from the lowest levels, opted to reject the compliment. This phenomenon may be caused by the negative transfer from Spanish. In Spanish, rejecting a compliment is a very usual way to answer and it is considered polite, even a sign of modesty (Maíz-Arévalo, 2012).

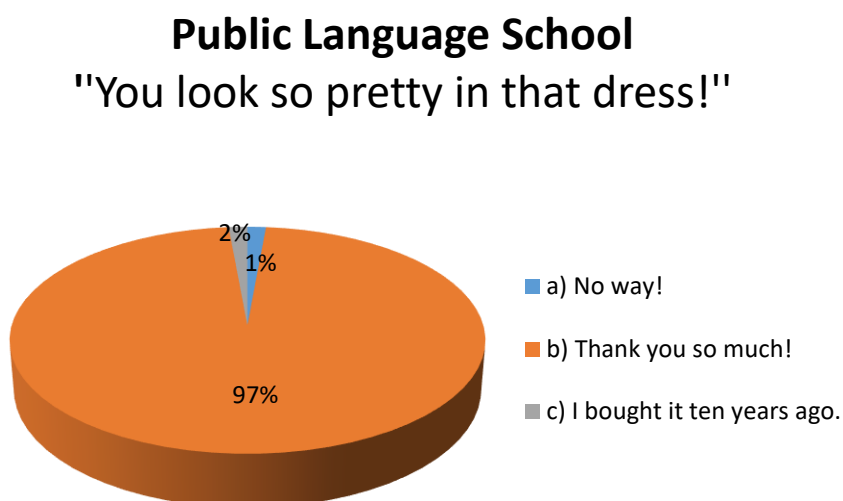


Figure 22: Public Language School - "You look your age"

Among the students of English from the **public language school**, 68 participants out of 70, who represent 97.14% of the total, selected option (b), which is one of the correct answers. The other possible one is option (c), it was chosen by just 1 participant, who is 1.43% of the subjects. Finally, 1 participant as well, who is 1.43% of the students, preferred option (a).

These results are illustrated in Table 21:

	Students' level (according to the CEFR)	
	B1	B2
Option A	0%	2.33%
Option B	27%	41%
Option C	0%	2.33%

Table 21: Public Language School - "You look your age"

This last example of representative game illustrates remarkable differences between both institutions. All B1 participants from the language school answered correctly to the compliment, and just two B2 students failed to answer wrongly, in comparison with students with the same level from the high school. This may be caused by the fact that English classes are given in English at the language school, which is not the case at the high school, not even at the highest levels. English-medium education affects positively the pragmatic competence of students by avoiding negative transfer from Spanish in second language learning. This implies that, as claimed by several authors (Kasper, 1996; Reigle, 2011; Taguchi; 2012), being exposed to the target language is an effective way to acquire pragmatic competence implicitly.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This paper has analysed and compared the results obtained from a questionnaire conducted with students of two different Spanish institutions in which English is taught as a foreign language. These institutions are a public high school and a public language school, both located in Móstoles, Madrid. The level of English of the students ranged from A1 level to B2 level according to the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR). This analysis has been done in terms of pragmatic failure in order to compare the linguistic and pragmatic competencies of the participants.

With the purpose of answering the research questions, it must be mentioned that, in general terms, the linguistic competence of the participants of this paper does not correspond with their pragmatic competence. The results of this study show some clear examples in which students with the most basic levels of English in linguistic terms (A1) display a higher pragmatic competence than those with more advanced levels. This phenomenon demonstrates that, as hypothesized, students are normally corrected according to what is grammatically correct, even at intermediate levels. This results in thinking of fixed rules and not always taking context into consideration because they have not been taught to do so. Nevertheless, students with lower levels of English are not “grammatically programmed” yet and thus, they are able to “think outside the box”.

It must be also underlined that language school students demonstrated being more pragmatically competent than those from the high school. The main reason might be the greater emphasis teachers give to interactive activities in the classroom. Moreover, language school students have the obligation to pass an oral exam at the end of the course, while high school students’ speaking skills are not evaluated. This requirement may also be working as a motivation for the students to use English outside the classroom and to

familiarize themselves with idiomatic expressions. Furthermore, the fact of being exposed to the language, as classes are conducted in English in this institution, in comparison with the high school in which Spanish is used most of the time, is another reason for obtaining better results regarding pragmatic competence.

The limitations of this study must be mentioned since the number of participants could not be very extensive. Moreover, the questionnaires were done during their English class time and controlled by their teachers. Consequently, not all teachers from the institutions were willing to participate or to spend more time than necessary to do them since it is time-consuming. The fact of having underage participants must be also considered given that their parents were asked to collaborate as well by filling in an authorisation for giving them official permission to participate in this project.

All things considered, it is previously assumed that a limited number of participants from two determined Spanish public institutions in which English is taught as foreign language cannot represent the whole situation. Therefore, it must be emphasised that one of the main concerns of this paper consists of avoiding generalizations of any kind.

