

UNIVERSIDAD COMPLUTENSE DE MADRID
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Departamento de Didáctica de la Lengua y la Literatura
(Español, Francés e Inglés)



**Un estudio comparativo de efectos de predisposición:
cartas de petición (A study of comparative priming :
letters of request)**

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PRESENTADA POR**

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TESIS DOCTORAL

**Un estudio comparativo de efectos de predisposición: cartas de petición (A
Study of Comparative Priming: Letters of Request)**

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Doctora Aoife Kathleen Ahern**

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RESUMEN EN ESPAÑOL

(SEGÚN LO DISPUESTO POR EL ARTÍCULO 4.3 DE LA NORMATIVA DEL REAL DECRETO 1393/2007)

a. INTRODUCCIÓN

Los análisis de la lingüística de corpus han existido desde los inicios de los estudios lingüísticos (Tognini-Bonelli, 2001). Sin embargo, a partir de los años 60, proyectos de gran envergadura han sido realizados en el mundo de habla inglesa con el fin de recoger datos sobre el uso de la lengua inglesa. Esto se debió a que numerosos lingüistas habían notado que las descripciones de la lengua inglesa contenían reglas gramaticales que no eran puestas en práctica en textos auténticos (Teubert, 2004) e, incluso, ignoraban el uso del inglés en los mismos. Dos ejemplos de estos proyectos han sido el *Survey of English Usage* de Randolph Quirk y el *Cobuild Project* de Sinclair.

Estos dos estudios han tenido importantes aplicaciones pedagógicas por dos razones. Primero, porque comenzaron a incorporar ejemplos del uso auténtico de la lengua inglesa en materiales para la enseñanza de la misma como lengua extranjera o segunda. Algunos ejemplos de estos materiales son libros de gramática, manuales escolares y diccionarios. Segundo, porque despertaron interés entre los expertos en la enseñanza del inglés como lengua extranjera o segunda por estudiar las contradicciones existentes entre las reglas gramaticales que los autores de los libros de gramática recomendaban que los estudiantes de lengua inglesa debieran poner en práctica y el inglés auténtico utilizado por los locutores nativos. En efecto, muchas de estas contradicciones han sido dadas a conocer desde la existencia de estos dos grandes proyectos (Holmes, 1988, Kennedy, 1992, Willis, 1993a, Willis, 1993b, Lewis, 1996, Stubbs, 1996, Sinclair,

1997, Tognini-Bonelli, 2001, Lewis, 2001a, Römer, 2004, Nesselhauf, 2004, Conrad, 2004, Hoey, 2005, Meyer, 2006, Gouverneur, 2008 & Paquot, 2008). Veinte años después del amplio trabajo de Quirk, la importancia de la aplicación de los hallazgos de la lingüística de corpus en la enseñanza del inglés como lengua extranjera o segunda ha llevado a Hoey (2005) a concluir que la enseñanza-aprendizaje de una lengua no puede ignorar los descubrimientos de la lingüística de corpus. La razón de esta conclusión se debe a que estos descubrimientos pueden explicar la existencia de efectos de predisposición entre los locutores nativos y no nativos de una lengua.

En este resumen se ha escogido el término “efecto de predisposición” como el equivalente al de “priming” desarrollado por Hoey (2005). La teoría de “priming” o de los efectos de predisposición de Hoey argumenta que los locutores utilizan combinaciones de palabras y/o frases hechas después de haber sido expuestos repetidamente a las mismas. La teoría desarrollada por Hoey (2005) también argumenta que la existencia de ellas en la producción verbal oral y escrita de los locutores se debe a las asociaciones pragmáticas, léxicas y prosódicas presentes en las mismas.

Estas asociaciones han sido claramente ejemplificadas por Stubbs (2002), quien observa que, en un corpus de 120 millones de palabras, las 50 combinaciones de palabras más frecuentes en un rango de 3:3 de las 38.000 frecuencias del verbo *cause* (*causar*) tienen connotaciones desagradables (Stubbs, 2002: 45). Las primeras cinco son *CAUSE* (*causar*) < *problem* (*s*) (*problema/s*) 1.806, *damage* (*daño*) 1.519, *death* (*s*) (*muerte/s*) 1.109, *disease* (*enfermedad*) 591, *concern* (*preocupación*) 598 >. *Cause* (*causar*) a veces ocurre en construcciones más amplias como *cause considerable damage* (*causar daños considerables*) y *cause great problems* (*causar grandes problemas*).

Hoey (2005) ilustra las asociaciones semánticas con el sustantivo *consequence* (*consecuencia*). En el corpus *Guardian* y en el *Bank of English*, el autor descubre que *consequence* (*consecuencia*) sucede a un adjetivo en alrededor de un 25% de

sus apariciones. *Consequence* (*consecuencia*) sucede a adjetivos que pertenecen al campo de la lógica (*logical consequence, consecuencia lógica*), de las evaluaciones negativas (*disastrous consequence, consecuencia desastrosa*), de la seriedad (*serious consequence, consecuencia seria*), de lo inesperado (*unforeseen consequence, consecuencia inesperada*), etc.

La existencia de estas combinaciones de palabras y de frases hechas en una determinada comunidad lingüística, según esta teoría, se debe a la labor de agentes que armonizan estos efectos de predisposición. Hoey (2005) menciona seis: la educación, la tradición literaria, la tradición religiosa, los medios de comunicación, los diccionarios y los libros de gramática. Sin embargo, explica el autor, los efectos de predisposición no son permanentes y pueden variar a lo largo de la vida de un locutor. Tradicionalmente, estas variaciones han sido abordadas por la psicolingüística. “The concern of psycholinguistics is how expert speakers of a language store and retrieve the language system, and how learners (of a first or second language) acquire the language” (Hunston & Francis, 2000: 11), es decir, “La preocupación de la psicolingüística es como locutores expertos de una lengua graban y recurren al sistema lingüístico, y como los aprendices (de una lengua primera o segunda) adquieren la lengua”.

Considerando este marco teórico, el siguiente estudio está basado en tres premisas. Investigaciones recientes han demostrado que los manuales escolares de inglés como lengua extranjera suelen simplificar los contenidos lingüísticos enseñados y, consecuentemente, ofrecen una descripción parcial de los efectos de predisposición del inglés hablado y escrito por los locutores de inglés como lengua primera. Asimismo, se ha comprobado que los locutores de inglés como lengua extranjera no logran expresar modalidad en inglés de la misma manera en la que lo hacen los locutores nativos de esta lengua ya que cuentan con efectos de predisposición diferentes. En consecuencia, los locutores de inglés como lengua extranjera usan los verbos modales en inglés de un modo diferente al que lo hacen los locutores nativos de inglés. En este estudio, estas tres premisas han sido

abordadas dentro del ámbito de las peticiones. Esto se debe a la existencia de estudios que han demostrado que los locutores nativos de español no cuentan con los mismos efectos de predisposición que los locutores nativos de inglés a la hora de formular peticiones y que, consecuentemente, son más directos que los locutores nativos de inglés en la elaboración de las mismas. Es importante destacar que una eventual ausencia de estos efectos de predisposición en las peticiones formuladas en inglés por los locutores nativos de español se puede deber, en parte, a la escasa presencia o incluso ausencia de los mismos en los materiales de aprendizaje de la lengua inglesa como, por ejemplo, en los manuales escolares de inglés lengua extranjera. De ahí derivan las aplicaciones pedagógicas del siguiente estudio.

b. OBJETIVOS DEL ESTUDIO

Teniendo en cuenta esta problemática, se estableció que el objetivo de la presente investigación es comparar los efectos de predisposición en el uso de los verbos modales en un conjunto de cartas formales e informales de petición y escritas en inglés por una muestra de estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2 cuya lengua materna es el español, por una muestra de profesores nativos de inglés como lengua extranjera y en una muestra de manuales escolares de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2.

Este objetivo general ha sido conseguido mediante la consecución de los siguientes objetivos específicos:

1. La comparación de las frecuencias de los verbos modales en un conjunto de cartas formales e informales de petición y escritas en inglés por una muestra de estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2 cuya lengua materna es el español, por una muestra de profesores nativos de inglés como lengua extranjera y en una muestra de manuales escolares de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2.
2. La comparación de las frecuencias de las palabras que acompañan a los verbos modales en un conjunto de cartas formales e informales de petición y escritas en inglés por una muestra de estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2 cuya lengua materna es el español, por una muestra de profesores nativos de inglés como lengua extranjera y en una muestra de manuales escolares de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2.
3. La comparación de las frecuencias de las frases hechas que contienen verbos modales y que son empleadas en peticiones en un conjunto de cartas formales e informales de petición y escritas en inglés por una muestra de estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2 cuya lengua materna es el español, por una muestra de profesores nativos de

inglés como lengua extranjera y en una muestra de manuales escolares de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2.

4. La comparación de la posición de los verbos modales en las oraciones que formulan peticiones en un conjunto de cartas formales e informales de petición y escritas en inglés por una muestra de estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2 cuya lengua materna es el español, por una muestra de profesores nativos de inglés como lengua extranjera y en una muestra de manuales escolares de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2.
5. La comparación de la posición de los verbos modales que ocurren en peticiones en los párrafos de un conjunto de cartas formales e informales de petición y escritas en inglés por una muestra de estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2 cuya lengua materna es el español, por una muestra de profesores nativos de inglés como lengua extranjera y en una muestra de manuales escolares de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2.
6. La comparación de la posición de los verbos modales que ocurren en peticiones en el conjunto del texto de un conjunto de cartas formales e informales de petición y escritas en inglés por una muestra de estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2 cuya lengua materna es el español, por una muestra de profesores nativos de inglés como lengua extranjera y en una muestra de manuales escolares de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2.
7. La comparación de las frecuencias de las cadenas cohesivas que contienen verbos modales y que son empleadas en peticiones en un conjunto de cartas formales e informales de petición y escritas en inglés por una muestra de estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2 cuya lengua materna es el español, por una muestra de profesores nativos de inglés como lengua extranjera y en una muestra de manuales escolares de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2.

La metodología de la presente investigación ha consistido en la comparación de las frecuencias de los verbos modales, de las frecuencias de las palabras que acompañan a los mismos, de las frecuencias de las frases hechas que contienen verbos modales y que son empleadas en peticiones, de la posición de los verbos modales y de las estructuras a las que pertenecen en las oraciones que formulan peticiones, de la posición en los párrafos de los verbos modales que ocurren en peticiones, de las estrategias cohesivas en peticiones que contienen verbos modales y que se encuentran en el inicio de los párrafos, de la posición en el conjunto del texto de los verbos modales que ocurren en peticiones, de las estructuras a las que pertenecen los verbos modales que ocurren en peticiones en el primer párrafo y de la frecuencia de las cadenas cohesivas que contienen verbos modales y que son empleadas en peticiones en las cartas formales e informales escritas por/en las tres muestras. La muestra de cartas informales escritas en los manuales escolares de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2 cuenta con 16 ejemplares. La de cartas formales con once. Por otro lado, las cartas formales e informales redactadas por los profesores nativos de inglés como lengua extranjera son 42 (21 en cada registro), mientras que las realizadas por los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2 son 82 (41 para cada registro). Estas comparaciones han sido llevadas a cabo utilizando diversas pruebas estadísticas paramétricas y no paramétricas para calcular la existencia de diferencias estadísticas significativas de los elementos recién enumerados.

c. APORTACIONES FUNDAMENTALES

c.1. OBJETIVO 1

En relación a los hallazgos de este objetivo, se observó que los manuales escolares de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2 no ofrecen un gran número de cartas de petición. El motivo de este hecho puede ser la necesidad que los manuales escolares de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2 tienen de suministrar textos de una amplia gama de géneros con el propósito de responder al amplio abanico de necesidades lingüísticas de los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2. Consecuentemente, se considera necesario que los mismos complementen las cartas de petición formales e informales de los manuales escolares en cuestión con cartas formales e informales de petición escritas por locutores de inglés como lengua primera para poder recibir una variedad más amplia de los efectos de predisposición con los que cuentan estos últimos cuando escriben textos de este género. En efecto, la ausencia de efectos de predisposición puede resultar en algunos de los siguientes problemas.

En primero lugar, los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2 hicieron uso de peticiones verbosas, lo cual puede explicar el porcentaje más elevado de palabras funcionales en sus cartas. Como resultado, es importante que los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2 analicen la complejidad de las unidades sintácticas que los locutores de inglés como lengua primera utilizan en sus cartas de petición así como también de las combinaciones de palabras empleadas por los mismos en este género. El fin de esta sugerencia descansa en la necesidad de que los mismos adquieran las unidades sintácticas utilizadas por los locutores de inglés como lengua primera a fin de que estas reemplacen a sus peticiones innecesariamente verbosas.

En segundo lugar, los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2 transfirieron algunos efectos de predisposición comúnmente utilizados en registros formales al registro informal en peticiones. Esto se reflejó en el uso de verbos modales en sus cartas de peticiones informales que fueron utilizados en las cartas formales escritas por las otras dos muestras. También se observó que, los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2 hicieron poco uso de ciertos verbos modales como *could* (*podría-s-mos-is-n*) y *can* (*poder*) en sus cartas formales de petición en comparación con las cartas de petición escritas por las otras dos muestras. Por el contrario, hicieron un uso demasiado frecuente de otros verbos modales como, por ejemplo, (*will*) en ambos registros. Luego, es de esperar que los análisis de las cartas de petición escritas por los locutores de inglés como lengua primera y en los manuales escolares de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2 permitirán a los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2 cuestionar el uso de los verbos modales en sus cartas de petición y, consecuentemente, a incorporar el uso de verbos modales alternativos. Asimismo, comparar los verbos modales utilizados en las cartas de petición escritas por los locutores de inglés como lengua primera y en las cartas de los manuales escolares de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2 puede despertar el interés entre los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2 por el estudio de las fluctuaciones del uso de la lengua inglesa en distintas muestras y/o contextos y, en consecuencia, por cuestionar la verdad relativa de reglas gramaticales tradicionalmente arraigadas. Un ejemplo de estas es aquella que estipula que las formas contraídas de los verbos modales *will* y *would* deben ser utilizadas en contextos informales y las no contraídas en contextos formales. En efecto, mientras que en las cartas informales de los manuales escolares se prefirió el uso de las formas contraídas, esto no fue así en las cartas informales escritas por los profesores nativos de inglés como lengua extranjera. Asimismo, estos últimos hicieron uso de la forma contraída del verbo *would* en sus cartas formales,

mientras que esta forma no se observó en las cartas formales redactadas en los manuales escolares.

Finalmente, se descubrió que las frecuencias de los verbos modales en tiempo pasado fueron significativamente más bajas en las cartas formales escritas por los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2 que en las cartas formales escritas por/en las otras dos muestras. Esta menor frecuencia de verbos modales en tiempo pasado en cartas formales es un indicador de un tono más directo en las mismas. Sin embargo, este estudio argumenta que no es suficiente que los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2 sepan que en las otras dos muestras los verbos modales en tiempo pasado en sus cartas formales son mucho más frecuentes que los verbos en tiempo presente y que sus frecuencias son similares en las cartas informales. Sería muy interesante que los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2 identifiquen sus peticiones sin verbos modales e incorporen los verbos modales usados por/en las otras dos muestras en sus peticiones (ver objetivo tres).

c.2. OBJETIVO 2

En referencia a las palabras que acompañan a los verbos modales, se observó que los profesores nativos de inglés como lengua extranjera usaron combinaciones de palabras cuyas frecuencias fueron más bajas o inexistentes en las cartas escritas por los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2 y en los manuales escolares de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2. Ejemplos de estas combinaciones son *can + you (puedes + tú)* y *should + I (debería + yo)* en las cartas de petición informales y *can + you (puede + usted)* y *could + you (podría usted)* en las formales.

Al mismo tiempo, los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2 usaron combinaciones de palabras que contienen verbos modales cuyas frecuencias fueron más bajas o inexistentes en las cartas escritas por los

profesores nativos de inglés como lengua extranjera y en los manuales escolares de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2. Estas fueron *can + I (puedo + yo)*, *could + you (podrías + tú)*, *could + I (podría + yo)*, *would + like (me gustaría y su conjugación)*, *would + verb*, *will + verb* y *will + be (seré, serás, será, seremos, seréis, serán, estaré, estarás, estará, estaremos, estaréis, estarán)* en las cartas informales; *would + like (me gustaría y su conjugación)* y *'d + like (me gustaría y su conjugación)* en las formales.

Vale también la pena mencionar que en el análisis de los verbos que acompañaban a los verbos modales, se rescataron frases hechas en las cartas escritas por los profesores nativos de inglés como lengua extranjera. Se puede mencionar el caso de *give (dar)* en *if you could give me (si tú me puedes dar)* después de *I was wondering (me preguntaba)* y *I was hoping (estaba esperando que)* en peticiones de información en las cartas informales. En las cartas formales, se puede subrayar el uso del verbo *let (permitir)* en *if you could let me know (si usted me puede hacer saber)* luego de *I would (also) be grateful (estaría (también) agradecido)* y *I would also appreciate it (Apreciaría también)* y del verbo *provide (suministrar)* en *can + provide (poder suministrar)* en cláusulas relativas en peticiones de información. Además, mientras algunas combinaciones de verbos modales seguidos de un adverbio y luego de un verbo fueron detectadas en las cartas formales e informales escritas por los profesores nativos de inglés como lengua extranjera y en los manuales escolares de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2, en las cartas escritas por los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2, estas fueron menos frecuentes. Lo que es más, la estructura *would + be + adverb + adjective (estaría-s-mos-is-n/sería-s-mos-is-n + adverbio + adjetivo)* fue usada mayormente en las cartas formales escritas por los profesores nativos de inglés como lengua extranjera: la misma fue menos frecuente en las cartas formales de los manuales escolares de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2 e inexistente en las cartas formales redactadas por los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2.

Finalmente, la existencia de estructuras verbosas adelantada en la discusión del primer objetivo fue confirmada en los hallazgos correspondientes al segundo objetivo. Es interesante remarcar que la alta frecuencia de *can + verb (poder + verbo)* y de *should + verb (debería/s/mos/is/n + verbo)* en las cartas escritas por los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2 se debió en parte a la existencia de peticiones de información largas, verbosas e indirectas cuyo orden sintáctico difirió de aquel de las peticiones escritas por la muestra de profesores nativos de inglés como lengua extranjera.

Estos hallazgos permitirían observar que la identificación y el uso de las combinaciones de palabras que contienen verbos modales en las peticiones de cartas redactadas por locutores de inglés como lengua primera y en manuales escolares de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2 permitiría a los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2 reducir el eventual número de peticiones verbosas en sus cartas. También reduciría su eventual uso excesivo de un número limitado de combinaciones de palabras que contienen un verbo modal y que han sido empleadas en menor grado o nunca empleadas por las otras dos muestras. Finalmente, el empleo de la estructura *modal verb + adverb + verb (verbo modal + adverbio + verbo)* daría más herramientas a los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2 para expresar modalidad en peticiones.

c.3. OBJETIVO 3

Se identificaron cuatro tipos de peticiones: peticiones directas, peticiones indirectas con frases mitigadoras, peticiones directas con verbos modales y peticiones indirectas con frases mitigadoras y con verbos modales.

Se recomienda que los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2 analicen las mismas en las cartas de petición escritas por los profesores nativos de inglés como lengua extranjera y en los manuales escolares de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2 por los siguientes motivos.

En primer lugar, porque las cartas informales redactadas por los profesores nativos de inglés como lengua extranjera ofrecen un variedad de peticiones indirectas con frases mitigadoras y verbos modales y de frases hechas interrogativas que contienen verbos modales y que son utilizadas más de dos veces en peticiones que las cartas informales redactadas en los manuales escolares de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2. Lo mismo se observó en relación a las peticiones indirectas con frases mitigadoras y verbos modales y a las frases hechas afirmativas e interrogativas que contienen verbos modales y que son utilizadas más de dos veces en peticiones en las cartas formales.

En segundo lugar, en las cartas formales, los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2 usaron una gama más pequeña de frases hechas interrogativas que contienen verbos modales y que son utilizadas más de dos veces en peticiones que los profesores nativos de inglés como lengua extranjera. Esto no sucedió en las cartas informales, donde las frecuencias en las dos muestras son muy parecidas. Sin embargo, al observar las preguntas en las cartas informales, se detectó que los profesores nativos de inglés como lengua extranjera usaron combinaciones de palabras que incluían verbos modales más complejas y diferentes a las utilizadas por los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2. Estos usaron principalmente combinaciones simples y confundieron el uso de *will* en predicciones y en peticiones.

En tercer lugar, en las cartas formales e informales, los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2 emplearon considerablemente más frases hechas afirmativas que contienen verbos modales y que son utilizadas más de dos veces en peticiones que los profesores nativos de inglés como lengua extranjera y los manuales escolares de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2. Muchas de estas frases comenzaron con *I would*. Esto explica, en parte, un porcentaje mucho más alto de oraciones afirmativas en peticiones en las cartas escritas por los

estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2 que en las cartas redactadas por/en las otras dos muestras.

En cuarto lugar, la construcción de las peticiones indirectas con frases mitigadoras y verbos modales escritas por los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2 difirió de aquella comúnmente utilizada en inglés convencional. En efecto, problemas con el condicional, el subjuntivo y el pleonástico *it* fueron detectados.

Para finalizar, el porcentaje de peticiones directas sin verbos modales en las cartas redactadas por los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2 también fue el más alto. Esto se reflejó en las altas frecuencias de las frases hechas *I (also) need to know ((También) necesito saber)* y *I (also) want to know ((También) quiero saber)* en comparación con las cartas escritas por las otras dos muestras. En cuanto a las peticiones interrogativas directas sin verbos modales formuladas por los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2, se observaron diferencias en el orden sintáctico de las palabras en comparación con el inglés convencional. Diferencias con el inglés convencional también fueron detectadas en las peticiones con frases mitigadoras sin verbos modales.

Todos estos hallazgos establecen claramente diferencias entre las cartas redactadas por los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2 y por/en las otras dos muestras. Si los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2 tienen la intención de escribir en un modo más cercano al de los locutores de inglés como lengua primera, deberían compensar las eventuales altas frecuencias de peticiones que consisten en oraciones afirmativas comenzando con *I would, I (also) need to know ((También) necesito saber)* y *I (also) want to know ((También) quiero saber)*, por ejemplo, con las estrategias de petición empleadas por los profesores nativos de inglés como lengua extranjera y en las cartas de manuales escolares de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2.

Además, sería interesante que los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2 comparen sus peticiones con aquellas redactadas por las otras dos muestras con el fin de analizar diferencias en el orden sintáctico de las mismas y de reescribir aquellas cuyo orden sintáctico no es aceptado en el inglés convencional para así poder lograr niveles de complejidad, exactitud y fluidez similares a los del inglés como lengua primera (Lewis, 2001).

c.4. OBJETIVO 4

Los hallazgos relacionados con la posición de los verbos modales en las oraciones que formulan peticiones han justificado la combinación del uso de las cartas escritas por los profesores nativos de inglés como lengua extranjera y en los manuales escolares de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2. Esta justificación se basa en las siguientes razones.

Las cartas formales e informales escritas por los profesores nativos de inglés como lengua extranjera reflejaron un porcentaje más alto de verbos modales colocados antes de los verbos principales en interrogaciones que las cartas escritas en los manuales escolares de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2. Estos efectos de predisposición en las cartas escritas por los profesores nativos de inglés como lengua extranjera son muy útiles ya que el orden sintáctico en las interrogaciones con o sin verbos modales formuladas por los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2 ha diferido, en varias oportunidades, del orden sintáctico comúnmente empleado en inglés convencional. Cabe recordar, además, que los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2 utilizaron combinaciones de palabras con verbos modales simples en las peticiones interrogativas de las cartas informales en comparación con aquellas escritas por los profesores nativos de inglés como lengua extranjera. A su vez, se destacó que los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2 hicieron uso, preferentemente, de peticiones afirmativas.

La segunda razón deriva de un abanico más amplio de efectos de predisposición en las estructuras de los verbos modales empleadas antes del verbo principal en las cartas formales y después del mismo en las cartas informales escritas por los profesores nativos de inglés como lengua extranjera en relación a las cartas escritas en los manuales escolares de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2. Se recomienda, entonces, que los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2 se familiaricen con las estructuras de los verbos modales utilizadas antes y después del verbo principal en las cartas redactadas por los profesores nativos de inglés como lengua extranjera y que las comparen con aquellas escritas en los manuales escolares de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2. El objetivo de esta comparación es la incorporación de estas estructuras en las cartas redactadas por los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2. En efecto, estos últimos emplearon la gama más amplia de estructuras de verbos modales en relación a la posición de los verbos en las oraciones, lo cual puede ser otro indicador del estilo verboso de ciertas peticiones escritas en sus cartas.

Por consiguiente, que los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2 establezcan diferencias entre las estructuras en la que ocurren los verbos modales antes y después del verbo en las peticiones de sus cartas y aquellas que son empleadas en las otras dos muestras podría ser una actividad de autocorrección con un resultado inmediato en la autoevaluación y reformulación de sus propias peticiones.

c.5. OBJETIVO 5

Tanto las cartas formales como las informales mostraron tendencias similares en lo que respecta a la descripción de oraciones que contienen verbos modales y que son empleadas en peticiones en el inicio de los párrafos.

En ambos casos, los profesores nativos de inglés como lengua extranjera y los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2 compartieron algunas herramientas cohesivas que agregan peticiones como *firstly* (*primeramente*) y *finally* (*finalmente*). Al mismo tiempo, las dos muestras hicieron uso de herramientas diferentes. Algunas de las empleadas por los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2 revelaron importantes diferencias en relación a aquellas utilizadas en inglés convencional como, por ejemplo, *finish* (*terminar*) en las cartas formales y *and other really good question* (*y otra realmente buena pregunta*) en las cartas informales. Los manuales escolares de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2, por el contrario, emplearon solamente *firstly* (*primeramente*) y *finally* (*finalmente*) en sus peticiones conteniendo verbos modales en el inicio de los párrafos en las cartas formales y ninguna expresión cohesiva en las informales. Es digno de destacar que los profesores nativos de inglés como lengua extranjera hicieron uso del adverbio *also* (*también*) entre un verbo modal y un verbo principal más frecuentemente que los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2, lo cual suministra más evidencia de la menor frecuencia de adverbios acompañando verbos modales en las cartas de estos últimos (ver sección C.2.Objetivo 2). En relación a los manuales escolares de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2, no se detectó ningún ejemplo del uso del adverbio *also* (*también*) entre un verbo modal y un verbo principal.

Debido a la diversidad de adverbios, frases adverbiales, frases nominales o conjunciones que contienen verbos modales y que agregan peticiones en la primera oración de los párrafos en las cartas escritas por los profesores nativos de inglés como lengua extranjera, a casi su total ausencia en las cartas de los manuales escolares de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2 y a la versión no convencional de algunos de los mismos en las cartas redactadas por los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2, es crucial que estos últimos trabajen con las cartas de petición producidas por los primeros para adquirir más efectos de predisposición en este contexto considerando el efecto

que estas herramientas cohesivas tienen en el inicio de los párrafos en relación a la cohesión del texto. Más información referida a la cohesión textual será suministrada en la discusión del séptimo objetivo.

c.6. OBJETIVO 6

Este estudio encontró que las cartas de los manuales escolares de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2 ofrecen una variedad más pequeña de estructuras conteniendo verbos modales en peticiones en el inicio del texto que las cartas redactadas por los profesores nativos de inglés como lengua extranjera. Este hallazgo puede ser explicado por el hecho de que el número de cartas obtenidas de la muestra de manuales escolares de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2 ha sido menor que aquel de las cartas realizadas por los profesores nativos de inglés como lengua extranjera. Este hallazgo es, además, otra razón por la cual se recomienda combinar el uso de manuales escolares de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2 con textos escritos por locutores de inglés como lengua primera.

Este estudio también reveló que, en las tres muestras, las cartas formales contenían más verbos modales al inicio de peticiones afirmativas en el primer párrafo que las cartas informales. Esto fue particularmente notorio en las cartas formales redactadas por los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2, donde el porcentaje de las mismas fue más alto que en las cartas redactadas por los profesores nativos de inglés como lengua extranjera. Este alto porcentaje de verbos modales en peticiones afirmativas en las cartas redactadas por los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2 ya había sido reflejado en el uso frecuente de frases hechas con o sin verbos modales como, por ejemplo, *I would like (me gustaría)*, *I need to know (necesito saber)* o *I want to know (quiero saber)*.

Cuando las razones por las que los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2 usaron un porcentaje más alto de verbos modales al inicio de peticiones afirmativas fueron tratadas, tres posibles explicaciones fueron propuestas. Primero, porque los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2 no cuentan con suficientes efectos de predisposición a la hora de usar interrogaciones en el primer párrafo de cartas de petición como resultado de las pocas ocasiones en las que fueron expuestos a cartas de petición completas en ambos registros. Luego, a causa del hecho de que los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2 se pueden sentir más seguros cuando utilizan afirmaciones debido a la complejidad del orden sintáctico de las interrogaciones en la lengua inglesa en comparación con la lengua española. En tercer lugar, porque, según estudios anteriores, en español, las peticiones no son consideradas demandas amenazantes que requieren de estrategias mitigatorias para minimizarlas (Blum-Kulka, 1996), sino un deseo de que el receptor de la petición la lleve a cabo (Díaz Pérez, 2002). Luego, los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2 formularon sus peticiones directamente en oraciones afirmativas, como se explicó en el párrafo anterior.

Finalmente, se observó que los profesores nativos de inglés como lengua extranjera emplearon verbos modales en peticiones en el primer párrafo en un porcentaje más alto de cartas formales que los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2. Además, en las cartas informales, hicieron uso de un porcentaje más alto de verbos modales en aquella posición. Por lo tanto, es de esperar que la observación de las peticiones empleadas en el primer párrafo de cartas escritas por locutores de inglés como lengua primera y su comparación con aquellas utilizadas por estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2 podría ser una actividad fructífera en el momento de estudiar como comenzar una carta de petición formal o informal.

c.7. OBJETIVO 7

Los análisis de cadenas que agregan cohesión a la organización del texto en cartas formales e informales de petición obtuvieron los siguientes datos.

En las cartas formales e informales, las cadenas empleadas por los profesores nativos de inglés como lengua extranjera difirieron, en general, de aquellas usadas en las cartas de los manuales escolares de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2. Además, los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2 se concentraron más en el uso de cadenas cohesivas conteniendo la estructura *I + would + verb*. Complementar el estudio de cartas redactadas en manuales escolares de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2 y por locutores de inglés como lengua primera podría dar a los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2 acceso a cadenas alternativas para crear cohesión. Ayudaría también a solucionar algunos de los problemas ya observados en las cartas redactadas por los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2 como, por ejemplo, el uso de secuencias sintácticas no convencionales en interrogaciones, la confusión del uso de *will* en peticiones y en predicciones o el uso excesivo de *would* y *could* (*podría-s-mos-is-n*) en las cartas informales en comparación con las cartas informales elaboradas por las otras dos muestras.

Este estudio ha también demostrado que la cohesión explica, en parte, las combinaciones de palabras, las estructuras a las que pertenecen y sus frecuencias en un determinado género. Esta investigación ha revelado que los verbos modales y las combinaciones de palabras a las que pertenecen más frecuentes en las cartas escritas por los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2 y por los profesores nativos de inglés como lengua extranjera forman parte de cadenas cohesivas. Este trabajo también ha sugerido que el análisis combinado de las frecuencias de las palabras, de las estructuras a las que pertenecen, de la combinación de palabras y de la cohesión de un texto de un determinado género escrito en una lengua segunda puede explicar no sólo los efectos de

predisposición de la lengua segunda de su escritor, sino que también puede dar información sobre los efectos de predisposición en su primera lengua y de aquellos que tienen un gran componente cultural, lo que en esta tesis se ha denominado “culturally-dependent ideological primings” o efectos de predisposición ideológicos y culturalmente dependientes. Por ellos se entiende, en esta tesis, el conjunto de razones por las cuales los escritores piensan que lo que escriben es lo más adecuado en un determinado contexto. Por ello se ha también recomendado que los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2 conozcan posibles explicaciones por las cuales los locutores de inglés como lengua primera escriben peticiones de una determinada forma y, asimismo, que analicen en que medida estas razones y maneras de escribir difieren lingüísticamente y culturalmente del español como lengua primera.

Finalmente, es importante indicar que se han descubierto oraciones afirmativas que explican una petición que contiene uno o más verbos modales y oraciones afirmativas que contienen uno o más verbos modales y que explican una petición que no cuenta con ningún verbo modal. En cuanto a las frecuencias de los casos de oraciones afirmativas que explican una petición que contiene uno o más verbos modales, estas han sido más elevadas que las frecuencias de los casos de oraciones afirmativas que contienen uno o más verbos modales y que explican una petición que no cuenta con ningún verbo modal.

d. CONCLUSIONES

Al comparar las cartas escritas por los profesores nativos de inglés como lengua extranjera con las cartas escritas en los manuales escolares de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2, se demostró que, en estas últimas, algunos de los elementos comparados habían sido simplificados. En efecto, se pudo observar una frecuencia mucho menor de frases hechas que contienen verbos modales y que son empleadas más de dos veces en peticiones en las mismas. También se observó una gama menos variada de estructuras a las cuales pertenecen los verbos modales y de estrategias cohesivas como cadenas cohesivas y adverbios, frases adverbiales, frases nominales y conjunciones que agregan peticiones que contienen verbos modales en el inicio de los párrafos.

Ciertas diferencias también se detectaron entre las cartas escritas por los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2 y por los profesores nativos de inglés como lengua extranjera en relación al uso de los verbos modales. En efecto, se ha observado una frecuencia significativamente menor de los verbos modales utilizados en tiempo pasado en las cartas de petición formales elaboradas por los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2, lo cual indica un tono más directo en las mismas. Una variedad limitada y/o diferente de palabras que acompañaron a los verbos modales en las frases hechas utilizadas más de dos veces en peticiones y en las cadenas cohesivas también empleadas en peticiones, pero, al mismo tiempo, una gama más amplia de estructuras en las cuales ocurrieron los verbos modales fueron observadas en las cartas escritas por los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2.

Además, los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2 emplearon menos adverbios y adjetivos junto a los verbos modales. También alteraron el orden de las palabras comúnmente empleado por los locutores nativos de inglés en peticiones y formularon peticiones verbosas. Por último, en las cartas escritas por los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2 se observó un

porcentaje más alto de peticiones directas en oraciones afirmativas que en las cartas escritas por los profesores nativos de inglés como lengua extranjera.

El presente estudio luego sugiere que los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2 cuya lengua materna es el español combinen el uso de manuales escolares con la lectura de textos escritos por locutores nativos de inglés en el momento de aprender a escribir peticiones en inglés. El propósito de esta sugerencia se funda en la necesidad de la incorporación de las estructuras a las que pertenecen los verbos modales, de las palabras que los acompañan y de las frases hechas a las que pertenecen utilizadas por los locutores nativos a las cartas redactadas por los estudiantes de inglés lengua extranjera nivel B2 cuya lengua materna es el español. Asimismo, esta recomendación tiene como finalidad la eliminación de las peticiones anómalas y el incremento de la variedad de estrategias de petición en las mismas.

La presente investigación recomienda también la incorporación de las cadenas cohesivas que contienen verbos modales en peticiones empleadas en las cartas redactadas por los locutores nativos de inglés a las cartas escritas por estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2 cuya lengua materna es el español. Esta sugerencia tiene como finalidad una mejor organización del texto a través de la utilización de una amplia variedad de estructuras que contengan verbos modales. Finalmente, se recomienda que los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera nivel B2 cuya lengua materna es el español reciban información sobre las diferencias entre los efectos de predisposición de los locutores nativos de inglés y de español en la elaboración de peticiones formales e informales y sobre las diferencias culturales de los mismos.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ANOVA	Analysis of variance
BNCS	British National Corpus Spoken
BNCW	British National Corpus Written
CF	Collocational Factor
CLC	Cambridge Learner Corpus
CW	Content Words
DDL	Data-driven learning
EF	Expected Frequency
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ESL	English as a Second Language
FW	Function Words
ICLE	International Corpus of Learner English
LC	Learner Corpus
LCF	Learner Corpus Formal
LCFP	Primary modals in LCF
LCFS	Secondary modals in LCF
LCI	Learner Corpus Informal
LCIP	Primary modals in LCI
LCIS	Secondary modals in LCI
LD	Lexical Density
L1	First Language
L1English	English as a First Language
L1 Spanish	Spanish as a First Language
NNS	Non-Native Speakers
NS	Native Speakers
L2	Second Language

TC	Teacher Corpus
TCF	Teacher Corpus Formal
TCFP	Primary modals in TCF
TCFS	Secondary modals in TCF
TCI	Teacher Corpus Informal
TCIP	Primary modals in TCI
TCIS	Secondary modals in TCI
TEFL	Teaching English as a Foreign Language
TESL	Teaching English as a Second Language
TXTC	Textbook Corpus
TXTCF	Textbook Corpus Formal
TXTCFP	Primary modals in TXTCF
TXTCFS	Secondary modals in TXTCF
TXTCI	Textbook Corpus Informal
TXTCIP	Primary modals in TXTCI
TXTCIS	Secondary modals in TXTCI
WH	Words that start with <i>h</i> or <i>wh</i> and which head questions.

LIST OF SYMBOLS

\bar{x}	Mean
n	Number
t	t score
r_s	Spearman's rank order correlation
p	Significance
=	Equal
>	Bigger
<	Smaller
/	Divided by
x	Multiplied by
f	Frequencies

ABSTRACT

This study is based on three premises. Research has shown that English as a foreign language (EFL) textbooks may simplify the language taught and, consequently, give a partial description of English as a first language (L1 English). It has also revealed that EFL learners find it difficult to convey modality in English as L1 English speakers do and, consequently, that they use English modal verbs differently from L1 English speakers. In this study, these three premises have been approached within the domain of requests. Indeed, research has also found that L1 Spanish speakers may be more direct than L1 English speakers when making requests.

Based on this theoretical background, the objective of this research is to compare modal verb primings in a set of formal and of informal letters of request written by a sample of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners, a sample of native teachers of EFL and in a sample of B2 EFL textbooks.

The methodology consisted in comparing modal verb frequencies, the frequencies of modal verb collocations, the frequencies of prefabricated lexical items containing modal verbs and used in requests, the position of modal verbs at sentence level in requests, the colligations of modal verbs in theme and rheme position at sentence level in requests, the position of modal verbs at paragraph level in requests, the use of cohesive devices in requests containing modal verbs at the beginning of paragraphs, the position of modal verbs at text level in requests, the colligations of modal verbs in requests in the first paragraphs of letters and the frequencies of cohesive chains containing modal verbs and used in requests in the formal and in the informal letters written by/in the three samples. Parametric and non-parametric statistical tools were used to work out significant differences.

The results showed that, indeed, the letters contained in the sample of B2 EFL textbooks simplified modal verb primings if compared with those in the letters written by the native teachers of EFL. This was reflected in smaller ranges of prefabricated lexical items containing modal verbs and occurring two or more times in requests, of modal verb colligations, of cohesive chains containing modal verbs and used in requests and of adverbs/adverbial phrases, noun phrases or conjunctions that add requests with modals in theme position at paragraph level.

As regards the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners, they used modal verbs differently from the native teachers of EFL. This was reflected in significantly lower frequencies of past modal verbs per formal letter, in the use of a limited and/or different range of modal verb collocations in prefabricated lexical items containing modal verbs and occurring two or more times in requests as well as in cohesive chains containing modal verbs and used in requests in the letters written by the former group, but in a wider range of modal verb colligations in the same letters. What is more, the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners used fewer adverbs and adjectives in modal verb collocations in requests. They also employed wordy requests as well as non-standard word order. Furthermore, a higher percentage of affirmative statements were observed in the direct requests of the letters written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners than in those written by the native teachers of EFL.

This study suggests L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners' knowing why NS write requests in the way they do and analysing how this differs cross-culturally and also cross-linguistically from L1 Spanish. This study also recommends that L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners' supplement textbook material with text written by native speakers (NS) when learning to write requests. The aim of these suggestions is for them to incorporate the modal verb collocations, modal verb colligations, prefabricated lexical items and cohesive devices used by NS into their formal and informal requests with a view to doing away with non-standard requests and to widening the range of request strategies available to them.

INTRODUCTION

CORPUS LINGUISTICS AND ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING: A FRUITFUL PARTNERSHIP

Corpus linguistics investigation has existed since the beginning of linguistics enquiry (Tognini-Bonelli, 2001) with a view to “ [...] studying the use of real language in written and spoken discourse both across corpora of data and also with reference to the functions of language in social institutions ” (Stubbs, 1996: 22). However, it has been since the 1960s that large-scale projects in the English-speaking world have been carried out to collect real language data as a result of the fact that some linguists had discovered that language descriptions contained grammar rules that were not applied in authentic text (Teubert, 2004¹). Two examples of these large-scale projects have been Randolph Quirk’s *Survey of English Usage* (Quirk & Greenbaum, 1989, 1990) and Sinclair’s *Cobuild Project* (Clear, 1988).

These two projects have had important pedagogical implications for two reasons: they started to incorporate evidence of real language use in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and English as a Second Language (ESL) learner materials such as grammars² and dictionaries³ and to make Teaching English as a

¹ More relevant information about corpus linguistics methodology will be provided in the *Theoretical Background* in chapter two.

² *A Grammar of Contemporary English, A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language, A Student’s Grammar of the English Language* and *A University Grammar of English*.

Foreign Language (TEFL) and Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) experts aware of the mismatches between the language rules that textbook and grammar writers prescribe that EFL/ESL learners must use and naturally occurring language. Indeed, these mismatches have been reported by different writers since then (Holmes, 1988, Kennedy, 1992, Willis, 1993a, Willis, 1993b, Lewis, 1996, Stubbs, 1996, Sinclair, 1997, Tognini-Bonelli, 2001, Lewis, 2001a, Römer, 2004, Nesselhauf, 2004, Conrad, 2004, Hoey, 2005, Meyer, 2006, Gouverneur, 2008 & Paquot, 2008). What is more, twenty years after Quirk's endeavour, the importance of the application of corpus linguistics findings in EFL/ESL teaching made Hoey (2005) conclude that “[...] there is no aspect of the teaching and learning of a language that can afford to ignore what corpus investigation can reveal” (Hoey, 2005: 150). If this gap between abstract and prescriptive grammar rules and real language use is to be bridged, it may be wondered how corpus investigation has contributed to EFL/ESL textbooks and educators teaching EFL/ESL learners to use the English language as native speakers (NS) do. The answers to this question have revolved around two concepts: *collocation* and *priming*⁴.

The first concept, *collocation*, “[...] has been defined as ‘the occurrence of two or more words within a short space of each other in a text’ (Sinclair, 1991: 170)” (Barnbrook, 1998: 87⁵). Nevertheless, learning the statistical significance of

³ The *Collins Dictionary of the English Language* and the *Collins COBUILD English Language Dictionary*.

⁴ These two concepts are linked to *Data Driven Learning*. This approach will be discussed in *chapter two*.

⁵ “Jones and Sinclair (1974) claim that the probabilities of lexical items occurring in English are generally affected by collocational norms within a span of up to four words” (Aston & Burnard, 1998: 13). Collocational priming will be discussed in *chapter two*.

the accompaniment of two or more words is far from being the ultimate goal of TESL/TEFL. Aston and Burnard (1998) explain that “The tendency for one word to occur with another has both grammatical and semantic implications.” (Aston & Burnard, 1998: 14).

To illustrate the grammatical implications, Hoey (2001a) compares the colligations of the words *accountant*, *actor*, *actress*, *architect* and *carpenter* in a corpus taken from the *Guardian* newspaper which he himself has built. The author concludes that these five words behave differently even though they all denote professions. A case in point is the word *carpenter*, which collocates with an indefinite article in 42 % of its occurrences as compared to the second highest 26 % of the occurrences of *accountant*, or the word *actress*, which is even a more significant example since it appears in apposition in 31 % of its occurrences (*actress Debra Winger*, for instance) as compared to the all-low two per cent of the occurrences of the word *carpenter*.

As for the semantic implications, Aston and Burnard (1998) argue that “[...] the habitual collocations of some words mean that they tend to assume the positive or negative connotations of their typical environments – a particular *semantic prosody*” (Aston & Burnard, 1998: 14). This is clearly exemplified by Stubbs (2002), who observes that, in a corpus of 120 million words, the 50 most frequent collocates in a span of 3:3 of the 38,000 occurrences of the verb *cause* are all words that have unpleasant connotations (Stubbs, 2002: 45⁶). However, according to Hoey (2005), there is semantic association when words collocate with others that belong to the same semantic set. The author illustrates this concept with the noun *consequence*. In the *Guardian* corpus and in the *Bank of*

⁶ Stubbs (2002) provides the most frequent collocates of the word *cause* in his book. The first five are CAUSE < problem (s) 1806, damage 1519, death (s) 1109, disease 591, concern 598 >, which sometimes occur in larger constructions such as *cause considerable damage* and *cause great problems*.

English one, the writer discovers that *consequence* is pre-modified by an adjective in about 25% of its occurrences⁷. *Consequence* collocates with adjectives that belong to the field of underlying logic, e.g. *logical consequence*, of negative assessment, e.g. *disastrous consequence*, of seriousness, e.g. *serious consequence*, of unexpectedness, e.g. *unforeseen consequence*, etc. It is believed that semantic associations such as those of *cause* and *consequence* exist because repeated encounters with these collocations prime the speaker to use them in the same way (Hoey, 2005). Indeed, Hoey (n.d.) adds a third factor that aids in the understanding of why words collocate in spoken and written production: the subversiveness and pervasiveness of collocations.

“Collocations – recurrent combinations of words – are both pervasive and subversive. Their pervasiveness is widely recognized in corpus linguistics; probably all lexical items have collocations [...]” (Hoey, 2005: 3). A lot of attention has been given to this aspect (Hoey, 2005) as all the studies that have focused on word combinations have cast light on collocational use. This assertion is evidenced by the variety of names that word sequences made up of collocations have received: *lexical phrases*, *composites*, *gambits*, *routine formulae*, *phrasemes*, *prefabricated routines and patterns*, *sentence stems*, *formulae*, and *formulaic language* (Hunston & Francis, 2000). However, according to Hoey (2005), the subversiveness of collocations has been given much less attention because it is more difficult to account for⁸. “[...] any explanation of the pervasiveness of collocation is required to be psychological because...collocation is fundamentally a psychological concept”, explains Hoey,

⁷ A description of the *Bank of English* corpus will be provided in *chapter two*.

⁸ Traditionally, this issue has been within the domain of psycholinguistics. “The concern of psycholinguistics is how expert speakers of a language store and retrieve the language system, and how learners (of a first or second language) acquire the language” (Hunston & Francis, 2000: 11).

and goes on to add that “The most appropriate psychological concept would seem to be that of priming [...]” (Hoey, 2005: 7). The theory of priming advances that the subversiveness of collocations can only be accounted for by the fact that “[...] every word is mentally primed for collocational use.” (Hoey, 2005: 8). Nonetheless, not only does collocation happen at word level but it also exists at text level, which has been defined as *text collocation*.

“Words...may be primed positively or negatively to participate in cohesive chains of different and distinctive types (textual collocation)” (Hoey, 2005: 115⁹). Hoey (2005) illustrates how the word *locomotive* is primed to be used in cohesive chains in the following example in a text by Robert Firsk: *a wonderful 19th-century rack-and-pinion railway locomotive* chains with *the wonderful old Swiss loco, the latest state-of-the-art locomotive* and with *train*¹⁰. Besides long chains such as these, Hoey (2005) suggests that writers are also primed to create cohesion by means of shorter cohesive chains, a case in point being *for one thing* and *for another* in this introduction.

After dealing with the concepts of *priming* and *collocation*, it is possible to answer the question raised above: how corpus investigation has contributed to EFL/ESL textbooks and educators teaching EFL/ESL learners to use the English language as NS do. Hunston and Francis (2000) explain that “If the learner wishes to sound ‘natural’, ‘idiomatic’, or ‘native-like’, it is argued, he or she needs to use

⁹ The theory of lexical priming introduces another concept: *textual colligation*, which complements that of *textual collocation*. However, with the aim of introducing the idea of *textual priming* this definition will do, whereas that of *textual colligation* will be introduced in *chapter one* and fully developed in *chapter two*.

¹⁰ This chain comes from the first two paragraphs of *The Irresistible Romance of a Steam Train Scarred with the Bullet Holes of Battle*, by Robert Firsk. Source: *The Independent*, Saturday 12th February 2005: 37 (Hoey, 2005).

the collocations, the phraseologies and the patterns of English that native speakers automatically choose” (Hunston & Francis, 2000: 268). Consequently, “Researchers who are interested in language teaching place importance upon lexical phrases because of their frequency and their importance to a ‘nativelike’ production of the language” (Hunston & Francis, 2000: 10). Indeed, bearing in mind that the primings of non-native speakers (NNS) may differ in their collocational use from those of NS, several studies have carried out comparative analyses of collocations and word frequencies in corpora containing text written and spoken by NS and NNS (Hinkel, 1995, Neff, Martínez & Rica, 2001, Neff, Dafouz, Herrera, Martínez, Rica, Díez, Prieto & Sancho, 2003, Camiciottoli, 2004, Neff, Ballesteros, Rica, Díez & Prieto, 2004, Mason, 2007, Montero, Watts & García Carbonell, 2007, Neff Van aertselaer, 2008 & Paquot, 2008), or between textbook English corpora and authentic English corpora (Holmes, 1998, Conrad, 2004 & Römer, 2004). These studies have had important pedagogical implications for two reasons. For one thing, because they have brought to light what aspects of EFL/ESL textbook English need to be worked on and improved for such materials to prime the learner to use the English language as NS do. For another, because they have contributed with data describing how EFL/ESL learners are primed to use the English language and how these primings differ from those of NS, the challenge being to narrow the gap between EFL/ESL and English as a first language (L1 English) by identifying the NS’ primings the EFL/ESL learner would need to acquire. However, surprisingly few, if any, studies have shown a triangular comparison of EFL/ESL, L1 English and textbook English¹¹.

With these facts in mind, the present study is based on the assumption that comparing and contrasting corpora of native EFL teachers’ English with corpora of EFL learners’ English and corpora of EFL textbook English is an interesting

¹¹ In fact, none at all to our knowledge.

endeavour that has useful learning applications¹². It allows the researcher to establish similarities and differences between the English of two samples of important priming agents (native teachers of EFL and EFL textbooks (Holmes 1988 & Hoey, 2005)), which in many contexts are still relied on as the sole sources of priming, and the English of the recipient of the priming process (the EFL learner). With this goal in mind, a set of words, a genre and a sample had to be selected.

As for the set of words, it was decided that modal verbs were a suitable word group since, syntactically, they are a closed and well-defined class (Perkins, 1983 & Murphy, 2010). At the same time, their use depends on intertwined factors, such as degree of formality, tentativeness and politeness (amongst others), which makes the set of modals a complex item for the EFL learner to prime as several studies have shown (Holmes, 1988, Hinkel, 1995, Neff et al, 2001, Neff et al, 2003, Keck & Biber, 2004, Neff et al, 2004, Dafouz, Núñez & Sancho, 2007, Mason, 2007, Montero et al, 2007, Neff Van aertselaer, 2008 & Debbie, 2009).

With respect to the genre, only one had to be chosen since priming is genre specific: NS are primed to use language differently depending on the task and on its context (Biber, 1992, McCarthy, 1993, Collins, 1996, Tribble, 2001, Stubbs, 2002, Keck & Biber, 2004, Dedaić, 2004 & Hoey 2005). Additionally, this genre had to be relevant to the EFL learners' learning context and had to guarantee a substantial frequency of modals. Letter writing and, more specifically, formal letters of request and informal ones are important components of many

¹² From now onwards the term EFL will be used in lieu of EFL/ESL as a result of the fact that this research will be conducted in an EFL context. By learning EFL it is meant the learner learns English in a geographical place where English is not the main language of communication. By contrast, learning ESL means the learner, whose L1 is not English, learns English in a geographical place where English is the dominant language.

international and national EFL exams at B2 level (Tribble, 2001) which sooner or later the EFL learner may have to produce and which require the use of modal verbs.

The choice of the last element, the sample, was threefold as it required the selection of three comparable sample types: one of textbooks, one of NS and one of NNS. Opting for a set of EFL textbooks written by NS and which are not only aimed at the same EFL learner profile but which also contain formal letters of request and informal ones would make a homogeneous textbook sample. To this end, a sample of formal and of informal letters of request in ten B2 EFL textbooks was collected¹³. As a consequence, a sample of formal and of informal letters of request written by Spanish as a first language (L1 Spanish) EFL learners at the same level, B2, was built. It was decided that these two samples, the textbook English and the EFL learners' ones, would be compared with a sample of formal and of informal letters of request written by native teachers of EFL for the reasons established above: not only are they NS, but also essential priming agents. Indeed, this study will find out whether the sample of B2 EFL textbooks provides a significant number of modal verb primings in letters of request, whether these modal verb primings differ from those that appear in the NS' letters and whether the sample of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners are sufficiently primed to sound native-like when using modals in their letters.

¹³ At B2 level, a speaker “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” (Council of Europe, 2001: 24).

Thus, the main objective of this research is to compare modal verb primings in a set of formal and of informal letters of request written by a sample of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners, a sample of native teachers of EFL, and in a sample of B2 EFL textbooks. More specific information about the objectives and research questions of this thesis will be given in the next chapter.

The following is an outline of this thesis. Chapter one will include a more detailed description of the research problem. It will contain definitions of terms relevant to this research, the statement of the problem, the objectives and research questions, as well as the significance, the assumptions and the limitations of this study. Chapter two will provide the theoretical background to the context and objectives of this research. Chapter three will introduce the methodology used¹⁴. Chapter four will present the findings gathered after data collection. These findings will be discussed in chapter five, while chapter six will contain the conclusions related to the pedagogical implications of the discussion of the findings and suggest further research possibilities. Relevant appendixes and the bibliography will follow.

¹⁴ The methodology chapter (*chapter three*) will include the methodological approach, the research design, the methods used for data collection, the validity and reliability of the data as well as the data collection and analysis procedure (Bitchener, 2010: 111).

CHAPTER I

THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

MODAL VERBS: THE EFL LEARNERS' ALBATROSS?

As anticipated in the *introduction*, this chapter will state the research problem, set the objectives of the study, introduce the research questions linked to these objectives, and then discuss the significance, the assumptions and the limitations of this research. Before this is done, those concepts that are essential to the objectives and research questions will be introduced. Therefore, it must be explained that this is not a literature review of the terms in question, which will be presented in the *Theoretical Background (chapter two)*.

1.1 DEFINITION OF TERMS

The *introduction* advanced the macro objective of this study: to compare modal verb primings in a set of formal and of informal letters of request written by a sample of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners, a sample of native teachers of EFL, and in a sample of B2 EFL textbooks. This comparison will be carried through by adopting the framework used by Tribble (2001) in *Small Corpora and Teaching Writing. Towards a Corpus-Informed Pedagogy of Writing*. This framework is based on one originally proposed by Bhatia (1993¹⁵) and used by Tribble (2001) to consider “[...] ways in which teachers and learners can apply corpus

¹⁵ BHATIA, VK. (1993): *Analyzing Genre: Language Use in Professional Settings*, London, Longman.

methodologies to a micro corpus of web-published ‘leaflets’ as part of a strategy for developing a capacity to write such texts” (Tribble, 2001: 381). The framework consists of three parts:

- An analysis of lexico-grammatical features.
- An analysis of text-pattern or textualisation.
- An analysis of the structural interpretation of the text-genre (Tribble, 2001).

The first analysis aims at finding out about the word frequencies, calculating the Lexical Density (LD) and identifying the word clusters of the text-genre in question.

The second analysis intends to find the position of keywords (or the words under investigation, in this case *modal verbs*) at sentence and paragraph level in the text-genre under scrutiny. This position may be the beginning or end of sentences and paragraphs (theme and rheme positions). It is worth pointing out that this analysis may also apply to word clusters, which can also be in theme and/or rheme position.

The third analysis has the objective of establishing the main sections and cohesive devices of the text-genre under investigation.

After introducing the three elements of the analytic framework, the concepts involved in each one will be defined.