More extensive research should be done to obtain clearer and more generalized results in order to put them into real practice in the classroom. These results could help with the implementation of pragmatic competence teaching in English courses.

To conclude, in order to avoid pragmatic failure and make communication efficient, EFL learners should be taught what pragmatic failure is, among other pragmatic concepts. Moreover, being exposed to the language, even in a Spanish-speaking environment, also yield positive results. Even though teaching every cultural value of the world is not possible, pragmatic awareness is essential to make communication as

successful as possible. This is the main objective of learning a new language, especially in the case of the international language par excellence.

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APPENDIX

1. QUESTIONNAIRE

Máster en Lingüística Inglesa: Nuevas Aplicaciones y Comunicación Internacional



- ❖ Este cuestionario es totalmente anónimo y los resultados serán utilizados para un estudio relacionado con la competencia pragmática con el fin de mejorar la enseñanza de idiomas.
- ✓ Marca la casilla que contenga la mejor opción y/o rellena cuando sea necesario la siguiente tabla de acuerdo a tu situación personal.

¿Dónde estás rellenando este cuestionario?	Instituto de Educación Secundaria		Escuela Oficial de Idiomas		Curso: _____	
Género	Masculino		Femenino		Otro	
Edad	12-19	20-29		30-39		+40
Nacionalidad	Española			Otra ¿De qué país eres? _____		
Nivel de Estudios (Tuyo o de tus padres o tutores legales, si vives con ellos)	Educación Primaria	Educación Secundaria	Bachillerato (o similar)	Estudios Universitarios	Oposiciones	Otros
Nivel de Inglés	Avanzado alto (C2) / Nativo	Avanzado (C1)	Intermedio alto (B2)	Intermedio (B1)	Básico (A2)	Inicial (A1)

COMPETENCIA PRAGMÁTICA

- ✓ Esta parte del cuestionario es en inglés, rodea la mejor opción contestando a las preguntas de acuerdo a lo que tú entiendas evitando preguntar dudas sobre el idioma al profesor/a.

1. How would you feel if someone that you know tells you: "We need to talk"?
 - a) Panicked.
 - b) Worried.
 - c) Relaxed.

2. How would you answer if someone that you know asks you: "How are you doing"?
 - a) I'm just waiting for the bus.
 - b) I'm OK, thank you.
 - c) I'm not doing anything actually.

3. How would you answer if someone that you haven't seen for a long time tells you: "You look thinner"?
 - a) That's rude, I feel healthy.
 - b) Thank you so much, you too.
 - c) Yeah... I've been sick for a few days...

4. How would you answer if someone tells you: "You look your age"?
 - a) Thank you so much!
 - b) Well... That's rude... I thought I look younger.
 - c) You too.

5. How would you answer if someone asks you: "Are you feeling blue"?
 - a) No, I'm not ill.
 - b) Yes, it's definitely not my day today.
 - c) I'm wearing black.

6. How would you answer if someone tells you before leaving: "See you soon!"?
 - a) Bye!
 - b) When?
 - c) Looking forward to it!

7. How would you answer if someone that you know tells you: “You look so pretty in that dress!”?
- a) No way!
 - b) Thank you so much!
 - c) I bought it ten years ago.
8. How would you answer if you are starving and someone that you know asks you: “Do you want a piece of cake?”?
- a) Yes, please, I’m starving.
 - b) No, thank you (waiting for another offer).
 - c) Maybe later.
9. How would you answer if your partner asks you: “Don’t you think it would be rather a good idea to go to the party together?”? (You are tired and you don’t want to go to the party).
- a) No, I don’t think it would be a good idea.
 - b) It'd be lovely but I'm afraid I don't really feel too much like it today.
 - c) Yes, of course, that would be lovely.
10. How would you answer if your mother/father asks you: “My lord/lady, would you be willing to tidy up your room at some point of history?”?
- a) Yes, of course, right now.
 - b) Maybe next month.
 - c) No, I don’t think so.

¡MUCHAS GRACIAS POR VUESTRA COLABORACIÓN!
THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR COLLABORATION!



2. AUTHORISATION FOR UNDERAGE STUDENTS



ESTUDIO SOBRE LA COMPETENCIA PRAGMÁTICA

_____ (nombre y apellidos del padre/madre/tutor) autorizo a que _____
_____ (nombre y apellidos del/a menor) participe en un estudio sobre la competencia pragmática mediante un cuestionario totalmente anónimo. Este estudio forma parte del *Máster en Lingüística Inglesa: Nuevas Aplicaciones y Comunicación Internacional* de la Universidad Complutense de Madrid y su fin es la mejora de la enseñanza de idiomas.

Muchas gracias por su colaboración.

En Madrid a ____ de _____ del 2017,

(Firma)