1.1.1 LEXICO-GRAMMATICAL FEATURES

The *introduction* presented the term *collocation*, which “[...] has been defined as ‘the occurrence of two or more words within a short space of each other in a text’ (Sinclair 1991, 170)” (Barnbrook, 1998: 87). Collocations consist of a *node* and its *collocates*. Sinclair (1991) uses the term “[...] *node* for the word that is being studied, and the term *collocate* for any word that occurs in the specified environment of a node” (Sinclair, 1991: 115). This specified environment is the *span*. “A ‘span’ is the number of word-forms before and/or after the node (e.g. 4:4, 0:3) [...]” (Stubbs, 2002: 29). The distance of the collocate from the node is the *span position*: “[...] the span position of a collocate is the number which specifies the distance of the collocate from the node” (Ooi, 1998: 76), and “[...] can be given as N-1 (one word to the left of the node), N+3 (three words to the right), and so on” (Stubbs, 2002: 29). In Ooi’s citation, the span position of the collocate *distance* with respect to the node *specifies* is + *two*, while that of *number* is - *two*. In a span of 4:4 within the node *specifies* in the same citation, the following chunk would be obtained:

<i>is</i>	<i>the</i>	<i>number</i>	<i>which</i>	<i>specifies</i>	<i>the</i>	<i>distance</i>	<i>of</i>	<i>the</i>
-4	-3	-2	-1	<i>Node</i>	+1	+2	+3	+4

Only *word-forms* can be *nodes* since *lemmas* are abstract categories. Stubbs explains that

“Word-forms are the only lexical units which are directly observable. They are the units which occur in actual texts, and, in a written text, they are strings of letters separated by spaces or punctuation marks. In fact, they provide us with a definition of a text, which consists of a linear string of word forms. In a written text, they occur one after the other in space; in a spoken text, one after another in time” (Stubbs, 2002: 26).

A *lemma* is the base form of *word-forms* (Oakes, 2003). Sinclair (1991) says that when people “[...] talk of ‘the word *come*’, meaning *come* or *comes* or *coming* [...]” (Sinclair, 1991: 41), in actuality, it is the lemma *come* they refer to. *Come*, *comes*, *came* and *coming* are all word-forms that are related to the lemma *come*. Word-forms may be counted in any corpus, which has been defined as

“[...] a text collection that has been designed for linguistic research, in order to represent some aspect of the language. It could be a collection from a given text-type (such as casual conversation, scientific research articles or science fiction novels), or it could be designed to sample as wide a range of text-types as possible, including written and spoken, formal and informal, fiction and non-fiction, language produced by or for children and adults, and texts from different historical periods” (Stubbs, 2002: 25).

Each occurrence of a word-form in a corpus is a *token*, and the *frequency of occurrence* of a word-form in a corpus is the number of times it appears in it. The frequency of occurrence of a given word-form in a corpus may be calculated by software packages called *concordancing programs* or *concordancers*. “These programs allow the user to search for specific target words in a corpus, providing exhaustive lists for the occurrences of the word in context” (Biber, Conrad & Reppen, 1998: 15). Each occurrence of any word-form becomes a node and it is accompanied by a definite number of word-forms that precede it and follow it, i.e. its span. Once the occurrences of all the word-forms in context are obtained, it is possible “[...] to pick out significant patterns and subtle distinctions that are buried in literally thousands of concordance lines. The unaided human mind simply cannot discover all the significant patterns, let alone group them and rank them in order of importance” (Church, Gale, Hanks, Hindle, Bell Laboratories & Oxford University Press, 1991: 115). The discovery of these significant patterns have led corpus linguists to argue that, when L1 English speakers speak and write, they rely on a bank of *prefabricated lexical items*¹⁶ (Lewis, 2001c) which they combine depending on the communicative need. In the *Theory of Priming*, Michael Hoey suggests how NS acquire and why they use these prefabricated lexical items, which may be clearly seen and easily obtained by means of concordancers:

¹⁶ This term will be defined in *chapter two*.

“[...] each time we encounter a word (or syllable or combination of words), we subconsciously keep a record of the context and co-text of the word, so that cumulatively as we re-encounter the word (or syllable or combination of words) we build up a record of its collocations (Hoey, 2007a: 7-8).

It is important to point out that one of the most important findings thanks to the use of the concordancer has been the link between the frequencies of prefabricated lexical items and the genre in question, i.e. that primings are genre-specific. “[...] we prime words or word sequences...in a range of social contexts, and the priming...takes account of who is speaking or writing, what is spoken or written about and what genre is being participated in [...]” (Hoey, 2005: 13). Hoey (2005) mentions who and what is involved in interacting; genre is why interactions take place.

A genre is a “[...] text categorization made on the basis of external criteria relating to author/speaker purpose” (Biber, 1995: 68). Biber provides the example of the general category *speeches*, which “[...] might be considered as a ‘way of speaking’...while the specific categories might be considered as the ‘genres’” (Biber, 1995: 68), e.g. sermons, lectures, political speeches, statements in court, etc (Biber, 1995). In the context of this research, the general category is *letter writing*, while the genre in question is *letters of request*.

Once the concordancing lines and word-form frequencies in a corpus have been obtained, it is possible to work out a few calculations that can measure the LD of a text as well as the attraction of a node to its collocates. In this research, the nodes under scrutiny will be modal verbs. *Modal verbs* are a specific class of verbs that “[...] add certain kinds of meaning connected with certainty, or with obligation and freedom to act [...]” (Swan, 2005: 353), i.e. “They express stance

meanings, related to possibility, necessity, obligation, etc” (Biber, Conrad & Leech, 2007: 174¹⁷). Amongst these calculations¹⁸, the following will be cited:

- “The lexical density (LD) of a text is the proportion of lexical words expressed as a percentage” (Stubbs, 2002: 41). A study conducted by Ure (1971¹⁹) and cited by Stubbs (2002) found out that the LD of written text ranges from 36 to 57 % while, in spoken text, it may range from 24 to 43 %.
- The expected frequency (EF) of the collocates of a node within a certain span. This is done by figuring out, let us say in the context of this study, the frequencies of the collocates of the modal verbs that occur in the sample of letters written by the NS first, and then by comparing their expected frequencies in the sample of letters written by the NNS (based on their frequencies in the letters written by the NS) with the real ones. (Barnbrook, 1998).
- The collocational factor (CF) shows the strength of the collocation of a node with its collocates. It calculates the frequency of the collocation of a node with a collocate as a percentage of the frequency of the node and/or of the collocate (Handl, 2008).

¹⁷ A discussion of modal verbs will take place in Chapter 2, *Theoretical Background*.

¹⁸ The formulae of these calculations will be presented, explained and illustrated in *chapter three, Methodology*.

¹⁹ URE, J. (1971): “Lexical Density and Register Differentiation”, in *Applications of Linguistics*, PERREN G. & TRIM JLM. (Editors), London, Cambridge University Press, 443-452.

- The *t-score* makes it possible to calculate any significant difference between the expected occurrence of a collocate within a certain span of its node and its real frequency within that span. (Barnbrook, 1998).

1.1.2 TEXT PATTERN OR TEXTUALISATION

Hoey (2005) defines *colligation* as follows:

1. “the grammatical company a word or word sequence keeps (or avoids keeping) either within its group or at a higher rank;
2. the grammatical functions preferred or avoided by the group in which the word or word sequence participates;
3. the place in a sequence that a word or word sequence prefers or (avoids)” (Hoey, 2005: 43).

At text level, for example, “Every word is primed to occur in, or avoid, certain positions within the discourse; these are its textual colligations” (Hoey, 2005: 13).

When a word-form or prefabricated lexical item is used in initial position in a sentence, paragraph or text, it is in theme position. Conversely, when a word-form or prefabricated lexical item is employed after the beginning of a sentence, paragraph or text, it is in rheme position (Hoey, 2005 & Tribble, 2001). For measurable purposes, in this study, theme position at sentence level means anything that comes before the main verb. If the subject comes before the main verb, it is in theme position. If the subject comes after the main verb, it is in rheme position (Hoey, 2005). At paragraph level, theme position entails the first

sentence and rheme position those that appear afterwards. At text-level, theme position comprises the first paragraph, rheme position those that follow. Nonetheless, Hoey (2005) believes that “[...] Rheme is too big and crude a category (everything after the Theme) to permit interesting textual colligation claims [...]” (Hoey, 2005: 130) and that analyses are more precise if descriptive statements are made instead. The example the author provides is one by Bastow (2003²⁰). The writer has asserted that in US defence speeches, speakers are primed to use the prefabricated lexical item *our men and women in uniform* at the end of clauses in lieu of in rheme position. In the context of this research, it has been decided that the terms *rheme* and *theme* will be used as general ones, but that more specific descriptive information will be given regarding the position of modal verbs in the texts under investigation to use the analyses to the best possible account.

There is a final remark regarding word-form position which is worth considering. There are cases in which a word-form is primed to be in theme position at sentence level, but in rheme position at paragraph level, and the other way around. Hoey (2005) illustrates this with the following example. According to his findings based on his corpus of text from the *Guardian*, the word-form *consequence* is primed to be used in theme position at sentence level, but to avoid paragraph-initial and text-initial position. By contrast, the word-form *consequences* is less strongly primed to occur in theme position at sentence level, although it is primed to be employed in initial position at paragraph level and negatively primed to appear in text-initial position.

²⁰ BASTOW, T. (2003): *Friends and Allies: Binomials in a Corpus of US Defence Speeches*. Paper given at ASLA Symposium. Örebro University. November 6th.

1.1.3 STRUCTURAL INTERPRETATION

This refers to the general structure of a text. Cohesion guarantees some kind of organization in it. Cohesion “[...] may be crudely defined as the way certain words or grammatical features of a sentence can connect that sentence to its predecessors (and successors) in a text” (Hoey, 1992: 3). Sinclair (1993) calls the first connection *encapsulation*, i.e. “[...] there is an underlying structure to discourse where each new sentence makes reference to the previous one, and encapsulates the previous sentence in an act of reference” (Sinclair, 1993: 8), and the second connection *prospection*, which “[...] occurs where the phrasing of a sentence leads the addressee to expect something in the next sentence” (Sinclair, 1993: 12).

In this process of encapsulation and prospection, “Every word is primed to participate in, or avoid, particular types of cohesive relation in a discourse; these are its textual collocations.” (Hoey, 2005: 13). In the case of modal verbs in the context of formal and of informal letters of request in particular, it is expected that they will participate in formulaic prefabricated lexical items with the aim of requesting something to be done and/or information to be given; and since “[...] significant chunks of sentences certainly do recur frequently [...]” (Stubbs, 2002: 112) and part of the cohesion of a text is due to this recurrence (Stubbs, 2002), it is also expected that these formulaic prefabricated lexical items containing modal verbs will contribute to making the organization and structure of these letters cohesive. It must also be borne in mind that “[...] preferred mechanisms of cohesion differ in different text-types” (Stubbs, 2002: 120). Stubbs (2002) gives the example of another text-type, legal texts, whose prefabricated phrases have been used for centuries to create cohesive wills and testaments: *This is the last will and testament of me, I give the residue of my real and personal estate, and so*

on and so forth. In the same vein, it is hypothesized that the sample of native teachers of EFL and that of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners in this research are primed to use prefabricated lexical items containing modal verbs which may be unique to formal and to informal letters of request.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

When this research was planned, the point of departure was a combination of three problems that may be interrelated and that affect EFL learning:

1. EFL textbooks provide shortcuts for priming EFL learners that may simplify the language taught and, consequently, give a partial description of NS' primings.
2. Modality is a difficult learning area for EFL learners.
3. EFL learners use English modal verbs differently from L1 English speakers.

As a general rule, L1 English learners have more sources of priming than EFL learners do: L1 English learners are more often exposed to the target language in a wider variety of contexts than L1 Spanish EFL learners who learn English in a Spanish speaking environment are. This kind of situation led Hoey (2005) to argue that “[...] for many learners the classroom and the teaching materials used in the classroom provide the only context for priming [...]”, and that, as a result, the priming shortcuts these materials offer need to be helpful since

“While it is not possible to say that any set of primings are correct and another incorrect, it certainly is possible to say that someone’s primings are not in harmony with those of their likely listeners or readers and that they will accordingly sound unnatural to them” (Hoey, 2005: 186).

However, research has shown that “[...] the language of ELT textbooks falls very short indeed in terms of representing natural usage” (Tognini-Bonelli, 2001: 40). Tognini-Bonelli (2001) illustrates this statement with the way *any* is taught in pedagogic grammars. The author has found that a pedagogic grammar teaches *any* in contrast with *some*, and mainly to use it in negative sentences, questions, in expressions of doubt and after *if* and *whether*. The corpus of authentic English the author uses corroborates these uses, but, at the same time, it shows that *any* may also occur in other contexts. By looking up this word in the *Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary*, the following sentence was found:

1.1 *Any advice (= Whatever advice) that you can give me would be greatly appreciated*²¹.

None of the rules cited above apply to account for the use of *any* in this example.

The second problem, “[...] that modality is a complex and very important aspect of English which is not easy for ...second language learners to acquire”, stems from the fact that

²¹ WALTER, Elizabeth (Editor) (2005): *Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

“Modal expressions are complex because they express such a wide range of meanings and because the linguistic devices used do not relate to particular meanings in a convenient one-to-one relationship” (Holmes, 1988: 21).

Besides the linguistic complexity which is inherent in modal expressions, the author adds that what makes modal expressions particularly difficult for EFL learners is that modality is expressed in different languages and cultures in different ways. A good example of this is the conveyance of politeness, tentativeness and formality by means of modal expressions in requests in English as compared to other languages. House and Kasper (1981²²) in Holmes (1988) show that, in a study they conducted about the use of hedges by German speakers when making requests, these used fewer than English speakers, and therefore, “By English norms they would thus be judged as less polite because their requests would be heard as too direct [...]” (Holmes, 1988: 23). However, since speakers’ attitudes change in part depending on who the addressee is, who the interlocutors are and what the subject matter is (Dedaić, 2004), it was decided that it would be interesting to look into modal verb primings in formal and in informal letters of request separately in this thesis.

The third problem is strictly linked to the previous two. The effects of the complexity of modality on EFL English referred to above have received a lot of attention, particularly in the analyses of the use of English modal verbs by EFL learners. All the studies consulted in this thesis and discussed in *chapter 2* have

²² HOUSE, J & KASPER, G. (1981): “Politeness Markers in English and German”, in *Conversational Routine*, COULMAS, F. (Editor), The Hague, Mouton.

concluded that EFL/ESL learners are primed to use English modal verbs differently from L1 English speakers. Hinkel (1995), for instance, shows how EFL learners' culture may have an influence on their use of modal verbs. In a study concerning the use of modals by a sample of Asian ESL learners and American students, the writer finds out that the former, who, on average, had learnt English for 12.6 years and who had been living in the United States of America for about 2.4 years, used *must* and *should* in essay writing about the family, friendships and traditions, while their American counterparts used the modal *need* in the same contexts.

Following the arguments of the three paragraphs above, it may be suggested that differences in modal verb use between EFL learners and NS may be due to four factors: the complexity of the conveyance of modality, differences across languages and cultures (as problem two suggests), lack of primings and/or wrong primings (as problem one argues).

These three problems, the choice of genre accounted for in the *introduction* (letters of request) and Bhatia's framework in Tribble (2001) presented in the *Definition of Terms* led to the research objectives and questions that are introduced in the section that follows.

1.3 OBJECTIVES

Since the framework adopted by Tribble (2001) will be used in the analyses of this thesis, the objectives will be set with reference to the three analytic areas:

- Lexico-grammatical features.
- Text-pattern or textualisation.
- Structural interpretation of the text-genre (Tribble, 2001).

As for lexico-grammatical features, the objectives are:

1. To compare the frequencies of modal verbs in a set of formal and of informal letters of request written by a sample of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners with the frequencies of modal verbs in a set of formal and of informal letters of request written by a sample of native teachers of EFL and in a sample of B2 EFL textbooks.
2. To compare the frequencies of the collocates of modal verbs in a set of formal and of informal letters of request written by a sample of native teachers of EFL with the frequencies of the collocates of modal verbs in a set of formal and of informal letters of request written by a sample of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners and in a sample of B2 EFL textbooks.
3. To compare the frequencies of prefabricated lexical items containing modal verbs and used in requests in a set of formal and of informal letters of request written by a sample of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners with the frequencies of prefabricated lexical items containing modal verbs and used in requests in a set of formal and of informal letters of request written by a sample of native teachers of EFL and in a sample of B2 EFL textbooks.

With respect to textualisation, the objectives are:

4. To compare the position of modal verbs at sentence level in requests in a set of formal and of informal letters of request written by a sample of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners, by a sample of native teachers of EFL and in a sample of B2 EFL textbooks.

5. To compare the position of modal verbs at paragraph level in requests in a set of formal and of informal letters of request written by a sample of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners, by a sample of native teachers of EFL and in a sample of B2 EFL textbooks.
6. To compare the position of modal verbs at text level in requests in a set of formal and of informal letters of request written by a sample of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners, by a sample of native teachers of EFL and in a sample of B2 EFL textbooks.

In connection with the structure of the text-genre,

7. To compare the frequencies of cohesive chains containing modal verbs and used in requests in a set of formal and of informal letters of request written by a sample of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners with the frequencies of cohesive chains containing modal verbs and used in requests in a set of formal and of informal letters of request written by a sample of native teachers of EFL and in a sample of B2 EFL textbooks.

To sum up, the following research will comprise four quantitative variables as far as modal verbs are concerned: *the frequencies of modal verbs, the frequencies of the collocates of modal verbs, the frequencies of prefabricated lexical items containing modal verbs and used in requests, and the frequencies of cohesive chains containing modal verbs and used in requests*; as well as four qualitative variables: *position of modal verbs, text-genre, register and type of writer*. *Position of modal verbs* has three dimensions: *sentence level, paragraph level and text level*. At the same time, each of these dimensions comprises two: *theme position and rheme position*. *Text-genre* consists of one dimension: *letters of request*.

Register of two: formality and informality. Type of writer comprises three: L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners, native teachers of EFL and B2 EFL textbook writers.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following are the research questions linked to the objectives listed above.

1. Research has shown that NNS use modal verbs, not only less frequently, but also differently from NS. Has the sample of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners used modal verbs more or less often than the sample of native teachers of EFL? And how do these frequencies compare to the ones in the sample of B2 EFL textbooks? Are there any differences in the choice and frequencies of individual modal verbs between the sets of formal and of informal letters of request? If so, are these differences significant in the three samples? Finally, what is the LD in all the sets?
2. Research has shown that NNS differ in their collocational use from NS. What are the frequencies of the collocates of modal verbs in the set of formal and of informal letters of request written by the sample of native teachers of EFL, and how do they compare with the ones in the letters written by the sample of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners and in the sample of B2 EFL textbooks? What are the t-scores and CF of the verbs that collocate most frequently with modal verbs in the requests written by the sample of native teachers of EFL and how do they compare with theirs in the other two samples? And how do the real frequencies of these verbs in the letters written by the sample of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners and in the sample of B2 EFL textbooks compare with their expected ones using the

formal and the informal letters written by the native teachers of EFL as a reference?

3. Considering the frequencies of the prefabricated lexical items to which modal verbs belong in requests, are the ones in the formal and in the informal letters of request in the sample of B2 EFL textbooks similar to those in the formal and in the informal letters written by the native teachers of EFL and the other way around? Are the frequencies of prefabricated lexical items containing modal verbs and used in requests in the letters written by the sample of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners similar to the ones in the letters in the other two samples?
4. Where are modal verbs in requests placed at sentence level in the formal and in the informal letters of request written in the B2 EFL textbooks? How does the position of modal verbs at sentence level in requests in the letters written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners compare with the same position of modal verbs in the letters in the other two samples? Finally, how do the colligations of modal verbs in theme and rheme position at sentence level in requests in the formal and in the informal letters written in the sample of B2 EFL textbooks compare with those in the letters written by the other two samples?
5. Where are modal verbs in requests placed at paragraph level in the formal and in the informal letters of request written in the B2 EFL textbooks? How does the position of modal verbs in requests at paragraph level in the letters written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners compare with the same position of modal verbs in the letters in the other two samples? In addition, where are sentences making requests and containing modal verbs placed at paragraph level in the formal and in the informal letters of request written in the B2 EFL textbooks? How does this compare with the

letters written by the other two samples? Do requests with modal verbs at the beginning of paragraphs (theme position) play any role in the organisation of the letters written in/by the three samples? If so, how is this achieved in each sample of letters?

6. Where are modal verbs in requests placed at text level in the formal and in the informal letters of request written in the B2 EFL textbooks? How does the position of modal verbs in requests at text level in the letters written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners compare with the same position of modal verbs in the letters in the other two samples? What is more, what is the number of formal and of informal letters containing modal verbs in requests in the first paragraph in the set of letters written by the sample of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners, by the sample of native teachers of EFL and in the sample of B2 EFL textbooks? How do these numbers compare? Can any differences be established in connection with the colligation of modal verbs in requests in the first paragraphs?
7. Are there cohesive devices, more specifically cohesive chains, containing modal verbs and used in requests in the formal and in the informal letters of request written by the native teachers of EFL and in the ones in the sample of B2 EFL textbooks? How about the formal and the informal letters written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners? If so, which are they and how do their frequencies of occurrence compare?

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The significance of this study departs from the fact that it analyses the use of modal verbs, a complex target in any EFL learning context, in a text genre that is required in many international and national EFL exams and which is also part of

NS' linguistic production: letters of request. Besides, the analyses will be comprehensive: these will include a description of the frequencies of modal verbs, of their collocates and of the prefabricated lexical items and cohesive chains they belong in, as well as of their positions at sentence level, paragraph level and text level in requests.

However, the most important aspect of these analyses is their pedagogical implications. In effect, this research will help to answer two key questions relevant to using modal verbs when writing formal as well as informal letters of request: what to teach and why. Not only will it describe modal verb primings in a set of formal and of informal letters of request written by a sample of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners, but it will also provide data about modal verb primings in the same types of letters written by a sample of native teachers of EFL and, consequently, identify possible gaps. As for the sample of B2 EFL textbooks, important data about modal verb primings in their formal and in their informal letters of request and about how these primings compare with those in the letters written by the sample of native teachers of EFL will be gathered. As a result, findings about how different modal verb primings in the letters written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners are from those in the sample of letters written by the native teachers of EFL and in the B2 EFL textbooks will also be presented. Therefore, it is to be expected that this research will be clearly relevant to both language teaching professionals and EFL teaching material developers.

1.6 ASSUMPTIONS OF THE STUDY

It has been assumed that the sample of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners has been primed to use modal verbs in formal and in informal letters of request. However, it is highly probable that, even though these primings may be similar and that

some trends in the use of modals may be established when the data are analysed and the research questions answered, they will not be exactly the same for two reasons: differences in language input and in language output. For one thing, it is supposed that each learner in the sample of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners has had different amounts of exposure to the use of modal verbs in and/or outside the classroom in spite of the fact that they may have used the same or similar materials in previous and present courses. For another, the teachers the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners have had may have differed in the types and number of tasks requiring the use of modals that they have assigned them to produce and in the amount of feedback they have given them.

It has also been assumed that, although the native teachers of EFL participating in this study have had different teaching, professional and life experiences, their use of modal verbs in letters of request may be similar. EFL teachers are priming agents and, as such, they are often required to teach the language of EFL textbooks. Indeed, the sample of native teachers of EFL may have used the same or similar EFL textbooks to teach to write formal and also informal letters of request and, thus, be partly primed by them. As a consequence, it has been deduced that these primings may have had a bearing on the way they themselves are to write their letters. At the same time, it is also expected that the language of the letters written by the native teachers of EFL will be more complex than that of the letters written in the B2 EFL textbooks since, as opposed to authors of EFL textbooks who write text that will be read by NNS, native writers of letters addressed to other NS do not need to simplify the linguistic devices they count on if both the sender and the addressee are supposed to have a similar command of the language.

Finally, it has been supposed that, even though the writers of the letters of the B2 EFL textbook sample have relied on their intuition and on authentic linguistic data to decide on what makes an effective letter of request, in the selection process of the language to be taught, they may have done away with some of the language that may still exist in the letters written by the native teachers of EFL, since it is supposed the latter are to write their letters as L1 English speakers and without any kind of pedagogical intentions.

1.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

It has been presumed that the B2 EFL textbooks contain samples of a wide range of genres, e.g. letters of advice, of application, of complaint, narrations, reports, etc, to cater for B2 EFL learners' wide variety of needs. This means that they are not in a position to provide a big number of letters of request. If, in actuality, this number is too small, it is worth considering that, even though the number of letters of request written by the native teachers of EFL and by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners will intend to be larger, it will not be much larger than the number of letters taken from the B2 EFL textbooks for comparative reasons²³. The main weakness of small samples is that they cannot be representative of large populations, especially the observations that result from data concerning modal verb frequencies. By contrast, a realistic number of letters are recommended to carry out a detailed manual analysis of both cohesive devices containing modal verbs and modal verb positions alongside a quantitative analysis of modal verb frequencies. Hunston and Francis (2000) put it this way:

²³ Details about how the letter samples will be collected and the corpora built will be given in *chapter three, Methodology*.

“Annotation software involves several practical problems: automatic taggers and parsers have limited accuracy; if the alternative - manual annotation – is used, the size of the corpus that can be annotated is limited by the person-time available. Greenbaum et al (1996), for example, describe the study of complement clauses which is based on the manual annotation of a 2,000 word corpus” (Hunston & Francis, 2000: 19).

There are numerous examples of studies that rely on analyses of small corpora. A case in point is the one conducted by Tribble (2001) and cited in this chapter, which compares fourteen university web leaflets of Master of Arts in Applied Linguistics programmes among, probably, hundreds or thousands to be able to establish general trends about their organisation. As Kennedy (1992) argues, “It is not the size of a study which necessarily determines its relevance or importance for language teaching. Even a small study can reveal aspects of language use which could be the basis for whole new directions in research and language teaching” (Kennedy, 1992: 356).

The second limitation is that, as already explained, the NS’ letter sample with which the set of letters in the sample of B2 EFL textbooks will be compared will be written by native teachers of EFL. This entails both advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, interesting insights into how EFL teachers are primed to write letters of request and how these primings may influence the input EFL learners receive will be provided. On the other hand, EFL teachers are familiar with a variety of EFL textbooks and, as a consequence, as explained in the previous section, they may be partly primed to write as textbooks suggest the learners should as opposed to the layman. By contrast, carrying out a task that is typically done by EFL learners may also make teachers feel they are in the learners’ place and play, in a way, the role of the learner instead of theirs in a real

life task thus biasing them to write in a learnerish style. In addition, the native teachers of EFL who are to participate in this study differ in the type of English they speak and write: they are not meant to be the same nationality. This may affect the choice of modal verbs and patterns they use. At the same time, it was thought that this variety would also exist if teachers of the same nationality were chosen as there are regional differences within countries as well.

The third limitation stems from the fact that B2 EFL textbooks may differ in the number of letters they contain. This means that the weight of the English proposed by some textbook writers may prevail over other textbook writers' in any sample of letters from B2 EFL textbooks. To counteract the over representativeness effect, letters from different B2 EFL textbooks will be collected: ten in total.

Finally, it must be explained that, while the content of the letters written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners and the native teachers of EFL is expected to be based on the information given by the same set of instructions, the letters obtained from the B2 EFL textbooks are expected to have been both set in different contexts and situations and presented with pedagogical intentions. Consequently, because of these two differences, it is also to be expected that the textbook letters will inevitably differ from the letters written by the native teachers of EFL and by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners in the choice of vocabulary, in the text-pattern, in the structural interpretation, in modal verb collocations and in the use of prefabricated lexical items in requests, the confirmation of which is an important goal of this study.

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

A LOOK AT MODAL VERBS AND PRIMING

It has already been stated that the macro objective of this thesis is to compare modal verb primings in a set of formal and of informal letters of request written by a sample of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners, a sample of native teachers of EFL, and in a sample of B2 EFL textbooks. It has also been explained that this comparison will be carried through by using some of the tools of corpus linguistics methodology and that its findings are meant to have important pedagogical implications. Therefore there are certain topics that need to be discussed to facilitate a better understanding of the findings, of the discussions and of the conclusions of this study.

The first one will be that of *corpus*. This is because the three letter samples mentioned above will be used to build six different corpora (a corpus of formal letters and a corpus of informal ones from each sample) the comparisons of which will attain the objectives and answer the research questions of this thesis. Because of the learning implications of these comparisons, the application of corpus linguistics methodology in EFL teaching and learning and in the analyses of EFL textbooks as priming agents in language teaching and learning will also be discussed.

The second topic will be the target words: *modal verbs*. It can be observed that, even though modal verbs are a closed and well-defined class (Perkins 1983, Cruse 2004, Murphy 2010), there have been several discrepancies amongst linguists' grammars in the choice of the verbs that belong to it. A literature review

will be carried out with the aim of selecting a set of modals for the analyses. Considering this study focuses on comparing modal verb use by NS and NNS, a review of relevant research into this issue will also be provided. Furthermore, the fact that the modals under scrutiny are used in letters of request will necessarily mean looking into studies that have gone into the conveyance of requests by both groups.

In *chapter one*, it was explained that the structure of this research goes along three lines: an analysis of modal verbs as a lexico-grammatical feature of letters of request which contributes to the organization of their text-pattern and to their structural interpretation. As for *lexico-grammatical features*, *collocation* and *collocational priming* as two of the factors that may explain the construction of *prefabricated lexical items* containing modal verbs will be discussed. The term *prefabricated lexical item* is a general one and, as such, it may be argued that it comprises many others, e.g. *chunks*, *idioms*, *proverbs*, *formulaic phrases*, etc. A literature review of this terminology will be needed to define the concept *prefabricated lexical item* as well as to account for the decision to use it instead of others.

Given that the analysis of text-pattern will deal with the position of modal verbs at sentence, paragraph and text level, the fourth theme will be that of *colligation* at sentence level and of *textual colligation* at paragraph and text level. Because the text pattern and the structural interpretation of a given text are closely related since the latter identifies long and short cohesive chains that may appear in different places in it (it should be remembered that, in this study, the cohesive devices under scrutiny will contain modal verbs and be used in requests), the fifth issue will be that of *text collocation*. These three concepts, *colligation*, *textual colligation* and *text collocation*, were introduced in the *introduction* and in *chapter one* but, as anticipated in those sections, they will be reviewed in this chapter.

2.1 CORPUS LINGUISTICS METHODOLOGY

In *chapter one*, the definition of *corpus* provided by Stubbs (2002) was cited:

“[...] a text collection that has been designed for linguistic research, in order to represent some aspect of the language. It could be a collection from a given text-type (such as casual conversation, scientific research articles or science fiction novels), or it could be designed to sample as wide a range of text-types as possible, including written and spoken, formal and informal, fiction and non-fiction, language produced by or for children and adults, and texts from different historical periods” (Stubbs, 2002: 25).

The use of corpora for language description is not new. Tognini-Bonelli (2001) goes back to the nineteenth century and reports Bréal’s work, in which “[...] the study of language was simply equated with the *observation of data*; the laws that governed the historical development of meaning could only be discovered by looking at specific and observable phenomena” (Tognini-Bonelli, 2001: 51). But, at that time, Bréal was not alone in observing authentic language use. Kennedy (1992) mentions Kaeding, who “[...] is reported to have worked with over five thousand assistants on a corpus of eleven million words to gather statistical information on the German language relevant for the training of stenographers” (Kennedy, 1992: 335). Nonetheless, it has been since the invention of the computer and, consequently, the application of statistical tools to the automatic analyses of corpora that “[...] we have better descriptions of English available to us than ever before [...]” (Lewis, 2001b: 126). However, access to large amounts of data has not only provided better descriptions of the English language. It has also raised doubts about the depictions of language which

rely on NS' and/or linguists' intuitions alone, which have been defined as *intuition-based*, while placing emphasis on descriptive or *observation-based* (Aarts, 1996) approaches to the study of language.

This big divide between intuition-based and observation-based approaches to language description has been a matter of dispute between generative linguists and corpus linguists. Hoey (2005) puts it this way:

“Painting in a broad-brush stroke, traditional generative grammarians have derived their goals, if not their methods or descriptions, from Chomsky, and for them the distinction of a grammatical sentence from an ungrammatical one has been a central consideration. They have not been interested in probability of occurrence, only in possibility of occurrence” (Hoey, 2005: 152).

The main method of scientific enquiry of this school has been introspection (Stubbs, 1996) since the ability to produce an infinite number of sentences and to distinguish grammatical sentences from ungrammatical ones resulted from the speaker's linguistic competence. Then, to establish language rules it was not necessary to observe a substantial amount of authentic language evidence, since speakers could rely on their internal grammar to decide whether a given sentence was grammatically correct. Hoey (2005) goes on to say that

“Still painting with a broad brush, corpus linguists in contrast have derived their goals and methods in part from John Sinclair and his associates and in part from what concordancing software currently makes feasible. These linguists have typically seen their goal as the uncovering of recurrent patterns in the language, usually lexical but increasingly grammatical. They have not been much concerned with the single linguistic instance but with probability of occurrence, and their data have always been authentic” (Hoey, 2005: 152).

Within corpus linguistics methodology, two approaches to the observation of authentic language with a view to discovering regularities in language use have been identified: the *corpus-driven approach* and the *corpus-based approach* (Tognini-Bonelli, 2001). The former consists of building theoretical constructs based on the observation of these regularities in authentic language data alone. This method is cyclical since these constructs may be compared and contrasted with other existing data in further observations. Therefore, the source of scientific enquiry does not come from linguists' a priori ideas or intuitions; the cycle begins with observations that give rise to theory which is later contrasted with further data to challenge the existing theory, and so on and so forth. Stubbs (1996) questions this approach by arguing that "The linguist always approaches data with hypotheses and hunches, however vague" (Stubbs, 1996: 47).

In the corpus-based approach, by contrast, it is through the observation of authentic data that the linguist corroborates or rejects his/her a priori hypotheses (Murphy, 2010). These hypotheses are based on the linguist's intuitions and/or on his/her knowledge of the language obtained "[...] from language research based on other methods" (Hunston & Francis, 2000: 18). Sampson (1987) illustrates this approach by challenging "[...] one of the solidly-established rules of standard English ... by which a reflexive pronoun in isolation may not act as subject of its clause [...]" (Sampson, 1987: 19). While parsing the Lancaster-Oslo/ Bergen corpus manually, he came across the following sentence from an article on nuclear war:

2.1 *Each side proceeds on the assumption that itself loves peace, but the other side consists of warmongers*²⁴.

²⁴ *Parsing* means identifying the categories of speech to which word-forms in a given text belong. Parsing may also be done automatically by computer programs especially created for this purpose such as *CLAWS*, *WORDTAG*, *CHAINPROBS*,

This example could lead to the following reformulation of the rule: in the Lancaster-Oslo/Bergen corpus, a reflexive pronoun in isolation tends not to act as subject of itself. Still, this rule would need to be tested with further observations in the same corpus. The method of the corpus-based approach led Aarts (1996) to conclude that “An intuition-based grammar will therefore always be at the basis of an observation-based grammar; they are not two different things” (Aarts, 1996: 47).

When the backbone of this thesis was thought up, the corpus-based approach to language analysis was selected. This decision resulted from the fact that this study has a set of objectives and research questions which are based on general assumptions and previous research findings about the use of modal verbs and EFL textbook priming. These assumptions and findings are the three research problems that were presented in *chapter one*:

1. EFL textbooks provide shortcuts for priming EFL learners that may simplify the language taught and, consequently, give a partial description of NS' primings.
2. Modality is a difficult learning area for EFL learners.

TAGGIT, (Marshall, 1987), the *April System* (Sampson, 1992), etc. However, “Hardly any of the major grammatical systems of English...have simple, consistent patterns of realisation such that instances can be easily recognised by computer (computational analysis being necessary in practice to perform large-scale counting)” (Halliday & James, 1993: 34). In a study of modals in persuasive journalism, which will be cited in the following section, for example, Morley (2004) explains that he resorts to manual parsing since “[...] automatic tagging...is unfortunately not accurate enough to be totally reliable” (Morley, 2004: 71).

3. EFL learners use English modal verbs differently from L1 English speakers.

To confirm or reject these assumptions in a specific text-genre, letters of request, the use of modal verbs in six corpora of formal and of informal letters of request written by L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners, native teachers of EFL and in B2 EFL textbooks will be observed.

Having defined the approach to corpus linguistics methodology adopted in this study, the next step will be to define the corpora selected for the analyses of this thesis.

2.2 TYPES OF CORPORA

In the literature of corpus linguistics, different types of corpora have been identified. Aston and Burnard's (1998) comprehensive classification will be cited. In it, there are seven types:

Geographical Varieties: Examples of these are the Brown corpus (it contains American English text); the London-Lund Corpus, the British National Corpus and the Lancaster-Oslo Bergen Corpus (the three contain British English text (Biber et al, 1998)); and the International Corpus of English (it contains samples of English from "[...] the major English speaking countries where English is predominantly the native language...as well as the heavily populated countries where it is an official non-native language [...]") (Greenbaum, 1992: 171)). These corpora are usually very big in size because they are meant to represent the state of a variety of a language as a whole at a given time. They have often been used for comparative purposes.

Spoken Language Corpora: A case in point is the London-Lund Corpus. It contains little less than half a million words. If a bigger size is required, the BNCS component may be used instead. Generally speaking, spoken corpora have

usually been smaller than written ones for two reasons: spoken language may sometimes be difficult to obtain and it requires long hours to be transcribed. This has resulted in one of the main criticisms of corpus linguistics methodology: “Corpus studies often over-rely on written sources and tend to assume that the form of a lexical item is graphic, rather than phonemic” (Murphy, 2003: 7). This overreliance on written text may have affected the choice of the text-genre of this thesis: letters of request. However, as will be stated in the *Further research possibilities* section, a comparison of requests in both media, spoken language and written language, would also be a challenging enterprise.

Mixed corpora: A good example is the Bank of English. It was created at the University of Birmingham and comprises several corpora of spoken and of written text. Nakamura (1995), for example, uses it to compare the use of private, of public and of suasive verbs in spoken and in written English.

Historical corpora: They describe the state of a language at a given time in history. The example given by Aston and Burnard (1998) is the Helsinki corpus, which covers three historical periods: Old English, Middle English and Early Modern English.

Child and learner corpora: An instance of the former is the Polytechnic of Wales Corpus of Child Language. Examples of the latter will be provided in the *Learner Corpora* section.

Multilingual corpora: Aston and Burnard (1998) report the European Corpus Initiative, which has produced a corpus that contains samples of the major European languages as well as of Japanese and of Chinese amongst other languages.

Genre and topic specific corpora: an increasing interest in studies that deal with language description in and/or across different genres has given birth to a good number of genre-related corpora. A few will be cited. Biber et al (1998) report the use of the present tense, the past tense and agentless passives in four corpora containing either the Introduction, Methods, Results or Discussion

sections “[...] of nineteen medical articles published in 1985” (Biber et al, 1998: 124) . Tribble (2001) addresses the language and organisation of leaflets of MA in Applied Linguistics programmes in a micro corpus of fourteen samples. In studies about modal verbs in particular, Morley (2004) uses corpora of editorial articles to analyse the use of modals in persuasive journalism. Walsh (2004) uses a corpus of financial and business news articles to report the use of modal verbs to make predictions. Rezzano (2004) studies the expression of modality in a corpus containing 90 Discussion and Conclusion parts of research articles with a view to helping students “[...] develop and organise their knowledge store by having them practice writing qualitative explanations” (Rezzano, 2004: 101). However, perhaps one of the most comprehensive studies in the history of genre-based corpus research has been Biber’s *Variation across Speech and Writing* (1995), where the writer analyses the distribution of linguistic features (amongst them modal verbs) across corpora of 23 different text-genres. Two of these genres are very similar to the one in question in the present study:

“The professional letters were written in academic contexts but deal with administrative rather than intellectual matters. They are formal and directed to individuals, but their purposes are both informational and interactional. The personal letters are written to friends and relatives; they range from intimate to friendly. Most of the letters are written by Americans, but some of them are written by Canadian or British writers” (Biber, 1995: 66).

As anticipated in the *introduction*, the possible uniqueness of the present study lies in the fact that a triangular comparison will be carried out. Thus, this comparison requires the use of two types of corpora according to Aston and Burnard’s (1998) classification: genre-specific corpora and learner corpora. Indeed, there will be a genre-specific corpus of letters of request written by a sample of NS. There will also be a genre-specific learner corpus of letters of

request written by a sample of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners. Finally, there will be a genre-specific corpus of letters of request from B2 EFL textbooks. This type, *textbook corpora*, does not appear in Aston and Burnard's (1998) classification. It will be discussed in the *The Application of Corpus Linguistics Methodology in the Analysis of EFL Textbooks* section.

2.3 PURPOSES IN THE USE OF CORPORA

It is also important to bear in mind that any type of corpus may be used for different purposes. Partington (1998) mentions nine:

Style and authorship studies: the main objective is to find out the features that define an author's writing.

Historical studies: the aim is to study text from different periods in history from a diachronic and/or a synchronic perspective.

Lexis: the goal is to investigate "[...] the frequency of words and word senses in different text types or language varieties and their *collocational behaviour*, that is, their patterns of combinations with other words" (Partington, 1998: 2).

Syntax: it is studied in relation to lexis. Word-forms may have more than one meaning. For example, *might* is a modal verb, but it may also mean *power*. The patterns in which word-forms appear will result, in part, from the meaning of the form.

Text: this refers to any type of analysis above clause level. So far, the design of software that can identify and quantify cohesive and other discourse devices at supra sentential level has had to be supplemented with manual analyses of text. In a study on referring expressions and distance between referring expressions in nine text-genres, for example, Biber (1992) uses a computer program to identify cohesive chains. Nevertheless, the writer explains that he has had to edit the data by hand to check that they are accurate.

Spoken language: this means studying not only the features that are unique to spoken language, but also the behaviour of word-forms in this particular medium in contrast to their behaviour in written language.

Translation studies: several writers have used text of different languages to compare and contrast their syntax, lexis and discourse (Ghadessy & Gao, 2001, to mention just a few). Partington (1998) explains that small corpora have also been applied to teach students to translate.

Register studies: Partington (1998) refers to comparative studies of different registers within the same language. Collins' (1996) research into the use of modals of obligation and necessity in semi-formal and in formal written and spoken Australian English is an example.

Lexicography: This is the use of corpora with a view to compiling linguistic data to build dictionaries. These corpora have to be updated on a regular basis since "They suffer from the same drawback as dictionaries, namely, they have been in existence for so long, that a whole fragment of language, as it has evolved over the last twenty-odd years, is not reflected in them at all" (Boguraev & Pustejovsky, 1996: 11).

As it happened with the identification of the corpora used in this thesis in Aston and Burnard's (1998) classification of corpus types, if their purpose were to be placed in any of the categories presented by Partington (1998), the conclusion would also be that these corpora belong in several different ones. To begin with, *lexis*: to find out the frequencies and collocations of modal verbs in given samples of letters of request. Secondly, *text*: to analyse the text-pattern and the structural interpretation of the same letter samples. Finally, *register*: to compare *lexis* and *text* in samples of formal letters of request with *lexis* and *text* in samples of informal letters of request. Nonetheless, as with many other corpus studies that deal with EFL textbook English, EFL learners' English and/or NS' English, this one has important pedagogical implications. Therefore, it was thought that it was necessary to add another purpose to the above-mentioned list: teaching and

learning a language. The next four sections will discuss the application of corpora in EFL teaching and learning.

2.4 THE APPLICATION OF CORPUS LINGUISTICS METHODOLOGY IN EFL TEACHING AND LEARNING

In the history of EFL teaching and learning, corpora have been used with two different aims: first to look into the language of EFL learners, L1 English speakers and EFL materials, and later as learning materials themselves.

As for the first aim, corpora have been relied on as sources of linguistic data for linguists and EFL professionals. Kennedy (1992) stresses the importance of these sources by explaining that “Corpus linguistics has held potential relevance for the teaching of languages because responsible language teaching involves selecting what it is worth giving attention to” (Kennedy, 1992: 335). This assertion is closely related to the aims of this thesis since, as explained in *chapter one*, part of the significance of the present study lies in the possibility of answering the question *what to teach* when dealing with modal verbs in formal and in informal letters of request. This will be discussed in the sections that follow. The study of EFL learners’ English will be dealt with in the *Learner Corpora* section. That of EFL materials will be presented in the *The Application of Corpus Linguistics Methodology in the Analysis of EFL Textbooks* section. Finally, examples of corpora containing L1 English will be given in the section *Modal Verb Use*.

As for the second aim, corpora have been used as a reference tool for EFL learners to discover language regularities and to be able to challenge existing rules and formulate their own. This aim is also linked to this study as Tribble (2001) strongly recommends that the framework adopted in it, say the analysis of the lexico-grammatical features, the text-pattern and the structural interpretation of a

given text-genre, be applied by learners of writing. This application will be discussed in *Corpora as EFL Teaching and Learning Materials*.

2.5 LEARNER CORPORA

Interest in the study of the language produced by EFL learners led necessarily to the construction of learner corpora defined as:

“[...] systematic computerized collections of texts produced by language learners. ‘Systematic’ means that the texts that constitute the corpus were selected on the basis of a number of (mostly external) criteria, such as the learners’ L1 or their proficiency level, and that this selection is representative of a certain learner group. Unlike with native speaker corpora, the texts that make up a learner corpus are usually not what would be called ‘naturally occurring texts’ (unless one is prepared to include language produced for the classroom in this category)” (Nesselhauf, 2005: 40).

This definition applies to the learner corpus of this thesis since the letters are to be collected systematically using the authors’ L1 (Spanish) and their proficiency level (B2 English) as criteria, and since they are not supposed to be written naturally: they are meant to be written for research purposes. Nonetheless, what does not apply to the learner corpus of this study is the representativeness factor. In *chapter one*, it was argued that a small sample of letters cannot be representative of a vast number of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners. After introducing

the definition cited above, Nesselhauf (2005) goes on to say that collecting learner corpora and analysing them have both advantages and disadvantages²⁵.

As for collecting learner corpora, on the one hand, it makes it possible to record what items EFL learners can use in a specific situation: in this study, modal verbs in formal and in informal letters of request. On the other hand, they provide no evidence of EFL learners' whole range of primings, i.e. of other language they would also be able to produce in a specific text-genre that could be elicited by other methods such as gap filling or multiple choice tests. This will be illustrated with the following example. The fact that an EFL learner may not use the prefabricated lexical item *I would be grateful if you could* when asked to write a formal letter of request does not necessarily mean that this phrase is not part of his/her primings, which could be elicited in a controlled environment. That is why, as already stated, the objective of this research is limited to comparing modal verb primings in a set of formal and of informal letters of request written by a sample of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners, a sample of native teachers of EFL, and in a sample of B2 EFL textbooks. Thus, no conclusions will be drawn about the writers' primings themselves.

As for analysing learner corpora, it must be pointed out that its main advantage is that, thanks to the creation of software tools, large amounts of language data may be studied. Some of the largest learner corpora will be described. The CHILDES corpus

²⁵ Nesselhauf (2005) discusses the advantages and disadvantages of learner corpora with reference to the competence/performance distinction. Here, they have been discussed in the context of priming.

“[...] allows researchers to study conversational interactions among child and adult first and second language learners and includes a variety of languages and situations/contexts of acquisition, including bilingual and disordered acquisition, as well as cross-linguistic samples of narratives” (Mackey & Gass, 2008: 97).

The Arizona Corpus of Elementary Student Writing

“[...] includes over 5,000 essays collected from forty classes of students living in fifteen towns across the state of Arizona. Students are from three language groups: native English, native Navajo, and native Spanish. Each class of students wrote on nine different topics...during class time, with no editing by teachers or peers” (Biber et al, 1998: 175-176).

The International Corpus of Learner English (ICLE) and the Cambridge Learner Corpus (CLC) contain samples produced by an even wider variety of L1 groups. The ICLE consists of eleven sub-corpora of written English produced by speakers of Bulgarian, Czech, Dutch, Finnish, French, German, Italian, Polish, Russian, Spanish and Swedish (Nesselhauf, 2005). This makes it possible to select any of them in order to carry out cross-linguistic comparisons (Neff van Aertselaer 2008, Paquot 2008). The CLC is a collection of exam papers from Cambridge exams.

In spite of the fact that these big learner corpora provide general information about learners' speaking and/or writing which can easily be accessed automatically on the computer, Nesselhauf (2005) explains that too much reliance has been placed on automatic methods to approach learner corpora and suggests combining them with manual ones. This issue was considered when this study was designed. As explained in *Limitations of the study in chapter one*, even though small corpora may not be representative of big populations, the decision to

use them makes it possible to combine a detailed manual analysis of cohesive devices containing modal verbs and used in requests as well as of modal verb positions alongside an automatic one of modal verb frequencies.

2.6 CORPORA AS EFL TEACHING AND LEARNING MATERIALS

As it was explained in *The Application of Corpus Linguistics Methodology in EFL Teaching and Learning*, the second application of corpora in EFL teaching and learning has been using them as learning materials. Bernardini (2004) argues that

“Whilst corpus data have long established themselves as *the real language data*..., sweeping away resistance as to their descriptive and, more controversially, pedagogic value, the actual use of corpora in language learning settings has for a long time remained somewhat behind such momentous breakthroughs” (Bernardini, 2004: 15).

Indeed, fast and easy access to very big amounts of naturally-occurring language was, at the beginning of the existence of concordancers, a linguists’ privilege. However, as the development of corpus linguistics methodology in language analyses started to bear fruit, researchers also started to realise that EFL learners could also take advantage of exposure to real language contained in corpora. EFL learners’ access to corpus analysis gave birth to *data-driven learning* (DDL)²⁶. In the context of DDL, “[...] the student is placed in a position

²⁶ It was Johns who first coined this term (Partington, 1998).

JOHNS, T. (1991a): “Should you Be Persuaded. Two Examples of Data-Driven Learning Materials”, in *English Language Research Journal*, University of Birmingham, 4, 1-16.

similar to that of a researcher, investigating and imaginatively making sense of the data available through observation of the corpus” (Leech, 1997: 2). Nevertheless, it is important to indicate that the EFL learner should not be alone in this search as the teacher’s role in DDL is vital for three reasons. First, “Learners are not amateur applied linguists and raw unedited corpus data is likely to overwhelm many ordinary learners” (Lewis, 2001d: 192). Therefore, teachers need to select the language samples that EFL learners will analyse and train them to carry out the analyses. Second, because it may also happen that “Problems will arise when the textual evidence does not fit the precept of classroom and textbook, and the mythology will prove no match for the facts” (Sinclair, 1997: 30). In this case, teachers will then have to deal with any possible mismatch between the given rules and the language observed. Third, because, if learner corpora are being used in DDL instead of NS’ corpora, the focus could be on the negative, i.e. on the mistakes and errors EFL learners make and should, therefore, avoid (Nesselhauf, 2004).

Since its appearance, DDL has been used in a wide range of contexts and for many different learning purposes. Partington (1998) cites Mparutsa et al mini-corpora of text of economics, geology and philosophy collected at the University of Zimbabwe to be used by non-native students to learn how NS use technical vocabulary²⁷. Nesselhauf (2004) suggests German learners’ analysing concordancing lines containing the verb *suggest* from the German sub-corpus of the ICLE as an error analysis technique. The aim is for German EFL learners to

JOHNS, T. (1991b): “From Printout to Handout: Grammar and Vocabulary Learning in the Context of Data-Driven Learning”, in *English Language Research Journal*, University of Birmingham, 4, 27-45.

²⁷ MPARUTSA, C, LOVE, A. & MORRISON, A. (1991): “Bringing Concord in the ESP Classroom”, in *Classroom Concordancing. ELR Journal*, Birmingham University Press, 4, 15-34.

realize that they tend to use the infinitive after *suggest* as opposed to L1 English writers. As a cross-linguistic activity, Thompson (2001) proposes foreign language learners' analysing travel brochures written in different languages "[...] to identify the choices which contribute to the interactivity and to gain some idea of the relative frequency of the various choices" (Thompson, 2001: 327) with the ultimate goal of establishing cross-linguistic differences. Ghadessy and Gao (2001) also recommend foreign language learners' using small corpora cross-linguistically for learning translation and, more specifically, to analyse theme in English and Chinese political commentaries. Sheehan (2005) uses corpora with a group of EFL learners for them to clarify their own doubts. In this particular case, they search for the difference in use between *due on* and *due to*. In an article that concerns modal verbs, Meyer (2006) provides an example of how DDL may be applied for EFL learners to research into the ways modals express probability, certainty and advice in authentic written and spoken English.

As the description of DDL has shown, DDL happens only when it is EFL learners who apply corpus linguistics methodology to the analysis of language use with the guidance of EFL teachers. Therefore, DDL cannot explain the methodology used in this thesis since it is not an EFL learner that is carrying out its analyses with the aim of learning how to write letters of request. However, if this were the case, two comments would need to be made. The aspects of the lexico-grammatical features, the text-pattern and the structural interpretation of letters of request to be selected for analysis would depend on the target learners' needs. Indeed, when Lewis (2001d) says that EFL learners are not amateur applied linguists, when Nesselhauf (2004) suggests using the German sub-corpus of the ICLE with German students and when Thompson proposes analysing tourist brochures and job advertisements with EFL learners, it must be borne in mind that it is highly probable that each writer be alluding to real or ideal EFL learner types that may differ from the learner types of other learning

environments. Consequently, it goes without saying that EFL learners and teachers are not expected to embark on complex research as this thesis does as a result of the fact that its goal is purely scientific and, as such, it intends to provide valid and reliable data. Still, this study proposes a combination of tools that may be adopted in DDL depending on how deeply the target texts of specific groups of learners of writing are to be analysed.

2.7 THE APPLICATION OF CORPUS LINGUISTICS METHODOLOGY IN THE ANALYSIS OF EFL TEXTBOOKS

As already explained, EFL textbooks are important priming agents (Hoey, 2005). Therefore, the fact that their analyses provide useful information about the language input their users may receive led to the decision to look into the use of modal verbs in letters of requests in a sample of EFL textbooks as well. Nevertheless, despite their relevance to EFL learners' priming, several writers doubt that EFL textbooks alone may prime EFL learners with authentic language use. Because of this, a substantial amount of research has already been conducted in spite of the fact that "Assessing textbook design and content is a relatively new research interest" (Gouverneur, 2008: 224).

This new research interest has necessarily required the construction of EFL textbook corpora. Depending on the research objective, some of these have been very big in size, but some others have been tailor-made, as occurs in this thesis. Nevertheless, all the studies reviewed have coincided on the pedagogical implications of their findings. Most of them have not only described textbook English, but compared it with learner English or L1 English with the objective of improving on the English already taught in EFL textbooks. Few have established no comparisons; though they have still had learning relevance since they have contributed with information about primings EFL learners receive. A case in point is the study conducted by Stubbs and Gerbig (1993) in Partington (1998), which gives examples of the expressions of common language functions in textbook

English by analysing a small corpus composed of one geography book²⁸. Another example is Bueno's (2002) exhaustive survey of the approaches to teaching word-formation in learning materials. As for comparative studies, they have questioned the simplicity and artificiality of the language taught in EFL textbooks.

Indeed, Holmes (1988) says that two criteria are often cited when language is selected for EFL textbooks to prime EFL learners: simplicity and naturalness. To illustrate the former, the writer compares the use of modal verbs, lexical verbs, adverbials, nouns and adjectives in spoken and in written corpora and in four EFL textbooks. Her conclusions are that, for the sake of simplifying, many EFL textbooks devote too much attention to modal verbs and neglect other devices, whereas "Native speakers do not confine themselves to modal verbs [...]" (Holmes, 1988: 40). This is why, the writer asserts that "[...] it is important therefore that textbooks present learners with alternative syntactic and lexical devices selected from those occurring most frequently in relevant spoken and written texts" (Holmes, 1988: 40). Other researchers have also shown that the modal verb primings that EFL textbooks provide may clash with NS' primings. This is partly due to the overuse and underuse of modals, which may also result in the simplification of the language taught.

Keck and Biber (2004) show that the communication of meaning through modal verbs in university settings depends on the context in question. For example, the frequencies of *must* to convey obligation in a corpus of university textbooks are very high as compared to those in spoken university registers, where obligation is mostly expressed through *should* and *have to*. Römer (2004)

²⁸ STUBBS, M & GERBIG, A. (1993): "Human and Inhuman Geography: On the Computer –Assisted Analysis of Long Texts", in *Data, Description, Discourse. Papers on the English Language in Honour of John Mc H Sinclair on his Sixtieth Birthday*, HOEY, M. (Editor), London, Harper Collins, 64 – 85.

comes to a similar conclusion in the comparative study of modal verbs in a set of EFL textbooks, the German six-volume textbook series *Learning English Green Line*, and in the BNCS. The author confirms the overuse of *must* in textbooks: while in the textbook corpus *must* expresses obligation and advice in about 94 % of its occurrences, in the BNCS it does in 52 % of them. The author also concludes that the frequencies of the modals *can, could, may, might, will, would, shall, should, ought to* and *must* in teaching materials differ from those in spoken English: some modal verbs and their meanings are underrepresented whereas others are over-emphasised.

Simplification has also been reported in other language areas. Lewis and Hill (1999) show that EFL textbooks often provide stereotypical language descriptions. They exemplify this with teaching tense: most textbooks tend to contrast past and present tenses instead of combining simple tenses with progressive ones. Lyung (1990²⁹) compares the frequencies of concrete words and abstract words in a corpus of over 50 EFL textbooks and in the Cobuild corpus³⁰ to conclude that “The TEFL texts were found to contain an unusually high proportion of simple, concrete words and a smaller than expected number of more abstract words” (Kennedy, 1992: 357). In an also very comprehensive context, Conrad (2004) carries out multi-dimensional analyses of a practice lecture from an ESL textbook and of a corpus of 176 class lectures recorded at five universities. Conrad (2004) finds that, even though the practice lecture is similar to the recorded lectures as far as the use of narrative and persuasion is

²⁹ LYUNG, Magnus (1990): *A Study of TEFL Vocabulary: Acta Universitatis Stockholmiensis* 78, ALMQVIST & WIKSELL, Stockholm.

³⁰ The Cobuild corpus contains more than 200 million words of British English and was built in Birmingham (Biber et al, 1998).

concerned, it contains fewer features of interaction, and involvement, but more relative clauses, nominalisations, and “[...] more passive constructions, with fewer agents and actors than is typical in the class sessions” (Conrad, 2004: 78).

Some studies have centred on the description of very specific language points. An example is Gouverneur’s (2008) analysis of the frequencies of *verb + noun* collocations containing the verbs *take* and *make* in the *Cutting Edge*, *Inside Out* and *New Headway* series. The author explains that these three corpora come from the TeMa corpus, which comprises ten advanced-level EFL textbooks and seven intermediate-level ones. Gouverneur (2008) discovers that intermediate textbooks include many more vocabulary exercises for the explicit practice of *make* and *take verb + noun* collocations than advanced textbooks in spite of the fact that advanced learners still find these patterns difficult. The author adds that there is no consistency in the selection of the patterns across the three corpora.

As for the second criterion, naturalness, its lack in EFL textbooks may result from the simplification of their language. Holmes (1988) argues that “Textbooks which give undue emphasis to formal or rare linguistic expressions can be criticized for failing to present the kind of language used in natural interactions between native speakers” (Holmes, 1988: 24). Hoey (2005) tackles the consequences of lack of naturally-occurring language in learning materials:

“Unhelpful primings may result from a textbook’s overemphasis on certain features of the language..., or on its fabricated illustrations of grammar points. At best, unhelpful primings will result in cracks in the priming when the learner encounters authentic instances of the language away from the teaching context. This may lead to insecurity or distrust of the value of what has been learnt in the classroom. At worst, it may inhibit the development of helpful primings and stunt language growth” (Hoey, 2005: 186).

These two criteria, simplification and naturalness, were both taken into account when the research lines of this thesis were established. Indeed, it will provide information about the range of modal verb primings in a set of letters of request obtained from a sample of B2 EFL textbooks as well as a comparison of this range with the one in a sample of letters of request written by NS.

In an attempt to overcome the limitations of EFL textbooks as sources of priming, it has been suggested that EFL teachers be aware of the reliance on EFL textbooks as sole priming agents and that they “[...] supplement the coursebook by extending existing practices with natural lexical alternatives which exist for many traditional EFL structures [...]” (Lewis, 2001a: 40). Meyer (2006), for example, recommends using the web. According to the writer, this “[...] can overcome the sometimes monotonous and decontextualised discussions of grammar so prevalent in textbooks. For these reasons, all language teachers should consider the WEB a resource that is as indispensable as a textbook” (Meyer, 2006: 20).

In addition to EFL teachers’ intervention to counteract simplification and lack of naturalness in EFL textbooks, it has been suggested that EFL textbook writers should use corpora of naturally occurring English produced by NS as well as learner corpora. As regards the former, Conrad (2004), for example, has justified using L1 English in textbook construction as “[...] variation is a crucial aspect of naturally-occurring language...and...ignoring this variation has undermined the effectiveness of teaching materials” (Conrad, 2004: 67). This variation is reflected in the language used in different registers and styles. Indeed, Paquot (2008) argues that data obtained from L1 English “[...] may prove particularly useful to EFL learners to help them conform to ‘the native stylistic norms for a particular register’, which ‘entails not only making appropriate grammatical and lexical choices but also selecting [multi-word units] to an appropriate extent’

(Howarth 1998: 186)” (Paquot, 2008: 116³¹). Using Howarth’s (1998) citation in Paquot (2008), in the context of this thesis, these multi-word units EFL learners have to select are prefabricated lexical items containing modal verbs and used in requests, while the norms they have to conform to in a particular register are those that exist in formal and in informal letters of request written by NS. Because of the relevance of this issue in EFL learning, it is expected that the findings of this study concerning the use of modals by NS will be helpful for present and future textbook writers as an additional language source.

As regards the use of learner corpora by textbook writers, Willis (1993a) stresses the importance of implementing it by saying that “A study of learner language which focused more clearly on the lexicon as well as on the grammar could provide valuable information for ELT materials writers in the shape of an inventory of the resources available to learners” (Willis, 1993a: 92). These inventories would provide real shortcuts as learners would not have to wait to make the mistakes which reoccur in the English produced by speakers of the same L1 (in this thesis, L1 Spanish) to identify them and avoid them. Some writers have gone a bit further and recommend including samples of EFL learners’ L1 in EFL textbooks. Scheffler and Cinciala (2011), for example, show that, even though twenty upper-intermediate Polish learners of English accounted for the grammar they used with L1-based explanations in a study they conducted, not even locally produced EFL textbooks provide L1-L2 correspondences. It is also hoped that the findings obtained from the learner corpora of this research will prove useful for present and future textbook writers.

³¹ HOWARTH, P. (1998): “The Phraseology of Learners’ Academic Writing”, in *Phraseology: Theory, Analysis, and Applications*, COWIE, A.P. (Editor), Oxford, Oxford University Press, 161-186.

It should be pointed out that the present thesis will also give some insight into some of the aspects of the studies discussed so far. A parallel may be drawn with Lyung's (1990) research. This study will not compare concrete and abstract word frequencies as Lyung does, but it will compare the proportion of function words (FW) and content words (CW) as shown in one of the research questions of objective one. Also, this study bears some similarities to Gouverneur's (2008) as, even though it is not *verb + noun* collocations that will be targeted, the analyses of prefabricated lexical items containing modal verbs and used in requests also belong to the field of phraseology. As for Keck and Biber's (2004), Römer's (2004), a close connection may be established since the three of them focus on modal verb frequencies in EFL textbooks.

2.8 MODAL VERBS

“The growing number of corpus-based studies dealing with modality is a clear reflection of its key role in human communication” (Camiciottoli, 2004: 27). Modality has been defined as “[...] the ways in which a language is used to encode meanings such as degrees of certainty and commitment, or alternatively vagueness and lack of commitment, personal beliefs versus generally accepted or taken for granted knowledge” (Stubbs, 1996: 202). Papafragou (2000) explains that these meanings are conveyed by means of modal expressions since they “[...] allow us to talk...about states of affairs which are not present in the current situation and may never occur in the actual world” (Papafragou, 2000: 3).

These *states of affairs* have also been referred to as *propositions*. Indeed, Cruse (2004) argues that there are two elements in modal expressions: the speaker's attitude and the proposition expressed or the situation described. Dedać

(2004) refers to Fowler and Kress (1979³²) and argues that the speakers' attitude towards the proposition or situation in question entails their "[...] attitudes towards themselves, their interlocutors, their subject matter, their social and economic relationships with the people they address, and the actions that are performed via language" (Dedaić, 2004: 47). The presence of propositions and speakers' attitudes in modal expressions will be exemplified with the following request, which has been taken from Quirk and Greenbaum (1990). In it, the speaker asks for coffee:

2.2 *I wonder if I might borrow some coffee?*

The proposition is *I borrow some coffee*, but the speaker acknowledges that this may not happen because this action fully depends on having the permission, possibility or ability to obtain the coffee³³.

In the previous example, two types of modal expressions may be identified: a hedging expression (*I wonder*) and a modal plus a lexical verb. However, modality in a broad sense may be conveyed by a wider range of linguistic items (Stubbs 1996, Wald 1993, Stephany 1993, Coates 1995 & González 2000): affixes (-y may denote informality, intimacy, childishness and femininity, for instance (Stubbs, 1996)), phrases ("[...] *strictly speaking* points to meanings which are inherent in the word" (Stubbs, 1996: 208)), connectors, cleft sentences, tenses (the present perfect, for instance, shows that a past event is relevant in the present (Stubbs (1996)), expressions (*let's say/suppose that* (Wald, 1993)), adjectives (*possible*), nouns (*possibility*) (Stephany, 1993), patterns to express opinions such as *I think* (Coates, 1995), participles, articles, aspect,

³² FOWLER, R & KRESS, G. (1979): "Critical Linguistics", in *Language and Control*, FOWLER, R., HODGE, R., KRESS, G. & TREW, T. (Editors), London, Routledge, 185-213.

³³ Please, See Biber et al's (2007) classification of modals below.

question tags, intonation, yes/no questions, *get*-passives, hedging expressions, emphatic do, finite, non-finite and verbless clauses (González, 2000), etc.

Nonetheless, “The term modality...is most familiar via the term modal verbs [...]” (Stubbs, 1996: 200). Wald (1993) explains this is so owing to the fact that “[...] the modal verbs may be viewed as a special case of modality...because modal verbs seem to occur in all languages³⁴, and most interesting of all, also seem to always include some verbs which have both epistemic and deontic uses³⁵”

³⁴ However, Leiss (2008) argues that “The class of modal verbs is well developed in the Germanic languages, it is lesser developed in the Romance languages, and there are even quite a lot of languages which are devoid of a class of modal” (Leiss, 2008: 16). As for the last group, the writer mentions Finnish.

³⁵ A lot has been written about *epistemic* and *deontic* modalities. Le Querler’s definitions from her exhaustive *Typologie des modalités* as well as Palmer’s and Papafragou’s comments will be cited. Epistemic modality “[...] marquent la certitude ou l’incertitude du locuteur par rapport au contenu de son assertion” (Le Querler, 1996: 55). Epistemic modality indicates the speaker’s certainty or uncertainty towards the content of his/her proposition (Translation made by the author of this thesis). The author provides the following example: *Il peut pleuvoir en Angleterre en ce moment. It may be raining in England at this moment.* (Translation made by the author of this thesis). Palmer (1993) says that epistemic modality “[...] is concerned with belief, knowledge, truth, etc. in relation to proposition [...]” (Palmer, 1993: 96). As for deontic modality, “Elles sont de l’ordre de la permission, de l’obligation”. It refers to permission and obligation. (Translation made by the author of this thesis). The example the writer gives is that of a father who allows his son to go to the cinema by saying: *Tu peux aller au cinéma ce soir. You may go to the cinema this evening.* (Translation made by the author of this thesis). Papafragou (1997) agrees with Le Querler’s (1996)

(Wald, 1993: 61). The author illustrates this with the verb *must*, which may carry both interpretations in some varieties of English, but only epistemic in others. Indeed, Wald (1993) explains that in some dialects of English, *must* is used epistemically, while the quasi-modal *have to* is preferred deontically (Wald, 1993). Coates (1995) refers to *may* and *can*. The writer argues that “[...] *can* is developing an epistemic meaning in the United States but not in Britain [...]” (Coates, 1995: 64), that *may* is more commonly used than *can* to convey permission and that, while *may* is the most common verb to express epistemic possibility in British English, it is less common in American English since it connotes formality. This goes to show that “Modality is unstable and in a constant state of flux” (Ziegeler, 2008: 44³⁶) and, as anticipated in *chapter one*, that the absence of one-to-one relationships between modal expressions and their meanings makes modal verbs a difficult item for EFL learners to prime and may be partly responsible for the fact that EFL learners use English modal verbs differently from NS. Because two of the three research problems of this thesis lie in these difficulties, it was decided to discuss modal verbs in particular.

concepts, but adds that “Apart from the epistemic/deontic distinction, a third main area of modal meaning is often recognised: so-called dynamic modality, which includes the notional categories of real-world ability, possibility and intention/willingness” (Papafragou, 1997: 2). The author puts deontic and dynamic modalities together, calls them *root* modality, and adopts “[...] the root-epistemic distinction [...]” (Papafragou, 1997: 2).

³⁶ The varieties of English factor was introduced in the *Limitations of the Study* section in *chapter one*, where the description of the subjects that compose the sample of native teachers of EFL of this study was discussed.

According to Alexander (2005), modal verbs share the following syntactic features. “The negative is formed ...by the addition of *not* after the modal. In informal spoken English, *not* is often reduced to the unemphatic *n’t*” (Alexander, 2005: 209). They are followed by the subject and the predicate in questions. However, if the question is negative, they are followed by the subject, the negative adverb *not* and the predicate (example 2.3) or by the subject and the predicate if the contracted form is used instead (example 2.4).

2.3 *Could you not write?*

2.4 *Couldn’t you write?*

“Modals cannot be used as infinitives [...]” (Alexander, 2005: 209), they cannot be followed by a *to*-infinitive, they have no *-ing* form, they are not followed by another modal, they never take the *es/s* in the third person singular, and only *will* and *would* may be contracted. Biber et al (2007) add that modals can be used with all aspects and in active and passive voice; Perkins (1983) explains that they cannot occur “[...] as the first element in imperatives” (Perkins, 1983: 56) and Swan (2005) remarks that “[...] certain past ideas can be expressed by a modal verb followed by a perfect infinitive (Have + past participle)” (Swan, 2005: 353).

In spite of these well-defining rules, when different grammars were consulted to select the modal verbs to scrutinise, it was discovered that there were, first, a few discrepancies among different authors as regards the verbs that belong to the modal verb class and, second, some mismatches between these verbs and the rules provided. Swan (2005), for example, calls them *modal auxiliary verbs* and considers that they are the following: *can, could, may, might, will, would, shall, should, must, and ought*. However, if Swan (2005) considers *ought* a modal auxiliary verb instead of *ought to*, then the rule that says that modals cannot be followed by a *to* infinitive and which applies to all the other modals cannot apply

to *ought* in particular. By contrast, Alexander (1995) agrees with Swan's (2005) list, but speaks of *ought to* instead of *ought*. In this case then, it is the rule that the very same Alexander (1995) establishes, the one which says that "The negative is formed ...by the addition of *not* after the modal [...]" (Alexander, 2005: 209) which is broken since NS use *ought not to* instead of *ought to not*. Thomson and Martinet (2000) propose the same list as Swan (2005) and solve the problem with the verb *ought* arguing that "All modal verbs except *ought* are followed by the bare infinitive [...]" (Thomson & Martinet, 2000: 111). However, these two authors are the only ones who add *had to* to the group of modals, considering it the past form of *must*. When Quirk et al's grammars were consulted, two different lists were obtained. In *A University Grammar of English* (Quirk & Greenbaum, 1989), the authors propose the same modals as Alexander (1995) but add *used to*, *need* and *dare*. However, in *A Student's Grammar of the English Language*, Greenbaum and Quirk (1990) keep the following verbs: *can*, *could*, *may*, *might*, *will*, *would*, *shall*, *should* and *must*, but they regard *used to*, *ought to*, *dare* and *need* as marginal modal auxiliaries.

Dare has been defined as "[...] the semantic black sheep of the modal family [...]" (Perkins, 1983: 29). Palmer (1988) explains that *dare* is a full verb and a modal verb. As a modal verb, the writer argues that it shares some of the features of the modals. Dixon (1992) agrees with Palmer (1988) and extends these comments to the verb *need*. As full verbs, *need* and *dare* "[...] may be used as lexical verbs, with a TO complement clause, taking the full set of inflections for tense, including 3sg subject present ending -s, and requiring *do* in questions and negatives if there is no other auxiliary element present" (Dixon, 1992: 172). As modals, the author explains that they front in questions, e.g. *Dare/Need he send me all the details?* , do not require *do* in negative statements, e.g. *He daren't/needn't send me the details*, and are not inflected in the present third person singular form. As regards *Used to*, Palmer (1990) asserts that, semantically, it shares nothing with the modals. Syntactically, Dixon (1992) argues, "It could be regarded as an aberrant member of the modal type "(Dixon, 1992: 171) since "[...] it generally requires *do* in questions and negation, e.g. *Did*

he use (d) to do that?, He didn't use(d) to do that [...]" (Dixon, 1992: 171), although the writer admits that *Used he to do that?* and *He use(d)n't to do that* may also appear in written and spoken English.

After reviewing these modal verb classifications, it was decided to keep those that all the lists share and the status of which has not been challenged. These are the so-called *nine central modal verbs*: *can, could, may, might, will, would, shall, should* and *must* (Biber et al, 2007). Nevertheless, given that this thesis centres on the analysis of modal verb primings in two registers, in formal as well as in informal letters of request, then it was thought that it was also necessary to look into their meanings.

Berbeira Gardón (1998, 2006) reports the existence of three models for identifying the meanings of modal verbs. These are the *monosemantic* approach, which assigns "[...] a meaning to the modals in isolation from a specific context of use [...]" (Berberia Gardón. 1998: 3), the *polysemantic* approach, which regards "[...] the meanings of the modals as being largely, if not entirely, dependent upon a specific context of use [...]" (Berberia Gardón. 1998: 3) and the *relevance-theoretic* approach, which assumes that "[...] The modals are not polysemous but have a single unitary meaning, which gives rise to different interpretations depending on contextual factors " (Berberia Gardón, 1998: 4³⁷). Considering that the polysemantic classification proposed by Biber et al (2007) is based on authentic English examples, and that it has already given useful insight into the analyses of meaning expressed through modal verbs in studies such as Dafouz et al's (2007) *Analyzing Stance in a CLIL University Context: Non-native Speaker Use of Personal Pronouns and Modal Verbs* and Keck and Biber's

³⁷ A case in point is De Roeck, Ball, Brown, Fox, Groefsema, Obeid and Turner's (2001) computational pragmatic model, which uses context to interpret the possible meanings of questions containing modals, i.e. the conversational background.

(2004) *Modal Use in Spoken and Written University Registers: A Corpus-based Study*, it was thought that it would prove to be a reliable source for this study as well.

In this classification, Biber et al (2007) establish three categories. They argue that *can*, *could*, *may* and *might* convey permission, possibility and ability; *must* and *should* express obligation and necessity; *would*, *will* and *shall* volition or intention and prediction. All these verbs may occur in requests. However, depending on the speakers' primings and on the communicative context, some of them may be expected to occur more often than others. Indeed, it would not be surprising that the frequencies of some of the nine central modal verbs in the set of formal letters of request differ from those in the set of informal letters of request written by the participants of this study due to the fact that some modal verbs convey more politeness and formality than others.

Carretero (2004) follows Searle's speech acts theory³⁸ and explains that requests are directives since directives "[...] refer to all those speech act types by which the speaker attempts to impose a course of action on the addressee or a third person, such as commands, requests, injunctions or warnings" (Carretero, 2004: 222). However, there are different linguistic elements that may be used for mitigating those directives and their use is called *hedging* (Rezzano, 2004). One of them is the use of past modal verbs instead of the use of present modal verbs since the former creates "[...] a larger psychological distance between the speaker and hearer, and is therefore less direct and more polite" (Debbie, 2009: 36).

Indeed, Perkins (1983) proposes two groups of modal verbs: primary modals and secondary ones. The former comprises *can*, *may*, *must*, *will* and *shall*, while the latter includes *could*, *might*, *would*, *ought to* and *should*³⁹. What distinguishes

³⁸ SEARLE, John L. (1971): "A Classification of Illocutionary Acts", in *Cultural Communication and Intercultural Contact*, NJ, Erlbaum.

³⁹ Note that *ought to* has been dropped from this study.

secondary modals from primary ones is that they “[...] are ‘more modal’ than their primary counterparts...on account of the further condition indicated by their tense form [...]” and that, as a result, “[...] they are potentially more polite” (Perkins, 1983: 118). Nonetheless, the author explains that the past tense of modal verbs may not only convey more politeness than the present tense of modal verbs but also “[...] may, for example, be used as an index of hypothesis, temporal reference, formality, politeness, or tentativeness and often more than one of these at the same time” (Perkins, 1983: 50). To illustrate this idea, the author proposes the following scales: from non-hypothetical to hypothetical, from non-past to past, from non-formal to formal, from non-polite to polite, from non-tentative to tentative, from non-indirect to indirect.

These scales may be used to establish the degree of modality of modal expressions. For example, example 2.5, a sentence taken from Quirk and Greenbaum (1990), is to the right of example 2.6 since it carries the past tense and it is more hypothetical, indirect, formal, polite (Quirk & Greenbaum, 1990) and tentative.

2.5 *Would you lend me a dollar?*

2.6 *Will you lend me a dollar?*

Nonetheless, it may be argued that the expression of politeness in particular is not absolute and that it depends on the context of the utterance or sentence (Perkins, 1983). The author provides the following illustrative example, in which a hostess persuades her guests to eat more cake (example 2.7):

2.7 *Have some more cake*

Even though example 2.7 is an imperative, it is a suitable utterance for this context since “[...] the more persuasive she (*the hostess*) can be, the more she is carrying out her duty towards her guests” (Perkins, 1983: 119). However, it may be worth pointing out that, in spite of contextual circumstances such as the role of a speaker who uses a modal expression or the situation in which it is being used, “[...] it is possible to predict the politeness of modal expressions on semantic grounds” (Perkins, 1983: 119).

Biber et al (2007), for example, argue that “[...] modals that can be associated with past time (like *could*) are also used for hypothetical situations with present or future time reference. In these contexts the modals convey politeness and tentativeness [...]” (Biber et al, 2007: 176⁴⁰). Examples of real polite and tentative requests the authors provide are 2.8 and 2.9.

2.8 *Could I sit here a minute, Joyce?*

2.9 *Could you sign one of these too?*

Swan (2005) agrees with Biber et al (2007) saying that “We can use *can* and *could* to ask or tell people to do things. *Could* is more polite, more formal or less definite [...]” (Swan, 2005:124).

Quirk and Greenbaum (1990) give examples of three types of requests carrying past modals. The first one expresses tentative permission with *could* (example 2.10), the second one conveys tentative volition with *would* (example 2.11) and the third transmits tentative possibility with *could* (example 2.12):

⁴⁰ Bybee (1995) shows that *should* and *would* gradually lost their past meaning and acquired a present and hypothetical meaning in Modern English. While the former no longer has any past readings, the past reading of *would* is that of past habits only.

2.10 *Could I see your driving licence?*

2.11 *I'd be grateful if someone would hold the door open.*

2.12 *Could you (please) open the door?*

As for requesting permission, Thomson and Martinet (2000) propose a gradation of modals, and explain that *can I?*, *could I?*, *may I?* and *might I?* are used. They argue that the first one is the most informal, that the second one is the most useful because it can be used in formal and in informal contexts, that the third one is more formal (Leech, 1989) and that the last one is the most uncertain with respect to the answer. It must be pointed out that sentences containing a secondary modal verb may be made even more hypothetical, formal, polite, tentative and/or indirect (Perkins, 1983) in combination with other modal expressions. Indeed, "There are numerous variations on straightforward request forms to express degrees of politeness" (Alexander, 1995: 217). The example Alexander (1995) provides is the addition of adverbs to requests (example 2.13).

2.13 *Can/Could I (possibly) use your phone?*

Considering that the findings of this thesis are meant to have important pedagogical implications, it must be stressed that the fact that secondary modal verbs convey different degrees of formality, politeness, indirectness or tentativeness from primary modal verbs (Perkins, 1983) poses difficulties to EFL learners (see next section). In *chapter one*, it was suggested that EFL learners' problems with the conveyance of modality may be due to the very same modal verb complexities in English, by differences in the expression of modality across languages and cultures, by lack of primings and/or by inadequate primings.

Whatever the reason may be, if EFL learners do not overcome these difficulties and, consequently, are not primed to “[...] make tentative and tactful statements [...]” (Stubbs, 1996: 227) as NS do, then they “[...] can sound rude, brusque or tactless if they make mistakes in this area. Often mistakes are not recognised as linguistic, but as social ineptitude” (Stubbs, 1996: 227). Rintell and Mitchell (1989) put it this way: “No “error” of grammar can make a speaker seem so incompetent, so inappropriate, so *foreign* as the kind of trouble a learner gets into when he or she doesn’t understand or otherwise disregards a language’s rules of use” (Rintell & Mitchell, 1989: 248). Thus, emphasis should be laid on the importance for EFL learners to be aware of how polite/formal/direct/tentative it is appropriate to be when making requests in different situations and/or contexts according to the cultural norms of L1 English speakers and, consequently, to use the items that NS use in them.

It is believed that comparing modal verb primings in the formal and in the informal letters of request written by the sample of native teachers of EFL will give interesting insight into modal verb use in both registers. Carrying out the same comparisons in the set of formal and of informal letters of request written by the sample of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners will not only make it possible to establish relevant similarities and/or differences in modal verb use between both registers, but also between both samples, the EFL native teachers’ letters and the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners’ ones, with the ultimate aim of drawing useful conclusions for EFL teaching. As for the analyses of the set of letters obtained from the B2 EFL textbooks, they will provide important data about how textbook writers perceive differences in register as far as the use of modal verbs in letters of request is concerned. However, the next section will advance some interesting data gathered from previous studies that have dealt with the use of modal verbs by L1 and L2 speakers.

2.9 MODAL VERB USE

It could be argued that research on the use of modal verbs by L1 and L2 speakers has been approached from two different angles. The first one has centred around modal verb acquisition. Studies in this area have generally been diachronic since their main concern has been the order of appearance of modal verbs and modalities in L1 and L2 production. Even though this subject is outside the boundaries of this thesis, it was thought that some of the findings in this field were worth mentioning since they were relevant to the description of the samples under scrutiny. The second research line has focused on the frequencies of modal verbs and/or of their meanings⁴¹ and/or of modality types⁴² at a given age and/or context and/or genre.

2.9.1 MODAL VERB ACQUISITION

Research on modality in L1 acquisition has shown that the conveyance of deontic modality comes before that of epistemic modality (Perkins 1983, Wald 1993, Stephany 1993, Stephany 1995, Papafragou 1997, Papafragou 2000, Papafragou & Ozturk 2007⁴³). Indeed, in a review of research on modal verb acquisition, Kenney (2008) concludes that “[...] children begin using the epistemic meanings significantly later than the deontic [...]” (Kenney, 2008: 1), and argues that this may be explained by the *Theory of the Mind*: “[...] a person has Theory of the Mind if he is able to represent the mental states of others and understand that they are different from his own” (Kenny, 2008: 3). The lack of this capacity does not allow children under four or three years old (Papafragou,

⁴¹ Please, refer to Biber et al’s (2007) classification above.

⁴² Please, refer to footnote 35 above.

⁴³ For the definition of modality types, please refer to footnote 35.

1997) to express uncertainty, i.e. “[...] alternative versions of the world as real [...]” (Kenney, 2008: 1). Nonetheless, studies disagree on the age in which children start to express epistemic modality. In a study conducted by Doitchinov (2001), for example, 86 German children between the ages of six and eight had to solve three tasks with the aim of assessing whether they were able to deal with the concept of uncertainty, “[...] to understand the German epistemic modals *Können* ‘may/might’ and *vielleicht* ‘maybe/perhaps’” and “[...] to compute scalar implicatures with the German quantifier *einige* ‘some’ [...]” (Doitchinov, 2001: 37). Doitchinov (2001) concludes that children under eight do not understand epistemic modals, cannot compute scalar implicatures and cannot detect epistemic uncertainty.

Studies also disagree on the time span between the expression of deontic and epistemic modalities. Diessel (2011) argues that “Children begin to use modal verbs in negative sentences, questions and imperatives...that are concerned with different aspects of deontic modality...the epistemic use emerges only several months later [...]” (Diessel, 2011: 6). The author illustrates children’s passage from deontic to epistemic modality by drawing a parallel between the evolution of the meaning of English modals in *diachrony* (the history of the English language) and in *ontogeny* (child language development) (Diessel, 2011). Diessel (2011) explains that

“Some Old English modal verbs were still commonly used as lexical verbs...and some modal verbs could already be used with an epistemic meaning: but the majority of the Old English modal verbs occurred in the deontic use and developed the epistemic use only later as a secondary meaning” (Diessel, 2011: 5).

Despite research disagreements on the ages in which epistemic and deontic modality start to be conveyed and on the time spans that separate them, in Perkins's (1983) *Analysis of data from the Polytechnic of Wales Language Development Project*, it is shown that children will have conveyed both deontic and epistemic modality by means of modal verbs by the age of twelve. This indicates that limitations in the conveyance of modality types will not be an issue in the corpus of letters written by the sample of NS since it is composed of adults, and, as theory shows, adults are already able to express root and epistemic modality by means of modal verbs. The remaining question was, then, when L2 learners can express both types.

As regards L2 modal verb acquisition, the reality seems to be different. In a project comprising "[...] longitudinal studies of sixteen native Polish speaking informants learning German" (Dittmar & Terborg, 1991: 353) throughout two and a half years, utterances expressing modality produced by the subjects were recorded 21 times. The authors conclude that "[...] formal indicators of modality or modal expressions occur quite early" but that "It is difficult to determine whether deontic or epistemic meaning is expressed earlier" (Dittmar & Terborg, 1991: 371). However, "It seems that deontic meaning is expressed more explicitly, epistemic more implicitly" (Dittmar & Terborg, 1991: 371).

Even though it is difficult to know whether it is epistemic or deontic modality that is expressed first, Stephany (1995) suggests that "[...] epistemic and deontic modality seem to be present from the very beginning [...]" (Stephany, 1995: 111) in adult L2 acquisition. The reason for this, Stephany (1995) argues, is that epistemic modality is relevant for adult communication since it is required for narrating and arguing. However, as far as modal verbs are concerned, Stephany (1995) looks into Italian and German interlanguages and points out that, even though epistemic and deontic meanings are present at the very early stages of second language (L2) varieties, the use of modals to convey epistemic meanings

appear very late. By contrast, deontic meanings are expressed by means of modal verbs in the early stages. Wald (1993) agrees with Stephany (1995) and remarks that “[...] it is generally observed that deontic use of modal verbs precedes epistemic use in both first and second language acquisition [...]” Wald (1993: 62).

Stephany (1995) observes that, in the initial stages, modality is communicated implicitly, e.g. through intonation, and that the first explicit modal markers are lexical and verbal rather than grammatical and adverbial (Stephany, 1995: 115). It is when the learner acquires the inflections of tense and mood that “[...] grammaticalization of modal expressions advances and lexical means become more diversified with the relative frequency of learner-initiated modalised utterances increasing...so that pragmatically more complex argumentation becomes possible [...]” (Stephany, 1995: 115). Given that the EFL learners participating in this study are all adult EFL B2 learners⁴⁴ and that, as cited in the *introduction*, at this level they

“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” (Council of Europe, 2001: 24),

it may be assumed that they have progressed into the latter stage of modality acquisition in which both root and epistemic modal uses have been acquired.

⁴⁴ A detailed description of the three samples under scrutiny in this study will be given in *chapter 3, Methodology*.

2.9.2 MODAL VERB FREQUENCIES

Modal verb frequencies in story telling between the ages of five and nine in L1 English and EFL, for example, are compared by Mason (2007). The writer reports that the sample of L1 English speakers told not only longer stories, but also used more modal verbs than the sample of Panjabi EFL speakers. The same comments hold good for adult French EFL speakers in Lambert's (1995) research. Lambert (1995) built a corpus of English spoken by five French university students and another one of English written by the same group. The spoken corpus was composed of descriptions related to the students' everyday life, of the expression of opinions and of the arguments that support them. The written corpus comprised narrations, descriptions of places to convince the interlocutor to visit them and argumentative essays discussing the role of universities. The five subjects were NS of French and university undergraduate students of an English programme. The writer compares the use of personal and impersonal modalised forms and finds out that

“Les formes les plus lexicalisées (unités verbales et adverbiales) sont globalement plus fréquentes que les formes les plus grammaticalisées (modaux et désinences). On remarque en particulier la quasi absence des moyens linguistiques les plus codés, les auxiliaires modaux, en dépit de l'insistance prêtée à ces formes dans l'enseignement institutionnel de l'anglais » (Lambert, 1995: 236)⁴⁵.

⁴⁵The most lexicalised forms (verbal and adverbial units) are in general more frequent than those which are more grammaticalised (modals and inflections). In particular, the almost absence of the most systematically codified linguistic means, the modal verbs, has been remarked in spite of the attention paid to these

Comparisons of total modal verb frequencies are relevant to this thesis, since it aims to reveal whether the sample of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners use modal verbs more or less often than the sample of native teachers of EFL in the formal and in the informal letters of request in question. However, as the frequencies of each modal verb will also be compared, it has also been considered necessary to look into studies that shed light on the frequencies of individual modal verbs in the English of L1 Spanish EFL speakers.

Camiciottoli (2004), for instance, compares modal verb frequencies in the presentation and interactional phases of five business lectures: one given by an Italian speaker, one by a German speaker, one by a Spanish speaker and two by British speakers. The writer finds out that the frequencies of *can* and *will* are the most numerous in the corpus that comprises the five lectures, while the frequencies of *may* and *would* were “[...] significantly higher with the native speakers” (Camiciottoli, 2004: 36). The author assumes that this is possibly due to “[...] both lecture type and purpose (descriptive vs. theoretical), as well as the language backgrounds and proficiency levels of the lecturers” (Camiciottoli, 2004: 41). In the same context, lecturing, a survey conducted by Dafouz et al (2007) on the expression of stance by three Spanish lecturers of Aeronautic Engineering comes to a similar conclusion: *we + will* and *we + can* are the most frequent clusters containing a central modal verb, while *we + could* and *we + may* are the least frequent ones.

These findings have also been attested by Neff et al (2003) in another context: argumentative writing. In a study in which argumentative texts written by German, Dutch, French, Italian and Spanish EFL student university writers are compared with argumentative texts written by American student university writers, the authors show that the Spanish ones used *we + can* almost twelve

forms in academic English teaching. (Translation made by the author of this thesis).

times more often than the American student university writers. Very high frequencies of *we + can* were also observed in the texts written by the French student university writers (almost eight times higher than in the American student university writers' texts) and in the ones produced by the Italian student university writers (almost five times higher than those in the American student university writers' texts).

By contrast, as opposed to the American student university writers, the Spanish ones never used *we + could*, *we + may* or *we + might*. The same comment applies to the texts written by the German and the Dutch student university writers, whereas the Italian ones never used *we + may* or *we + might* while the frequency of *we + could* was almost three times higher in their texts than in the American student university writers' ones.

Concerning the comparisons of raw modal verb frequencies in the essays written by the Spanish student university writers with those written by the American ones, those of *can* were 1.5 times higher in the former, whereas the frequencies of *could*, *may* and *might* were 1.36 times, 2.6 times and three times higher in the latter. As for the texts written by the other groups, the frequencies of *can* were also much higher than in the texts written by the American student university writers (Italian writers, 1.58:1; Dutch writers, 1.44:1; French writers, 1.41:1; German writers, 1.24:1). As regards the frequencies of *could*, only in the Italian student university writers' texts were they higher than in the American university writers' ones (1.37:1). In relation to the frequencies of *may*, they were also lower in the texts written by all the other EFL student university writers but in the texts written by the French student university writers, where the frequencies were no different from those in the American student university writers' ones. With regard to the frequencies of *might*, the Spanish writers reported the lowest ones.

Montero et al (2007) deal with modal verb frequencies in a semi-writing or semi-speaking context: discussion forums. The authors explain that what characterizes this medium of communication is that, even though it is written, it contains traces of spoken language to the extent that, the writers suggest, language from discussion forums may be used to acquire oral proficiency. In this study, modal verb frequencies in 878 messages written by L1 Spanish EFL learners in discussion forums are compared with the ones in the Lancaster-Oslo/ Bergen corpus, in the London-Lund Corpus, in Piqué et al's corpus of research articles on medicine and biology and in a corpus that deals "[...] with a wide range of topics totaling 2,200,000 words" and which was "[...] compiled from the computer conferencing system used at the Open University by students and teachers worldwide [...]" (Montero et al, 2007: 9). The authors arrive at the same conclusions as the studies cited above. *Can* and *will* are the most frequent modals in the messages written by the Spanish users, while the expression of epistemic possibility through *may* and *might* in them is low compared to the other four corpora.

Finding out about the reasons why Spanish speakers overuse *can* and underuse other modal verbs such as *may* was considered relevant to the present study owing to the fact that similar distributions might appear in the samples collected for analysis. Montero et al (2007) argue that "Spanish speaking learners of English find it difficult to grasp that something that is theoretically possible or that conveys a factual possibility may imply a different use of a modal verb, *can* vs. *may*. In Spanish both meanings are conveyed by the same verb, *poder* " (Montero et al, 2007: 18-19). In a comparative analysis of the expression of stance in argumentative essays written by L1 Spanish EFL speakers, by American university writers and by native professional writers, Neff et al (2001) suggest that the overuse of *we + can* amongst the first group may be due to EFL teaching to Spanish speakers: "[...] Since *can* is the first modal verb learned in the Spanish

EFL classroom...Spanish EFL students may feel comfortable using it – in the assumption that it covers the same degrees of doubt as *poder* (*can*) in Spanish” (Neff et al, 2001: 11). Besides, the authors argue that there is a cultural component: differences in the conventions and strategies used to express politeness across different languages. *We + can* and *we + must* in essays is a transfer from *podemos* and *debemos*, which are both polite in Spanish academic contexts since they assume less power and less distance, while English speakers prefer less power and more distance in those contexts. In another study (Neff et al, 2004) in which argumentative essays written by Italian, French and Dutch EFL learners are added to the comparisons carried out in Neff et al (2001), the authors add that other possible reasons for the underuse of some modal verbs amongst L1 Spanish EFL speakers could be the later acquisition of modal verbs to convey epistemic modality for hedging, “[...] lack of awareness of the appropriate degrees of directness and indirectness in different genres of writing or across different disciplines (Hyland 2000⁴⁶)” and “[...] the complexity involved in using clusters of both hedges and boosters to vary the strength of statements [...]” (Neff et al, 2004: 159).

These differences in modal verb frequencies in L1 English and in L1 Spanish EFL learners’ English have also been explained by Wald (1993). The writer argues that modals are morphologically, syntactically, semantically and pragmatically complex enough to “[...] frustrate direct analogy with the Spanish modals [...]” or any precise correspondence (Wald, 1993: 69). To begin with, “[...] there are fewer Spanish modals in a syntactic and semantic sense corresponding to the English primary modals, ie. *poder* [can/may] and *deber* [should/must]” (Wald, 1993: 69). The author goes on to add that the corresponding forms for the conditional, the subjunctive and the imperfect indicative in Spanish are provided by verb inflections. These differences have

⁴⁶ HYLAND, K. (2000): *Disciplinary Discourses: Social Interaction in Academic Writing*, London, Longman.

been illustrated by Marín-Arrese, Hidalgo Downing and Molina Plaza (2004) in a comparative study on the expression of deontic and epistemic modality in English and Spanish newspapers. In the former, *can*, *may*, *must* and *should* express deontic modality, while *cannot*, *could*, *may*, *might*, *must*, *shall*, *should*, *will* and *would* express epistemic modality. In the latter, *deber* (*must*) and *poder* (*can*) express deontic modality, whereas

“[...] verbal markers of epistemic modality take the form of modal verb + infinitive, or modal + complement clause in the subjunctive mood: *deber* "must" (*debe*,...), *poder* "may/might/could" (*puede*, *podría*, *podiera*, ...), future marker (*habrá*, *serán*, *tendrán*, ...), conditional marker (*serían*, *acabarían*, ...); future perfect marker (*habrá/n* + PP) [...]" (Marín-Arrese et al, 2004: 129).

This complicates the learning of English by Spanish speakers since they are not in a position to make a direct positive transfer from L1 to L2 or vice versa. This issue has also been discussed by Haegeman (1988) in a comparative study of English and French. Haegeman (1988) has studied the interference of L1 in L2 in a study about the use of English modal verbs by Dutch and French EFL learners. It was believed that the writer's comments on French learners may hold good for Spanish learners because of the similarities between the two languages as far as modals are concerned. The writer explains that “The acquisition of modals as a separate category seems to pose many more problems for French learners than for Dutch learners” (Haegeman, 1988: 264), and the writer explains this may be due to the fact that French speakers may not be prepared to consider modals a separate class because French modals are lexical verbs and modality is expressed by their inflectional endings as opposed to English.

By contrast, some studies have aimed at explaining differences in modal verb use between L1 English and EFL from a cultural angle with a view to avoiding resorting to linguistic explanations. As far as requests are concerned, for example, attempts have also been made to establish links between modal verb frequencies and cultural issues, particularly in the study of the conveyance of politeness and different degrees of directness. This is because politeness strategies have received a lot of attention in the field of pragmatics (Tadros, 1993⁴⁷) since “‘Questions’, ‘answers’ and ‘requests’ are the most obvious examples of the interplay between ‘discourse and modality’” (Dittmar & Terborg, 1991: 351). It was decided that looking into this issue was relevant to this study because requests written by a sample of L1 Spanish EFL learners will be compared with those written by a sample of L1 English speakers in two registers: formal and informal.

2.10 REQUESTS

Debbie’s (2009) paper on the use of modals in Brunei English “[...] is based on the premise that not much is known about how English modal verbs are used to express politeness in Non-Native English speaking (NNEs) contexts” (Debbie,

⁴⁷ Díaz Pérez (2002) refers to Yule’s *Pragmatics*, and explains that pragmatics “[...] can be said to be devoted to the study of (1) speaker meaning, (2) contextual meaning, (3) how more gets communicated than is actually said, and (4) the expression of relative distance. Therefore, pragmatics has to do with what speakers mean by their utterances rather than with what the words or phrases in those utterances mean by themselves; with the way speakers organise what they want to say depending on whom they are talking to, where, when and under what circumstances; with implicatures or how much of the unsaid is actually communicated; and with the relationship between the interlocutors” (Díaz Pérez, 2002: 263).

2009: 35). To cast light on this issue, the author analyses the frequencies of the present and past forms of the modals *will* and *can* in letters of request for corrective action sent by Bruneians to the local English-language newspaper in Brunei.

Debbie (2009) refers to studies conducted by Hamdan et al (1991⁴⁸) and Svalberg (1995⁴⁹) to explain that, amongst Bruneians, “[...] whether it is in Malay or English, indirect use of language is preferred over the direct alternative because it is deemed more polite and less confrontational” (Debbie, 2009: 39) and that, therefore, the use of *would* is preferred to that of *will*. The writer’s “[...] claim is that *would* has become an accepted part of the emerging Brunei nativized English (BNE) to express personal opinions and in ways not used in Standard English” (Debbie, 2009: 39).

In Debbie’s (2009) paper, data was collected from two groups. The first one consisted of 91 letters of complaint written by Bruneians to the local English-language newspaper. The second group comprised questionnaires given to 88 undergraduate students. Each questionnaire contained two sentences taken from the 91 letters of complaint. Each sentence had a blank which had to be filled in by the students. One of the sentences had to be completed by *can* or *could* while the other by *will* or *would*. After filling in the blanks, the students had to account for their choices.

The author found that, in the first group, i.e. in the 91 letters of corrective action, *will* and *can* were preferred to *would* and *could*. However, a significant difference was reported only in the frequency of *can* in relation to *could*. In the second group, i.e. in the sentences to be filled in by the undergraduate students,

⁴⁸ HAMDAN HASSAN, Haji, et al. (1991): *Forms of courtesy in Brunei Darussalam*, Departement of Malay Literature, Universiti Brunei Darussalam.

⁴⁹ SVALBERG, Agneta M.-L. (1995): “Meanings into Pictures: Icons for Teaching Grammar”, in *Language Awareness* 4, 65-88.

will and *can* were also preferred to *would* and *could*, but, in this case, significant differences were reported in both pairs. In the accounting for modal preferences, the undergraduate students reported being aware of the indirectness of *could* and of the directness of *can*. This result, Debbie (2009) argues, challenges the hypothesis that Bruneians prefer indirect language and non-confrontational attitudes as far as complaints are concerned. It was decided to look at studies that tried to set possible links between directness and politeness in requests made by L1 Spanish speakers as well.

The first cultural element that needs to be mentioned is that, while Spanish politeness tends to place emphasis on positive face when making a request, English politeness is inclined to emphasise negative face (Díaz Pérez, 2002: 270). Díaz Pérez (2002) takes these two concepts from Brown and Levinson (1987⁵⁰). Positive face means the desire that other speakers also ask for the same request and/or that they carry it out. Negative face entails not having the speaker's request hindered by others. In the latter, Blum-Kulka (1996) explains that requests may be seen as threatening as they demand an action to be done by another speaker⁵¹. Therefore, politeness strategies are used to minimise these threats. Díaz Pérez (2002) argues that this difference "[...] may be clearly reflected in the production of requests in both languages" (Díaz Pérez, 2002: 270). The author explains that requests in L1 Spanish are more direct than in L1 English, and illustrates this by saying that, while in Spanish it is common to make a request with a question using the present simple tense (example 2.14), English "[...] prefers more elaborate interrogative sentences which involve the use of modal verbs" (Díaz Pérez, 2002: 271).

⁵⁰ BROWN, P. & LEVINSON, S. (1987): *Politeness*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

⁵¹ Here, Blum-Kulka (1996) also refers to Brown, P. and S. Levinson (1987).

2.14 *¿Me prestas el bolígrafo?*⁵². (Díaz Pérez, 2002).

However, research has shown that this difference in the production of requests by L1 Spanish speakers and by L1 English speakers is not a black-and-white issue: it may depend on the medium of communication, on the situation in which requests are conveyed and on the variety of the language in which they are formulated.

Rintell and Mitchell (1989) conducted a study at an American university in which sixteen EFL students and L1 English American ones wrote requests for five different situations and eighteen students from both groups role played them instead. Unfortunately, the authors do not specify the nationalities of the EFL learners, but, since in the United States the Hispanic population is high and the study shows that requests may vary according to the medium of communication in which they are conveyed and to the situation in which they are set, it was thought it deserved to be mentioned. The five situations were the following: (1) A student requested his/her roommate to clean the kitchen, (2) a policeman requested a driver to move his car, (3) a student requested another student to lend him/her his/her notes, (4) a resident asked a neighbour for a ride, (5) a lecturer requested a student to change the date of a presentation. The writers show that, while the EFL learners used, on average, 35.7 words in the oral requests and 22.3 in the written ones, the L1 English students used an average of 28.5 in the oral medium and 27 in the written one. As regards the strategies used, it was revealed that both the EFL learners and the L1 English speakers were more direct in the *clean kitchen* and in the *move car* situations than in the other three. However, in both samples, the speakers were even more direct in the written medium than in the oral one. The writers explain this suggesting that “It may be the case that, although direct, less-polite language seems appropriate for these situations, in a face-to-face

⁵² Can you lend me your ball pen?

encounter with another person,... some subjects are less comfortable using such direct language” (Rintell & Mitchell, 1989: 269). However, there was an important difference between the sample of EFL learners and the sample of L1 English speakers as far as the request strategies were concerned. While the former used direct ones in 15.8 % of the oral responses in the *lecturer* situation, the latter never did so. This may reflect the distance between a lecturer and a student in the culture/s of both groups.

In a study by Cenoz and Valencia (1996), 29 American university students and 78 European ones were asked to write four requests for four different situations and four apologies for four different situations as well. Because of the aims of the present study, it has been considered worthwhile omitting the apologies and focusing on the requests produced in English by the American L1 English students and on the same requests produced in Spanish by the Spanish L1 Spanish students. The four situations consisted of the following: (1) a teacher who asked a student to take a book to the library, (2) a student who asked a teacher for the notes of the previous class, (3) a student who asked a classmate to make an international call from his/her apartment, (4) a traffic warden who asked a driver to park his/her car somewhere else. The results showed that 78.2 % of the requests written by the American students were indirect as compared to 84.8 % of the requests written by the Spanish students. As for the use of phrases for mitigation, 50.4 % of the request written by American students contained one as compared to 63.4 % in the requests written by the Spanish students. These results challenge the idea put forward by Díaz Pérez (2002) about L1 Spanish speakers being more direct than L1 English speakers and suggest that the variety of Spanish and English that the speaker who makes the request uses is a variable that may have an effect on the choice of the type of request that is formulated. The American English speakers who participated in Cenoz and Valencia’s (1996) research, for example, may be thought to be more direct when making requests

than the ones Rintell and Mitchell (1989) or Díaz Pérez (2002) refer to, whereas the Spanish ones more indirect. Blum-Kulka and House (1989) provides more information on this issue by analysing requests in Australian English and in Argentinian Spanish. Their results question those in Cenoz and Valencia's (1996).

Blum-Kulka and House (1989) used the same five situations as the ones in Rintell and Mitchell (1989) to find out about intercultural differences between a group of L1 Hebrew, L1 Canadian French, L1 Argentinian Spanish, L1 Australian English and L1 German speakers. Herein, only the comparisons of the L1 English and the L1 Spanish groups will be discussed as they are the ones that concern this research. The authors divided the speakers' requests into three categories: impositives (example 2.15), conventionally indirect (example 2.16) and hints (example 2.17).

2.15 *Haz esto*⁵³. (Blum-Kulka, 1996).

2.16 *¿Podrías hacer esto?*⁵⁴ (Blum-Kulka, 1996).

2.17 *Hace calor aquí*⁵⁵. (Blum-Kulka, 1996).

The authors concluded that both samples used conventional indirect strategies. However, "The results show the Australian English speakers to be the least direct: less than 10 % of the Australian English requests are phrased as impositives, more than 80 % are phrased as conventionally indirect and almost 8 % as hints" (Blum-Kulka & House, 1989: 133). Argentinian Spanish was found at the opposite end of the directness/indirectness continuum. The results indicated that 40 % of the requests were impositives, 60 % indirect strategies and 2 % hints. The writers go

⁵³ Do this. (Translation made by the author of this thesis).

⁵⁴ Could you do this? (Translation made by the author of this thesis).

⁵⁵ It is hot here. (Translation made by the author of this thesis).

on to say that “Though the results of Argentinian Spanish need to be further confirmed with larger samples, there is evidence to suggest that they reliably reflect a general Spanish trend for higher levels of directness than those acceptable in the English speaking world” (Blum-Kulka & House, 1989: 135). As anticipated, this challenges Cenoz and Valencia’s (1996) findings and, therefore, agrees with Díaz Pérez’ (2002) suggestion that requests in L1 Spanish are more direct than in L1 English.

As for this study, it is meant not only to be built on the ones cited in this section, but also to add some further insight into differences and similarities in the use of modal verbs and the formulation of requests by EFL L1 Spanish speakers and by L1 English speakers. Indeed, a highly relevant issue for the present study is whether L1 Spanish speakers’ reported tendency to be direct in requests formulated in Spanish will also be reflected in the formal and/or informal letters of request written in English by the sample of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners and, if so, how this compares to the formal and/or informal letters written by the sample of native teachers of EFL. If not, it will be interesting to see what conventionalities both groups share in either register or in both registers , i.e. to what extent the sample of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners has been primed to use modals in formal and/or informal letters of request as the sample of NS do.

Blum-Kulka (1989) explains that “conventionality can be used to refer to all those aspects of social life where practice is based on general, often tacit consent in regard to both patterns of behavior and the meanings assigned to those patterns” (Blum-Kulka, 1989: 38). Two of the conventionalities mentioned so far have been the following. Firstly, the norms regarding the use of direct/indirect requests in written and spoken English. Secondly, the norms regarding the use of direct/indirect requests in different situations: the distance between a speaker who makes a given request and the speaker to whom the given request is addressed with respect to the role both speakers play in social institutions may be

reflected in the directness and indirectness of the given request and, as a result, in the prefabricated lexical item or items conventionally used to formulate it. Indeed, prefabricated lexical items may express more or less directness and convey more or less strength in requests (Blum-Kulka, 1989). These conventionalities or aspects of social life (Blum-Kulka, 1989) are supposed to be ingrained (tacit, according to Blum-Kulka, 1989) in the culture and/or sub-culture (the patterns of behavior and the meanings assigned to those patterns, according to Blum-Kulka, 1989) in which an L1 English or L1 Spanish speaker belongs. However, in the case of EFL in EFL textbooks, conventionalities may result from a dominant culture. It is supposed that the EFL textbooks teach Standard English. Probably nobody's English, but an attempt to establish certain regularities. It is expected that these regularities will be reflected in the prefabricated lexical items containing modal verbs and used in requests that the three samples of this study employ to make requests, as the third objective is intended to reveal. This will be discussed in the next section.

2.11 COLLOCATIONS AND COLLOCATIONAL PRIMING

Hoey's argument that the subversiveness of collocations may be explained through the Theory of Priming, i.e. that "[...] every word is mentally primed for collocational use" (Hoey, 2005: 8) was presented in the *introduction*. In *chapter one*, two of the reasons why mental priming has been thought to occur were introduced: firstly, it results from frequent encounters with words (Hoey, 2005).

Several authors agree with Hoey (n.d.) on the theory that word frequencies have a bearing on language users' memory. Tomasello and Akhtar (2000a) explain that children's language acquisition would not be possible if they did not hear any adults' repetitions or interactions, and that this is clearly shown in imitative learning, where children use the same piece of language as adults do when having the same communicative intention (Tomasello & Akhtar, 2000b), a claim for which several experimental studies have provided evidence.

Papafragou (1997), for example, reports a correlation between modality in the language children under three receive from their mothers and the language they produce. The author cites Wells (1979⁵⁶) and Shatz, Grimm, Wilcox and Niemeier-Wind (1990⁵⁷), who gathered samples of maternal speech to children under the age of three. In Wells' research (1979), there was a strong correlation between the first modals that the children used, *will* and *can*, and the modals that their mothers used most often. In Shatz et al's (1990), there was also a link between the fact that children convey deontic modality first and the fewer than 10 % of the modals that the mothers who participated in the study used to convey epistemic meanings.

The stronger priming of high frequency words and phrases as compared to low frequency ones has also been reported by EFL learning researchers. A case in point is De Groot (2002), who explains that, in translation studies, it has been proved that "[...] many high-frequency words are stored in concept-mediation representations, whereas relatively many low-frequency words are stored in word-association representations" (De Groot, 2004: 43). Another example is Milton (1997⁵⁸) in Oakes (2003), whose study compares the most overused and underused word phrases in a corpus of learners' English with those in a corpus of

⁵⁶ WELLS, G. (1979): "Learning and Using the Auxiliary Verb in English", in *Cognitive Development: Language and Thinking from Birthday to Adolescence*, LEE, V. (Editor) London, Croom Helm, 250-270.

⁵⁷ SHATZ, M, GRIMM, H., WILCOX, S. & NIEMEIER-WIND, K. (1990): *Modal Expressions on German and American Mother-child Conversations: Implications for Input Theories of Language Acquisition*, Unpublished ms, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

⁵⁸ MILTON, J. (1997): "Exploiting L1 and L2 Corpora in the Design of an Electronic Language Learning and Production Environment", in *Learner English on Computer*, GRAINGER, S (Editor), Harlow, Longman.

Standard English. Milton (1997) finds a strong correlation between the phrases the learners overused and those which a good number of EFL students drill in EFL learning.

Secondly, it has been suggested that mental priming results from language users' ability to keep a mental record of words and of their context and co-text, i.e. of their collocations⁵⁹ (Hoey, 2005). Partington (1998) explains that these co-occurrences of words are acquired "Through lifelong exposure to a language [...]" (Partington, 1998: 16). Consequently, Hoey (n.d.) assumes that "Collocation priming is not a permanent feature of the word" (Hoey, n.d.) since each use and encounter with it either reinforces its primings or loosens them. Hoey (n.d.) calls this phenomenon *drifts in the priming*. In addition, the author proposes the existence of *cracks in the priming*. These happen when there is "conflict between the original priming and the self-reflexivity of the post hoc systems" (Hoey, n.d.). A case in point would be a child who was primed to pronounce a word at home in a way which clashed with its pronunciation in a post hoc system such as school and /or classroom English.

Nonetheless, these postulates of the theory of priming may lead to the following question (Hoey, n.d.). If each speaker has different encounters with the language and keeps his/her own records of these encounters; if, as a result, primings are individual, drift and crack, why is it that they tune in to other

⁵⁹ It must be pointed out that this does not mean that all of EFL learners' speech and writing will result from previous encounters. Mitchell and Myles (1998) suggest that "Learners' surface utterances can be linked to underlying rule systems, even if these seem primitive and deviant compared with the target language system. It logically follows that learners can produce original utterances, i.e. that their rule system can generate utterances appropriate to a given context, which the learner has never heard before" (Mitchell & Myles, 1998: 11).

speakers' primings? Why is it that regularities in prefabricated lexical items containing modal verbs and used in requests are expected to be found in the letters of request written by the sample of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners, the sample of native teachers of EFL, and in the sample of B2 EFL textbooks analysed in this study? Possible answers to these questions could be as follows (Hoey n.d.).

First, words and phrases are primed to be used in specific domains. Hoey (n.d.) illustrates this with a phrase he came across in a charity appeal (example 2.18).

2.18 *To gift aid your donations.*

The writer explains that, if more writers used this collocation, *gift aid*, as a verb in charity appeals, then it would end up being primed as such in this domain. As discussed in *chapter one*, the interesting data that this thesis will provide is what modal verb primings in the specific domain of letters of request may be identified in the three samples under scrutiny.

Second, there are mechanisms that harmonise primings. By harmonising primings Hoey (n.d.) means the process/es by which individual speakers who have been raised in different backgrounds end up sharing primings that are not necessarily unique to any of these backgrounds. Hoey (n.d.) mentions four: education, literary and religious tradition, the mass media and dictionaries and grammars. In this thesis, it is expected that the sample of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners that participated in this study has got education and grammars as harmonising mechanisms as far as modal verb primings in letters of request are concerned⁶⁰. As for the sample of EFL teachers, since it is composed of NS of English, it is expected that these subjects have received longer and wider exposure to the English language than the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners, as already

⁶⁰ By grammars, this study also means EFL textbooks.

explained in the *Statement of the Problem* section. However, as discussed in *chapter 1*, as teachers of EFL, they may have also been exposed to the EFL textbooks used by the sample of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners and, therefore, their primings may have also been harmonised by them. As a consequence, comparing modal verb primings in these two samples with the letters in the EFL textbooks will give important data for EFL professionals, whether differences between them are identified or not.

Nonetheless, the frequencies of the encounters with a word and its collocates are not enough to create primings: semantic priming and semantic associations also have a bearing on their constructions. Hoey (2005) explains that “[...] the notion of semantic priming is used to discuss the way a ‘priming’ word may provoke a particular ‘target’ word” (Hoey, 2005: 8.). These primings have been reported in several studies. Cruse (2004) and Murphy (2010) allude to research on word recognition, which has shown that learners can identify English words faster if they are preceded by semantically-related ones, e.g. *question* and *answer*. The speed goes down as words are less and less semantically related. It has been shown that semantic priming occurs cross-linguistically as well. De Groot (2004) refers to studies that have proved that “[...] a word is processed faster when it follows a semantically related word than when it is preceded by an unrelated word”, and adds that “This semantic-priming effect occurs not only when prime and target are words from the same language..., but also when the prime is a word from one of the participant’s two languages, and the target is taken from the other [...]” (De Groot, 2004: 36). Nesselhauf (2005) also places a big emphasis on the importance of lexical priming in EFL learning by explaining that, even though it was thought that semantic links prevailed in the L1 mental lexicon and phonological ones in the L2 one, recent research has demonstrated that “[...] at least in the advanced learner’s L2 mental lexicon, semantic links are also the primary ones [...]” (Nesselhauf, 2005: 250). The author confirms this idea based

on the data from her research on the use of verb-collocations in German EFL learners' argumentative and descriptive essays. Libben (2000) goes a little bit further and, based on experimental findings, asserts that "[...] there aren't any language-specific lexicons in the mind and, because the overriding property of the lexicon is that activation spreads, bilingual priming effects are identical in nature to monolingual ones" (Libben, 2000: 238⁶¹).

Besides semantic priming, as explained in the *introduction*, "[...] lexical items are also primed for semantic association. Semantic association occurs when a word associates with a semantic set or class, some members of which will normally also be collocates" (Hoey, n.d.). The example given at that point was that of *consequence*, which is pre-modified by adjectives that belong to the field of underlying logic, e.g. *logical consequence*, of negative assessment, e.g. *disastrous consequence*, of seriousness, e.g. *serious consequence*, of unexpectedness, e.g. *unforeseen consequence*, etc.

Nevertheless, it could be argued that, broadly speaking, the concepts of semantic priming and association cannot account for the existence of prefabricated lexical items containing modals and used in requests in letters of request. The repetition of *could you + lexical verb* (*could you send...*, *could you open...*, etc) by different language users cannot be explained by any semantic field shared by the modal *could* and the large number of verbs it collocates with. However, bearing in mind that, in this study, the sample of native teachers of EFL and that of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners are to write their letters following the same instructions set in the same situation and/or context, and considering Hoey's principle that words and phrases are primed to be used in specific domains, it may be concluded that some prefabricated lexical items containing modal verbs and verbs carrying the same semantic associations are expected to occur in more than

⁶¹ However, Cook (1991) explains that, while some studies have indicated that there is one mental store of words for L1 and L2, others have pointed out that there are two separate ones.

one letter from both or either of the samples. A case in point is example 2.11, which has been taken from Quirk and Greenbaum (1990). In this particular case, 'd (*would*) may be expected to be followed by verbs or verb phrases that belong to the field of desire and/or satisfaction, e.g. *I'd/would be happy if someone*, *I'd/would be pleased if someone*, of necessity, e.g. *I'd/would need someone to*, of gratitude, e.g. *I'd/would be grateful if someone*, etc. Furthermore, *I'd/would grateful* may be expected to be followed by clauses that belong to the field of requests, e.g. *I'd/would grateful if someone could hold.../would hold.../might hold...*, etc.

In addition to the concept of semantic association, it is worth referring to the concept of *pragmatic association* as well (Hoey, 2005): "Pragmatic association occurs when a word or word sequence is associated with a set of features that all serve the same or similar pragmatic functions (e.g. indicating vagueness, uncertainty)", (Hoey, 2005: 26). It was decided to apply Hoey's (2005) definition of *pragmatic association* to this particular study: lexical verbs, e.g. *open*, or word sequences, e.g. *open the door*, are associated with a set of features, e.g. *modal verbs*, *adverbs*, etc. They all serve the same pragmatic function: indicating a request (example 2.12).

Therefore, the whole sequence *could you (please) + an action that is desired?* indicates a request. As explained in the *introduction*, these sequences have received a wide variety of names (Hunston & Francis, 2000).

2.12 PREFABRICATED LEXICAL ITEMS

It must be pointed out that the idiom principle is behind all the names given to word sequences. According to Sinclair (1991), the idiom principle is illustrated by collocation. This principle states that NS rely on ready-made, i.e. prefabricated

lexical items, in their mental lexicon for language use. These items are often used as shortcuts and make NS fluent and efficient speakers (Partington, 1998⁶²).

Meyer (2006) and Biber et al (2007) call these ready-made lexical items *lexical bundles*: “[...] frequencies of words which are frequently re-used, and therefore become ‘prefabricated chunks’ that speakers and writers can easily retrieve from their memory and use again and again as text building blocks” (Biber et al, 2007: 443). Biber et al (2007) distinguish them from idioms since the meaning of these cannot be inferred from the meaning of the individual words that compose them, though, the authors admit, some idioms are more transparent than others. Cruse (2004) speaks of *strings of words* containing *lexical units*. Lipka (2000) suggests that linguists regard lexical units as “[...] the union of a lexical form and a single sense” (Lipka, 2002: 4), while Murphy (2003) explains that, for Cruse,

“A lexical item in the lexicon is an abstract representation that is instantiated as a lexical unit in language use..., which has a particular form and a particular sense. So, for example, *highest* in the phrase *the highest note in the song* and *high* in *I threw the ball high* are both lexical units instantiating the lexical item *high*” (Murphy, 2003: 15).

⁶² Sinclair (1991) contrasts the idiom principle with the slot-and-filler model, also called the open-choice principle, which assumes that NS rely on a series of patterns with slots that must be filled in by items from the speaker’s lexicon. These slots have grammatical restraints, and the lexical items that are to fill them must be adequate enough to fit in (Sinclair, 1991). In this model, there are cases of words which “[...] may be assigned to more than one grammatical or syntactic category according to the context..., i.e. *light* can be a noun, verb or adjective” (Cantos Gómez, 1996: 17).

The nomenclature goes on. Ready-made phrases have also been referred to as *clusters* (Dafouz et al 2007, Neff et al 2001 and Neff et al 2004); *phrases*, *multi-word units*, *lexical phrases* and *chunks* (Granger & Meunier, 2008); *prefabricated chunks* (Mitchell & Myles, 1998), etc. However, the most comprehensive definition to date is Lewis's (1996).

This author defines them as *lexical items*: “[...] the minimal units for certain syntactic purposes – this has two important consequences, sequences larger than lexical items are too large, but equally importantly, shorter sequences are too small” (Lewis, 1996: 90). The author explains that they are independent and that they carry “[...] fixed social or pragmatic meaning within a given community” (Lewis, 2000: 255). According to Lewis, there are three types of lexical items: words, multi-word items and polywords.

The author argues that the usefulness of words depends on their frequencies of occurrence, on the text-types in which they occur and on their availability, familiarity and coverage (Lewis, 1996). Multi-word items are collocations or word partnerships (Lewis, 2005) and institutionalised expressions that exist on their own. Collocations have already been discussed, e.g. *semantic* collocates with *priming*. Institutionalised expressions indicate very quickly what the writer or speaker is doing. Some are short, e.g. *Hold on a minute, please*, some are sentence heads, e.g. *I was wondering whether...* and some are full sentences, e.g. *I look forward to hearing from you*. Polywords are short, and the meaning of the whole may be deduced from the meaning of the individual words or not, e.g. *by the way*, *on the other hand*, *of course* (Lewis, 2000).

Bearing in mind that Lewis's definition of *lexical item* has been the most comprehensive and that lexical items are ready-made according to the idiom principle (Sinclair, 1991), it was decided to adopt the term *prefabricated lexical item* (Lewis, 2001c). In this research, the *prefabricated lexical items* under scrutiny will be composed of two or more words which together convey requests

and the combination of which is highly structured and, as a result, fixed and predictable (Lewis, 1996). What is more, since this study will focus on prefabricated lexical items containing modal verbs and used in requests in letters of request, it is expected that it is the *institutionalized expression* type of lexical item that will be encountered. Indeed, it is expected that the writers of these letters will produce word sequences that will indicate very quickly what they are doing: asking for an action and/or state to happen, e.g. *could you please...?*, *would you mind...?*, etc.

2.13 PREFABRICATED LEXICAL ITEMS IN EFL LEARNING

The existence of prefabricated lexical items has shown that, while it is impossible or difficult for some words to go together (Cruse, 2004: 217), “[...] There are great many cases in English where the occurrence of one word predicts the occurrence of another, either following or preceding it” (Aston & Burnard, 1998: 13). Different researchers have resorted to the idiom principle to account for these co occurrences of words. Coady (2000), for example, cites Lewis (1996) when he argues that “[...] native speakers of a language utilise a large number of fixed and prepatterned phrases as they carry out the routines of normal spoken interaction” (Coady, 2000: 282). Murphy (2010) explains that “[...] complex and frequent but predictable expressions [...]” are “[...] stored in the mental lexicon” (Murphy, 2010: 8) and that sometimes people depend on these “[...] ‘ready-made’ compositional expressions instead of composing new ones” (Murphy, 2010: 8). Following the basis of the idiom principle, it may be deduced that EFL learners are expected to use the fixed and prepatterned phrases that NS use if they want to achieve ‘native-like fluency’, or ‘native-like usage of words’ (Handl, 2008). This led Granger and Meunier (2008) to suggest that “It would therefore not seem unreasonable to propose that phraseology should occupy a central and

uncontroversial position in instructed second language acquisition” (Granger & Meunier, 2008: 247). However, research has shown that collocations pose difficulties for EFL learners, even at advanced levels.

Gouverneur (2008) discusses these difficulties amongst advanced EFL learners and cites Nesselhauf (2005) who, based on her study of verb-noun collocations in essays written by advanced EFL German speakers, concludes that “[...] the number of years of classroom teaching has no influence on learners’ mastery of verb-noun collocations [...]” (Gouverneur, 2008: 224). Owing to this conflict between the usefulness in learning ready-made phrases that NS use and the difficulty in learning them, a good number of researchers have insisted on the need of dealing with collocations in the EFL class (Zimmerman, 2000) and, as a result, have made EFL teachers aware of this need. Granger and Meunier (2008) explain that “For trained teachers, phraseology is often associated with collocations (typically verbs or adjectives plus noun collocations) or with pragmatically and communicatively useful phrases such as ‘how do you do?’, ‘nice to meet you’, or ‘what’s the weather like today?’” (Granger & Meunier, 2008: 248). However, since, as it has already been argued, collocations may differ in different genres, Lewis (2001d) recommends exposing EFL learners to prefabricated lexical items used in different text-types in order to build their mental lexicons as “[...] in a balanced way; no one ‘type’ of English is remotely adequate to represent the whole” (Lewis, 2001d: 187).

The argument that it is necessary for EFL learners to learn to use ready-made phrases as NS do in specific text-types raised one of the research questions of this study: to find out whether the frequencies of the prefabricated lexical items containing modal verbs and used in requests in the formal and in the informal letters of request written by the sample of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners were similar to those in the formal and in the informal letters of the other two samples.

2.14 COLLIGATION AND TEXTUAL COLLIGATION

In *chapter one*, it was explained that objective four consisted of comparing the position of modal verbs at sentence level in requests in the set of formal and of informal letters of request written by the sample of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners, by the sample of native teachers of EFL and in the sample of B2 EFL textbooks; that objective five meant to do so at paragraph level and that objective six aimed at doing so at text level. It was also explained that words or prefabricated lexical items may appear at the beginning of sentences, paragraphs or text, which is called *theme position*, or afterwards, which has been defined as *rheme position*. It was also pointed out that, as these terms may be a bit vague, they were going to be supplemented with very specific descriptions concerning the position of modal verbs at the three levels to be as accurately descriptive as possible. At that point, the notions of *colligation* and *textual colligation* were introduced, but they will be discussed here.

Hoey (n.d.) explains that the term *colligation* comes from Firth (1957⁶³) and from Halliday (1959⁶⁴). The author adds that, traditionally, the study of colligation has received much less attention than that of collocation. As anticipated in *chapter one*, “Every word is primed to occur in (or avoid) certain grammatical positions, and to occur in (or avoid) certain grammatical functions,

⁶³ FIRTH, J R. (1957): “A Synopsis of Linguistic Theory, 1930-1955”, in *Studies in Linguistic Analysis*, 1-32, reprinted in *Selected Papers of J R Firth 1952-59*, PALMER, F. (Editor), London, Longman, 168-205.

⁶⁴ HALLIDAY, M. A. K. (1959): “*The Language of the Chinese ‘Secret History of the Mongols’*”, Publication 17 of the Philological Society, Oxford, Blackwell.

these are its colligations” (Hoey, 2005: 13). Hoey (2005) illustrates this concept with the word-form *consequence*. As for its grammatical functions, the author shows that, in his corpus, *consequence* is primed to colligate negatively as premodification or postmodification of a nominal group. Indeed, *consequence*, the author indicates, is head of a nominal group in 98 % of its occurrences. Regarding its grammatical positions, *consequence* is part of an adjunct, of a subject, of a complement and of an object in 43 %, 24 %, 24 % and 4 % of its occurrences respectively. Aston and Burnard (1998) argue that colligation is also about “The collocation of a word with a particular grammatical class of words [...]” (Aston & Burnard, 1998: 14). The authors exemplify this with the fact that the verb *regard* is strongly primed to colligate with adverbs of manner, while the prepositional verb *look at* is not. As it may be seen, colligation is intrinsically related to the study of patterns.

Lewis (2001b) claims that “[...] colligation is the way one word regularly co-occurs with a particular (grammar) pattern [...]” (Lewis, 2001b: 137). The author exemplifies this with the fact that some nouns colligate with personal pronouns while others colligate with definite articles. For example, *make up your mind* and not *make up the mind*, but *take a hint* and not *take your hint*. Hoey (2001a) shows that, in his corpus, 93 % of the occurrences of *up to...ears* colligate with a possessive adjective and 7 % with a definite article. The same applies to verb phrases. The author explains that *get married*, for instance, colligates with a prepositional phrase starting with *to* in only 2 % of its occurrences, while, in 36 % of its occurrences, it colligates with both the people who get married as its subject and, in 38 % of its occurrences, it colligates with one of the parties. Tognini-bonelli (2001) suggests that *colligation* is even much broader than the patterns of individual words; it is about the grammatical patterning of words as members of classes. That is why Barnbrook (1998) argues that to know about word colligations, it is necessary to learn about word classes.

In this study, as explained in section 2.8 *Modal Verbs*, the target words are the nine central modal verbs: *can, could, may, might, will, would, shall, should* and *must*. At sentence level, their grammatical position, function and patterns are highly predictable. As also explained in section 2.8 *Modal Verbs*, Perkins (1983) divides these nine modal verbs into two groups: primary modal verbs (*can, may, will, shall* and *must*) and secondary modal verbs (*could, might, would, and should*). Even though secondary modals are expected to occur in formal, tentative, hypothetical and polite contexts, there are a number of criteria that all primary and secondary modals share: amongst them, their patterns and the classes of words they colligate with. Therefore, in a formal letter of request one is expected to come across *Could you let me know....?*, but not *You could let me knows....?*, or *I would like to know....*, but not *I would like knowing....*. Therefore, it may be wondered why the grammatical position, function and patterns of modal verbs will be analysed if, in fact, deviation from restrictive positions and patterns are not to be expected. The reason why it has been decided to do so is that, even though these deviations are not to be found in the corpus of the letters written by the sample of native teachers of EFL and in the corpus of B2 EFL textbooks, they may be found in the corpus of the letters written by the sample of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners. This is because cracks and drifts in modal verb primings in EFL have been reported even at advanced levels, whereas NS are believed to have consolidated theirs. Nonetheless, as regards the position of modal verbs in the whole text, variations in the three corpora are to be expected.

Hoey (2005) claims that “Words (or nested combinations) may be primed to occur (or to avoid occurring) at the beginning or end of independently recognised discourse units, e.g. the sentence, the paragraph, the speech turn (textual colligation)” (Hoey, 2005: 115). Hoey (2005) provides the following examples. To illustrate colligation at sentence level, this author explains that 65 % of the occurrences of *sixty* begin a sentence in his corpus of the *Guardian*. As for

colligation at paragraph level, the word-form *things* is primed in the same corpus to colligate in paragraph-initial position: over 37 % of its occurrences are reported to occur in this position. Concerning text position, 9 % of the occurrences of the word-form *sixty* appear in text-initial position: “[...] the first word of the title, subtitle or first full sentence” (Hoey, 2005: 131) and, in a corpus of travel writing, the pattern *Place name + is + evaluation* is primed to colligate in text-initial position as well. The examples the writer gives are: *Madrid is one of the world’s favourite meeting destinations* and *At the very heart of Europe, Hungary is a magical land bursting with ancient culture*.

The present study will show the position of modal verbs occurring in requests at sentence, paragraph and text level across the three corpora. It is to be seen whether the modals in the requests of the letters written by the sample of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners appear directly at the beginning of sentences, e.g. *could you please send me a brochure?*, or indirectly after reporting strategies, e.g. *I was wondering whether you could send me a brochure*. It is also to be considered whether the sample of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners starts paragraphs with requests instead of providing lead-in strategies such as cohesive devices. The colligations of modal verbs occurring in requests at the beginning of texts are also to be analysed. These findings are to be compared with those in the other two samples. This shows that priming does not finish at phrase level, but that it also affects text organisation.

2.15 TEXTUAL COLLOCATION

Hoey (n.d.) explains that written texts are characterized by the following features. First, they are written to be read, so there is interaction between the writer and the reader (Hoey, 2001b). Second, except for very short pieces of writing, texts are chunked and divided into paragraphs, sections, etc. Third, they are organised linearly. This has been illustrated in *chapter one* with the concepts of encapsulation and prospection in the constructions of texts (Sinclair, 1993).

Fourth, some texts are also organised non-linearly, e.g. there are connections between paragraphs which are not adjacent. Finally, there is cohesion in all written texts. Biber (1995) defines cohesion as “[...] surface features that mark the ways in which the sentences of a text are referentially related, for example, through the use of pronominal reference, demonstratives, ...lexical substitution..., and ellipsis [...]” (Biber, 1995: 34). Indeed, different types of cohesive relations have been identified in the literature of cohesion.

Hoey (1992) explains that Halliday and Hasan (1976⁶⁵) argue that the organisation of text consists of five classes. The first one is *conjunctions*: the use of linking devices, e.g. *although*, *furthermore*, etc. The second category is *reference*. Biber et al (1998) explain that, in the conveyance of given information, there are three types of reference that concerns cohesion: anaphoric, exophoric and inferrable. Anaphoric reference comprises pronouns, synonyms and repetition. The third is *substitution and ellipsis*. Hoey (1992) explains that the difference between the two is indistinct. An illustrative example is the use of the auxiliary *do* to avoid repeating a verb. Finally, *lexical cohesion*. The following examples are cited by Hoey (1992) from Hasan (1984)⁶⁶: *naming* (*the dog was called Toto*), *equivalence* (*you be the patient. I'll be the doctor*), *semblance* (*the deck was like a pool*), *synonymy* (*leave, depart*), *antonymy* (*leave, arrive*), *hyponymy* (*travel, leave*), *meronymy* (*hand, finger*) and *repetition* (*leave, left*).

Repetition has received a lot of attention in corpus linguistics analyses. Hoey (2001a) claims that “Most texts can be shown to be networks of repetitions, for the obvious reason that texts tend to be about something and whatever that ‘thing’ is, it is likely to be repeated many times in the course of the text” (Hoey, 2001a: 238). Hoey (1992, 2001b) claims there are two types of repetition: *simple lexical*

⁶⁵ HALLIDAY, M. A. K. & HASAN, R. (1976): *Cohesion in English*. London, Longman.

⁶⁶ HASAN, R. (1984): “Coherence and Cohesive Harmony”, in *Understanding Reading Comprehension: Cognition, Language and the Structure of Prose*, FLOOD J. (Editor), Newark, DE: International Reading Association, 181-219.

repetition and *complex lexical repetition*. The former happens when a lexical item is repeated with few alterations that are justified by grammatical reasons. For example, the singular form and the plural form of a lemma. The latter occurs when two lexical items share a lexical morpheme, but they have different forms, e.g. *request* and *requesting*, or when they have the same form, but they have different grammatical functions, e.g. *bus* in *I'll take a book* and *book* in *book token*.

However, Stubbs (2002) claims that, amongst repetitions to create cohesion, there are also formulaic sentences and chunks of sentences that recur. Indeed, Almela Sánchez (2006) cites Wray (2002⁶⁷), who argues that “it is not only a question of knowing the words that go together into strings, but also of knowing the strings of words that go together” (Wray, 2002: 281 in Almela Sánchez, 2006: 352). The role of prefabricated lexical items in cohesion has also been stressed by Hoey (2005), who cites Halliday and Hasan (1976) when they argue that collocation is a cohesive device that is “[...] a cover term for the kind of cohesion that results from the co-occurrence of lexical items that are in some way or other typically associated with one another, because they tend to occur in similar environments” (Halliday & Hasan, 1976: 287 in Hoey, 2005: 4).

However, Hoey's (2005) view of cohesion is broader, since he claims that “Every word is primed to participate in, or avoid, particular types of cohesive relation in a discourse; these are its textual collocations.” (Hoey, 2005: 13). In the *introduction*, it was explained that these cohesive relations consisted of long and short cohesive chains. The former were illustrated with Robert Firsk's text, while the latter were illustrated with linking phrases of the *introduction* itself.

⁶⁷ WRAY, Alison (2002): *Formulaic Language and the Lexicon*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Moreover, Hoey (n.d.) argues that lexical items “[...] may be primed to occur as part of a textual semantic relation” (Hoey, n.d) and that these primings are inherent features to the lexical item. The author exemplifies this with the following cases from his corpus. *Sixty* is primed to create cohesion by a semantic relation of contrast, e.g. *sixty* contrasts with *now*, for example. *Plato* is primed to create cohesion by a semantic relation of comparison: in about 75 % of its occurrences, *Plato* is compared with other planets. *Years* is primed to create cohesion by a semantic relation of change. *Textbooks* is primed to create cohesion by a semantic relation of communicating and expressing content, claims and denials. *Today* is primed to create cohesion by a semantic relation of time reference: *yesterday* – *last night* – *next week*, etc.

In the analyses of this thesis, the type of cohesion that will be focused on is the repetition of prefabricated lexical items containing modal verbs within the semantic relation of requests. Indeed, objective seven aims at comparing the frequencies of cohesive chains containing modal verbs and used in requests in the set of formal and of informal letters of request written by the sample of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners with the frequencies of cohesive chains containing modal verbs and used in requests in the set of formal and of informal letters of request written by the sample of native teachers of EFL and in the sample of B2 EFL textbooks, i.e. at comparing the frequencies of chains containing modal verbs that through repetition contribute to achieving cohesion in requests in the three samples in both registers. It must be admitted that it is highly probable that significant differences be reported between the sample of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners and the other two samples. This is because it has been found that cohesion in text written by EFL learners may differ from cohesion in text written by NS. Lewis (1996) puts it this way: “We have clear and concrete evidence of why much student writing is unsatisfactory. Technically, it lacks cohesion – the employment of precisely those grammatical devices that ensure that we perceive a

whole text as more than a sequence of sentences” (Lewis, 1996: 140). It is hoped that the findings of this thesis will cast light on this issue and on all the previous ones.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

A MEANS TO AN END

This chapter is divided into nine sections. The first section looks into the type of study conducted in this thesis. The second section describes the samples under scrutiny. Sections three to nine explain the methodology employed to collect the data required to achieve the research objectives and to answer the research questions. Each of these seven sections deals with one objective and its corresponding research questions.

3.1 DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY

Mackey and Gass (2008) argue that “[...] research is a way of finding answers to questions” (Mackey & Gass, 2008)⁶⁸.

Cook (1993) suggests that, in the study of L2 acquisition in particular, researchers have tried to answer three big research questions: what constitutes knowledge of languages, how knowledge of languages is acquired and how knowledge of languages is put to use. In addition, Cook (1986) explains that attempts to answer these broad research questions have fitted in with one of the following four orientations: to investigate L2 learning itself, to improve language

⁶⁸ It is important to point out that the authors cited in this section use the term L2 to refer to both L2s and foreign languages. What is more, they consider L2s those languages learnt in addition to the speaker’s L1, whether they are his/her second, third, fourth or further language.

teaching, to contribute to general issues in psychology and to contribute to wider issues in linguistics and the linguistic theory of language acquisition. This study will answer the three of the questions suggested by Cook (1993) within the domain of modal verb primings in letters of request. Firstly, to describe modal verb primings in the set of request letters written by the sample of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners, i.e. to enquire into the sample of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners' knowledge of this aspect of the language. Secondly, to confirm whether modal verb primings in the set of request letters written by the sample of native teachers of EFL and in the sample of B2 EFL textbooks coincide with and/or differ from those in the set of letters written by the sample of L1 Spanish EFL learners at B2 level, i.e. to look into what modal verb primings the latter have acquired at this stage of their learning and how these differ (or not) from those of the two priming sources. Thirdly, to analyse how the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners have put these primings to use in two different contexts: request letters in formal and in informal register. It must be also argued that this research belongs in the second and fourth orientations put forward by Cook (1986). As for improving language teaching, because the findings concerning modal verb primings in the letters in question are meant to have important pedagogical implications, as already advanced. Indeed, conclusions regarding what to teach and why with respect to modal verbs are to be given. As for contributing to wider issues in linguistics and the linguistic theory of language acquisition, conclusions related to the conveyance of requests by L1 English and L1 Spanish speakers are also expected to be drawn.

Cook (1986) goes on to add that, in L2 research, three major methods may be identified: language elicitation and analysis, measurement of learner or situational variables and correlation with language, and manipulation of situation and measurements of effects. This research has adopted the first method, which consists of recording “[...] samples of the learner’s language, technically a “corpus”, and then to analyse them; this may be called the “observational”

method” (Cook, 1986: 6). These language samples, the author explains, may be authentic, byproducts of teaching or non-authentic. The ones produced for this study are non-authentic in the case of the letters written by the sample of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners and by the sample of native teachers of EFL as they have been written specifically for academic purposes. In the case of the letters obtained from the sample of B2 EFL textbooks, they are products of teaching since they have been written for learning purposes. However, each of the methods proposed by Cook (1986) to answer research questions in L2 research may be applied in different scientific designs. Following Mackey and Gass’s (2008) mixed forms of research, the ones employed in this study are exploratory-quantitative-statistical and exploratory-qualitative-interpretative. Each of the features of these two scientific designs will be discussed below.

As regards the way of collecting data (exploratory as opposed to experimental), this study has been defined as exploratory since it explores modal verb primings in text written by a sample of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners, a sample of native teachers of EFL and in a sample of B2 EFL textbooks. No experimental designs whatsoever have been carried out: the samples that have written the texts in question have not been exposed to any treatments and no control groups or treatment groups have been scrutinised.

As for the data analysis method (statistical as opposed to interpretative), one part of this study is statistical and the other part interpretative. This can be explained by Mitchell and Myles’ (1998) argument that any given L2 theory is expected to provide descriptions of L2 phenomena and explanations of these phenomena. In this research, descriptions of L1 and L2 English rely on statistical data. These statistical data provide corpus-based information about modal verb frequencies, about the frequencies of modal verb collocations, about the frequencies of prefabricated lexical items containing modal verbs and used in requests, about the frequencies of modal verbs in rheme and in theme position at sentence, paragraph and text level in sentences making requests, about the

frequencies of sentences making requests with modal verbs in rheme and in theme position at paragraph level, about the frequencies of request letters containing modal verbs in requests in the first paragraph and about the frequencies of cohesive chains containing modals and used in requests. Nonetheless, the analyses of this thesis do not end here. This study tries to explain these descriptions through exemplification. Indeed, it is interpretative since statistical information has been supplemented with examples that illustrate request classifications proposed by the author of this study that may account for the frequencies mentioned above. Thus, the aim of this research is not only to compare frequencies, but also to look into the interpretation of why these frequencies occur within the context of the corpora studied as well as into their pedagogical implications.

With respect to the type of data (quantitative as opposed to qualitative), this study consists in two parts: a quantitative part and a qualitative one. It is quantitative because the occurrences of modal verbs, of the collocates of modal verbs, of prefabricated lexical items containing modal verbs and used in requests, of modal verbs in rheme and in theme position at sentence, paragraph and text level in sentences making requests, of sentences making requests with modal verbs in rheme and in theme position at paragraph level, of request letters containing modal verbs in requests in the first paragraph and of cohesive chains containing modals and used in requests have been quantified. This quantitative part is an associational one-shot design (Mackey & Gass, 2008) since the aim is to uncover any links between the corpora of letters under scrutiny and the above-mentioned frequencies at the particular moment when the letters were written. Nevertheless, it is also qualitative as, when this quantitative data was supplemented with examples that illustrated request classifications proposed by the author, an exploratory oriented enquiry into why certain frequencies occurred and into their pedagogical implications was conducted. As a result, further

research questions came up. This combination of quantitative and qualitative data is based on evidence of its usefulness in previous studies: the literature review has not only shown that quantitative and qualitative methods are complementary but also that “[...] it is increasingly common for researchers to present and discuss both quantitative and qualitative data in the same report, or to use methods associated with both types of research in a process sometimes known as split methods or multiple methods” (Mackey & Gass, 2008: 164).

In addition to the discussion of the type of research and of the scientific design of this study, it was thought that its reliability and validity had to be approached as well. This research is valid as the tools and methods that have been adopted collect and also measure the target data. Indeed, other studies could also be carried out to examine different samples of request letters by applying the same analytic methods as the ones used in this research and, therefore, by comparing their results with those of this research. These tools and methods will be described objective by objective in the sections that follow. This research is also reliable because, if another researcher used the same methods to collect the same data from the same sample, he/she would gather the same quantitative information. As for the qualitative data, this study also counts on confirmability, since “[...] another researcher should be able to examine the data and confirm, modify or reject the first researcher’s interpretations” (Mackey & Gass, 2008: 180). Indeed, this study provides “[...] systematic procedures for confirming/disconfirming the theory, through data gathering and interpretation [...]” (Mitchell & Myles, 1998: 5).

A third aspect that needed to be covered was that of the research technique that has been employed. Since modal verb primings play an important role in many aspects of the text organisation of request letters, from primary and secondary modal verb frequencies to modal verbs as essential elements of cohesive chains, methodological triangulation has been adopted. Mackey and Gass (2008) define methodological triangulation as “[...] using different measures or research methods to investigate a particular phenomenon” (Mackey & Gass, 2008: 181). Methodological triangulation has made it possible to reduce the

researcher's subjectivity and to collect different types of data, e.g. from the frequencies of the collocates of modal verbs to the number of letters containing requests in the first paragraph (these methods will be described in the following sections), with a view to giving a broad account of modal verb primings in request letters from different angles.

3.2 THE SAMPLES

As mentioned above, three sets of letters of request were supposed to be collected. One that comes from a sample of B2 EFL textbooks, another one written by a sample of native teachers of EFL and one written by a sample of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners. These three samples will be described in the same order below.

As explained in section 1.7 (*Limitations of the study, chapter one*), some B2 EFL textbooks may contain more letters than others. This would mean that, in any sample of letters from B2 EFL textbooks, the English proposed by the writers whose textbooks include more letters will carry more weight regarding letter writing than the English suggested by those writers whose textbooks contain fewer letters. To overcome over-representativeness, a considerable number of B2 EFL textbooks were collected: ten in total. These came from the following series: *First Certificate Gold*, *First Certificate Expert*, *Objective First Certificate*, *Countdown to First Certificate*, *First Certificate Direct*, *FCE Result*, *Laser FCE*, *FCE Gold Plus*, *Ready for FCE* and *Fast Track to FCE*.

It was decided to collect the letters only from the student books of these series for the following reason. It was considered that student books are the most important part of book series. Indeed, while it may happen that some L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners may do all of the activities in activity books, CD-Rom or online materials that book series provide, there may also be cases of learners who may do some of them or none. By contrast, because B2 EFL student books introduce

the content that forms the basis of B2 international and also of local/school exams – and, as a result, because this content may be believed to be a must-know to take any of these exams –, it is expected that students use student textbooks more often than other materials that may be regarded as supplementary.

Nonetheless, while the letters were being collected in the student textbooks, it was observed that these contained plenty of activities in which EFL learners had to distinguish lexico-grammatical features of formal request letters from those of informal ones. Furthermore, activities which included request letters with a substantial number of errors that EFL learners were supposed to spot and correct were also found. The presence of these numerous errors made these request letters unsuitable for analysis as they provided very few or even no examples of the use of lexical items in requests in Standard English in the register to which they belonged, which was often what the EFL learners had to find out. In addition, activities that included request letters with the aim of consolidating EFL learners' grammar, such as gap filling exercises to put the verbs in the right tense or exercises to reformulate requests, were also observed. All the activities described so far in this paragraph were left aside. Indeed, the following criteria were considered in the selection of the letters. First, requests for information and/or for actions to be done, i.e. situations in which the writer requests the addressee to let him/her know (about) something or to do something or both, had to be their main aim. It is worth pointing out that even though requests proved to appear in letters of complaint, these were excluded from the analyses. This exclusion is based on the fact that comparisons were meant to be established with the letters written by the other two samples: the native teachers of EFL and the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners wrote pure letters of request only and no letters of complaint. Second, the letters could be used to prime the reader to use the right register as they should contain lexical items that are used in requests in Standard English in the register to which they belonged –formal or informal–, even though they were not

necessarily used for this purpose. This is because they sometimes served as input material in interactional writing tasks and not as target language itself.

In total, eight formal request letters and seven informal request letters were obtained as well as three formal request emails and nine informal request emails in the ten textbooks. The presence of the emails brought up two options. The first option was to leave out the emails and kept the letters in order to stick to the objectives of this thesis. This would give a very small sample of letters, especially of informal ones, and might even lead to omitting the sample of textbook letters altogether. The second option was to keep both emails and letters together for two reasons. For one thing, in most cases it was difficult to distinguish between emails and letters. Indeed, the formal emails had all the appearance of formal letters as regards format, structure and language, whereas some informal letters looked like emails and some emails read as letters. For another, having said that it is questionable to argue that the letters and emails of request under scrutiny are seen as clearly distinct genres based on their close resemblance, and bearing in mind that the sample of letters was too small, it was decided to follow the second option and present the fact that B2 EFL textbooks contain a low number of both request letters and emails as an interesting pedagogical finding and with a view to collecting as wide a range of data as possible. Having explained this, it has been decided to refer to both the letters and the emails in the textbook sample as *letters* for a smooth reading.

As for the eleven formal request letters, one was taken from *FCE Gold Plus*, one from *First Certificate Direct*, one from *Fast Track to FCE*, two from *FCE Result*, two from *Ready for FCE*, two from *Laser FCE* and two from *First Certificate Gold*. As regards the informal request letters, one came from *First Certificate Direct*, one from *First Certificate Expert*, one from *Countdown to first Certificate*, two from *FCE Gold Plus*, two from *Laser FCE*, two from *Ready for FCE* and seven from *FCE Result*. In total, nine letters were obtained from *FCE*

Result, four from *Ready for First Certificate*, four from *Laser FCE*, three from *FCE Gold Plus*, two from *First Certificate Direct*, two from *First Certificate Gold*, one from *Fast Track to FCE*, one from *First Certificate Expert*, one from *Countdown to First Certificate* and none from *Objective First Certificate*. Therefore, the distribution of the letters under scrutiny has been uneven across the ten B2 EFL textbooks under scrutiny. As for the size of the text gathered from the B2 EFL textbooks, the total number of tokens of the formal letters was 1,687. This corpus was called Textbook Corpus Formal (TXTCF). With respect to the informal letters, the total number of tokens was 2,006. This corpus received the following name: Textbook Corpus Informal (TXTCI). Both TXTCF and TXTCI have been called Textbook Corpus (TXTC).

Before the letters from the B2 EFL textbooks were collected, it had been planned that the number of letters written by the sample of native teachers of EFL had to be comparable to that of the TXTC. Nonetheless, it was considered that a total of 27 letters was not big enough, and therefore it was decided to raise the number of letters written by the sample of native teachers of EFL by 50 % so as not to get too far from the number of letters obtained from the B2 EFL textbooks either. This gave a total of 40.5 letters which was rounded up to 41. This led to the collection of 21 formal letters of request and 21 informal ones written by the sample of native teachers of EFL.

Twenty-one adult male and female teachers have participated in the project. They have all worked in the same language school in Spain and have taught B2 exam preparation courses. They have all received the same teaching training and hold the Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults. They are all NS of English and come from Canada, New Zealand, Ireland, the United States of America and the United Kingdom. As it was advanced in section 1.7 (*Limitations of the study, chapter one*), multiple nationalities does not make it a homogeneous group as far as the variety of English is concerned. However, as also discussed previously, if teachers of the same nationality with the same teaching background had been chosen, a homogeneous sample would not have been gathered either due

to differences in variables such as place of birth, education, social class, etc. At the same time, it was thought that the decision to choose 21 teachers at random would provide a sample of English teachers that would have much in common with the population of native teachers of EFL teaching in a good number of language schools in Spain without necessarily being representative: they are of different nationalities and they have used B2 materials. As a result, they may have been partly primed by them, as already advanced as well.

Each teacher was given the same set of two handouts. One handout contained instructions to write a formal letter of request (see appendix A), whereas the other one provided those to write an informal letter of request (see appendix B). The teachers took the letters with them and wrote them in the context they found the most convenient, as letters are usually written in real life. Nonetheless, a limit of lines was set to elicit a comparable amount of language. The total number of tokens of the formal letters of request written by the native teachers of EFL was 2,290. The name given to the corpus containing these letters was Teacher Corpus Formal (TCF). Regarding the total number of tokens of the informal letters of request written by the same sample, it amounted to 2,840. The corpus comprising these letters was called Teacher Corpus Informal (TCI). Both TCF and TCI together form the Teacher Corpus (TC).

Concerning the sample of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners, they are all adult male and female university students who study English as an extracurricular subject at the same university. Initially, it was decided to obtain a number of letters written by the sample of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners which would be larger than the number of letters written by the native teachers of EFL to get as wide a spectrum of language as possible. Indeed, the students belonging to the sample under scrutiny come from different regions of Spain and have therefore studied English at different schools. As a consequence of this, the fact that they have all been placed at the same level of English, B2, does not necessarily mean they have

received exactly the same training or that they share the same or even a similar range of modal verb primings in requests as trained native teachers of EFL are supposed to do. Consequently, the sample of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners was expected to be less homogeneous than the sample of native teachers of EFL as far as modal verb primings in letters of request are concerned. At the same time, it has been decided that the number of letters written by this sample should not be too different from the number of the letters written in the sample of B2 EFL textbooks or by the sample of native teachers of EFL. Therefore, the number of letters has been doubled as compared to those written by the native teachers of EFL: 42 letters of each register were expected to be collected. Nonetheless, 41 students were available to participate in this study at the time when the letters were collected.

The sample of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners was given the same handout as the sample of native teachers of EFL to write the informal letter of request (see Appendix B). However, the instructions given on the handout for writing the formal letter of request were slightly different (see Appendix C). Instead of asking the participants to enquire about the knowledge of computers that was required to attend the imaginary webpage design course, the sample of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners was asked to make inquiries about the level of English that was required to attend. It was thought that this change would make the task more relevant to the learner participants. The total number of tokens of the informal letters written by the sample of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners was 5,107. This corpus was called Learner Corpus Informal (LCI). The number of tokens of the formal letters written by the same sample was 4,320. The corpus of these letters will be referred to as Learner Corpus Formal (LCF). Both LCF and LCI compose the Learner Corpus (LC).

3.3 OBJECTIVE ONE: MODAL VERB FREQUENCIES

In *chapter 1*, it was explained that objective one aims to compare the frequencies of modal verbs in a set of formal and of informal letters of request written by a sample of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners with the frequencies of modal verbs in a set of formal and of informal letters of request written by a sample of native teachers of EFL and in a sample of B2 EFL textbooks. Before providing the data related to this issue, some background information needed to be supplied. First the number of tokens of each of the six corpora: TCF, TCI, LCF, LCI, TXTCF and TXTCI. However, since some of the six corpora differ in the number of letters they include, the average number of tokens per letter in each corpus was calculated.

After that, and before comparing and contrasting modal verb frequencies across the six corpora, the LD in TCF, TCI, LCF, LCI, TXTCF and TXTCI was worked out. Words have traditionally been divided into two classes: function words (FW) and content words (CW). Murphy (2010) defines function words as those “[...] that have grammatical functions rather than rich meanings” (Murphy, 2010). Both Murphy (2010) and Stubbs (2002) regard modal verbs as function words. Nonetheless, Stubbs (2002) admits that, as far as modals are concerned, the line that separates CW from FW is blurred since modals also convey meaning. However, the author explains that when the three following criteria are adopted, this dividing line may become less controversial. FW do not take inflections, CW classes have many members and CW are constantly open to accept new invented words. The author considers that nouns, adjectives, adverbs and main verbs are CW whereas auxiliary verbs, modal verbs, pronoun, prepositions, determiners and conjunctions are FW. However, Stubbs’s criteria may still be questioned since auxiliary verbs take inflections even though they do not keep accepting new members. Nevertheless, bearing in mind that in language matters classifications do not depend on black and white divisions, Stubbs’s (2002) and Murphy’s were

adopted. In *chapter one*, the following definition of LD was given: “The lexical density of a text is the proportion of lexical words expressed as a percentage” (Stubbs, 2002: 41). The formula is

$$LD = (CW/n) \times 100$$

where *n* is the number of tokens in a corpus.

Once the LD in the six corpora was obtained, the frequencies of the full and contracted affirmative and negative modal verb forms of the nine central modal verbs (see *section 2.8 Modal Verbs* in *chapter two*) in TC, LC and TXTC were identified. These frequencies were normalised to a million words for two reasons. Firstly, because corpora differed in the number of tokens they contained. Secondly, because the frequencies of some modal verb forms were very low in some corpora and normalisation was needed to appreciate any possible differences between them.

Once these normalised frequencies had been obtained, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was carried out. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test “[...] assesses whether there is a significant departure from normality in the population distribution [...]” (Carver & Nash, 2009: 140). Since this test indicated that modal verb form frequencies were not normally distributed in any of the three corpora, non-parametric tests were to be calculated. First, Spearman’s Rank Order correlation test was employed. “The Spearman’s Rank Order correlation is the nonparametric version of the Pearson correlation (*r*)” (Carver & Nash, 2009: 257), whereas “Pearson correlation is used to measure the extent of the relationship between two numeric variables” (Biber et al, 1998: 276). At this stage, this tool measured if there was any significant correlation between the rank order of modals in the TC, the LC and the TXTC. From now onwards it must be borne in mind that in all the calculations of this study, data was considered statistically significant if their significance level was lower than the alpha level of

.05, i.e. where “[...] there is only a 5 % probability that the research findings are due to chance, rather than to an actual relationship between or among variables” (Mackey & Gass, 2008: 265).

After calculating the Spearman’s Rank Order correlation, it was decided to see whether mean modal verb form frequencies were significantly different in the TC, the LC and the TXTC. Since the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test had indicated that modal verb form frequencies were not normally distributed in any of the three corpora, a non-parametric test was to be employed. “A Kruskal-Wallis is a non parametric test comparable to an ANOVA, but used when parametric test assumptions are not met. It is employed when a researcher wants to compare three or more independent groups” (MacKey & Gass, 2008: 280). Then, the Kruskal-Wallis test was used.

After calculating the rank correlation of modal verb form frequencies in the TC, the LC and the TXTC as well as any possible differences in mean modal verb form frequencies in the three corpora, it was decided to find out whether register had a bearing on modal verb form frequencies and distributions. Therefore, the frequencies of the full and contracted affirmative and negative modal verb forms of the nine central modal verbs in TCF, TCI, LCF, LCI, TXTCF and TXTCI were worked out and normalised to a million words. Then, as in the analysis of the distribution of modal verb forms in the TC, the LC and the TXTC, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used to find out whether the frequencies in the six samples were normally distributed. Since the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test showed that modal verb form frequencies were not normally distributed in TCF, TCI, LCF, LCI, TXTCF or TXTCI, Spearman’s Rank Order correlation test was calculated to find out whether there was any significant correlation between the rank order of modal verb form frequencies in the six corpora. Afterwards, mean modal verb form frequencies were compared. Since, as already explained, these were not normally distributed in TCF, TCI, LCF, LCI, TXTCF or TXTCI, the Kruskal-Wallis test was employed as well.

Because corpora differ in the number of letters they contain, it was decided to calculate the average frequencies of modal verbs per letter in TCF, TCI, LCF, LCI, TXTCF and TXTCI. To work out if average modal verb frequencies per letter were significantly different, the Kruskal-Wallis test was performed as the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test had shown that frequencies were abnormally distributed in three of the six corpora. As significant differences in modal verb frequencies per letter were identified, pair comparisons were made to discover where differences lay. A parametric measure, the Tukey post-hoc ANOVA score, was applied in the comparison of normally distributed samples, whereas, if either of the groups in any of the pairs was not normally distributed, a non-parametric test, the Mann Whitney *U* test, was used instead.

Finally, in order to compare mean frequencies of secondary modal and primary modals per letter in TCF, TCI, LCF, LCI, TXTCF and TXTCI, these frequencies were calculated. This led to the following frequencies: primary modals in TCF (TCFP), secondary modals in TCF (TCFS), primary modals in TCI (TCIP), secondary modals in TCI (TCIS), primary modals in LCF (LCFP), secondary modals in LCF (LCFS), primary modals in LCI (LCIP), secondary modals in LCI (LCIS), primary modals in TXTCF (TXTCFP), secondary modals in TXTCF (TXTCFS), primary modals in TXTCI (TXTCIP) and secondary modals in TXTCI (TXTCIS). In this case, most modal verb frequencies were abnormally distributed and, as a result, the Kruskal-Wallis test was then carried out. This test revealed significant differences in the frequencies of primary and secondary modal verbs per letter. Consequently, pair comparisons were carried out. The Tukey post-hoc ANOVA score was employed when normally distributed samples were compared, whereas the Mann Whitney *U* test was used if either of the groups in any of the pairs was not normally distributed.

3.4 OBJECTIVE TWO: MODAL VERB COLLOCATIONS

In order to be able to answer the research questions corresponding to objective two presented in *chapter one*, it had been decided to collect data regarding the collocations of the modal verb forms which occurred five or more times in either TCF or TCI. These were *can*, *could*, *should*, *would*, *'d*, *will* and *'ll*. Therefore a subsection for each of these forms was created. In each subsection, the same procedure was followed. It consisted of five steps.

Firstly, the frequency of occurrence of the collocates that followed the modal verb form in question in each of the six corpora (e.g. *I*, *you*, *adverbs*, *verbs*, etc) was calculated and presented in percentages and number of tokens. These figures were compared across corpora. For example, it was observed that *should* was followed by *I* in TCF, TCI, LCF and in LCI, but never in the sample of B2 EFL textbooks.

Secondly, because it was thought that it was interesting to find out which verbs followed the modal verb forms under scrutiny in the formal and in the informal letters written by the sample of native teachers of EFL as well as to compare these frequencies with the expected and actual ones in the letters written by the sample of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners and in the sample of B2 EFL textbooks as one of the research questions of objective two enquired, the following operations were performed. Only those verbs that occurred twice or more times after the targeted modal verb forms in TCF and in TCI were scrutinized. The percentage of occurrence of these verbs after each modal verb form in TCF was calculated. For example, *would* was followed by *like* eleven times in TCF. Since *would* occurred 43 times in that corpus, it was concluded that it was followed by *like* in 25.58 % of its occurrences

$$\text{Percentage of occurrence of } \textit{like} \text{ after } \textit{would} = (11/43) \times 100$$

Afterwards, the expected frequency (EF) of *would* + *like* in LCF was calculated. Since in LCF *would* occurred 75 times, based on the percentage of occurrence of *like* after *would* in TCF, *like* was expected to occur after *would* in 19.18 of its occurrences in LCF:

$$\text{EF of } \textit{like} \text{ after } \textit{would} \text{ in LCF} = .2558 \times 75.$$

The same operation was then carried out to work out the EF of *like* after *would* in TXTCF. This procedure was performed in the analyses of the verbs that collocated with modal verb forms two or more times in TCI as well, i.e. the percentage of occurrence of all the verbs that followed the targeted modal verb forms more than twice in TCI was calculated and their expected frequencies after the same modal verb forms in LCI and in TXTCI reckoned and compared with the actual ones.

Thirdly, the *t-score* was calculated to find out whether there was any significant difference between the frequency of a verb that collocated within one-word span of its node (the modal verb form that it followed), and its EF within that span. The following example will illustrate how this was calculated (Barnbrook, 1998). *Like* occurred nineteen times in TCF. TCF is a corpus of 2,290 tokens. In this corpus, *would* occurred 43 times. Therefore, the EF for *like* to occur within a one-word span of *would* was:

$$.3567 = 19/2,290 \times 43$$

However, *like* occurred eleven times after *would* in that corpus. The *t-score* is calculated by applying the following formula (Barnbrook, 1998):

$$t \text{ score} = (\text{Observed Frequency} - \text{EF}) / \sqrt{\text{Observed Frequency}}$$

Thus,

$$3.21 = (11 - .3567) / 3.3166$$

Barnbrook (1996) explains that it is hard to assess absolute statistical significance with the *t-score*, but that the data that is the most interesting is that which is over two. This score, 3.21, would indicate that the difference between the observed frequency of *like* within a one-word span of *would* and its EF within that span based on its occurrences in the whole corpus may be considered significant. The *t-score* of the frequency of occurrence of all the verbs that occurred more than twice after the modal verb forms under scrutiny in TCF and of its corresponding frequencies (if any) in LCF and TXTCF was calculated. The same procedure was carried out with the frequency of occurrence of all the verbs that occurred more than twice after the modal verb forms under scrutiny in TCI and its corresponding frequencies (if any) in LCI and in TXTCI. These operations were performed with a view to identifying statistically significant collocations in the six samples of letters.

The fourth step consisted of working out the CF of the verbs that collocated more than twice after the modal verb forms in question in TCF and TCI and in its corresponding corpora (LCF and TXTCF for TCF; LCI and TXTCI for TCI). In *chapter one* it was advanced that the CF shows the strength of the collocation of a node and its collocates. It calculates the frequency of the collocation of a node with a collocate as a percentage of its frequency (Handl, 2008). What is more, it may calculate whether it is stronger for the node or for its collocate. The example provided to explain the calculation of the *t-score* will be used to explain how the CF is reckoned. It was observed that in TCF *like* occurred nineteen times, and that, in eleven of these nineteen occurrences, it followed the modal verb form *would*. The formula Handl (2008) suggests for the CF is obtained by dividing the combined frequency of the collocate and of its node by the frequency of the collocate or of its node times a probability measure, in this study the *t-score*.

Therefore, in TCF, the CF for *like* with respect to *would* is:

$$1.858 = (11/19) \times 3.21$$

It was decided to consider only those factors that were higher than .70 (Handl, 2008) to make sure that the strongest ones were dealt with. In this case, in TCF the collocation *would + like* proves to be very strong for the verb *like*.

Finally, in the fifth step, those verbs that collocated twice or more times with the modal verb form under scrutiny in LCF and in TXTCF but not in TCF, as well as in LCI and TXTCI but not in TCI were given. Examples of the collocations tackled so far in the six corpora were provided since *chapter five, Discussion*, will deal with the interpretation and pedagogical implications of all these findings.

3.5 OBJECTIVE THREE: PREFABRICATED LEXICAL ITEMS CONTAINING MODAL VERBS AND USED IN REQUESTS

When prefabricated lexical items containing modal verbs in requests were searched for, the existence of four types of requests was reported: direct requests, direct requests with modal verbs, indirect requests with mitigating phrases and indirect requests with mitigating phrases and with modal verbs. The frequencies and percentages of occurrence of these request strategies in the six corpora were calculated and later compared.

Afterwards, a subsection for the analyses of each of these types of request strategies was created. To give a very descriptive picture of these strategies, direct requests were sorted out into Yes/No questions, WH questions, adverb + WH questions, adverb + Yes/No questions, WH question + choice questions, *Please* + commands, commands, affirmative statements, and choice questions. Direct requests with modals in the formal letters were classified into questions, affirmative statements and *please* + commands. Direct requests with modals in the informal letters were divided into questions, affirmative statements and commands accompanied by *please* or not. These classifications made it possible to group requests and, later, to compare prefabricated lexical items containing modal verbs in requests across corpora (see *sections 4.3, 4.3.1 and 4.3.2*).

Indirect requests with mitigating phrases and indirect requests with mitigating phrases and with modal verbs were classified according to the patterns and the word forms used. For example, in TCF five types of indirect requests with mitigating phrases and with modal verbs were identified: one type contained the verb *wondering*, another one included the verb *appreciate*, a third one carried the adjective *grateful*, a fourth type contained adjectives that denote gratitude and appreciation and a fifth one used the verb *hoping*. This typography enabled the author to enquire beyond comparisons provided by figures. Indeed, in each of these subsections, examples were provided and, as a result, concrete cross-corpora comparisons were made.

3.6 OBJECTIVE FOUR: MODAL VERBS AT SENTENCE LEVEL IN REQUEST LETTERS

When the frequencies of modal verbs in theme and in rheme position at sentence level in sentences making requests were calculated (i.e. before and after the main verb), it was observed that some sentences carried modals in both positions. To create a valid method of collecting data that could be replicated, it was decided to count the position of each modal in each sentence separately. To illustrate this, three examples will be provided. Example 3.1 contains a modal in theme position (*could*) and another one in rheme position (*will*). Thus, in this sentence, two modals have been reported: one in theme position and one in rheme position. In example 3.2, one modal verb in theme position has been observed. This counts as one modal in theme position. Example 3.3 reports one modal verb in rheme position, which counts as one modal in rheme position. In total, in these three sentences, two modal verbs in theme position and two modal verbs in rheme position have been observed.

- 3.1 *First, **could** you inform me when the course **will** start and finish?*
- 3.2 *Additionally **can** you please provide all relevant details as to the accommodation provided?*
- 3.3 *I was hoping you **could** answer a few questions.*

After the frequencies and percentages of occurrence of modal verbs in theme and in rheme position at sentence level in sentences making requests in each corpus were calculated, the chi-square Goodness-of-Fit test was worked out to observe any significant differences in the proportion of modal verbs in theme and in rheme position at sentence level in sentences making requests across the six corpora. For example, in TCF, 79.2 % of all modal verbs in requests were reported to be in theme position, whereas in TCI, this group amounted to 60.6 %. The chi square test showed a high chi square score (13.860) and a significance of $p < .0001$, which expressed that the proportions of sentences with verbs in theme and in rheme position in both samples were significantly different.

After calculating these scores, examples were provided to illustrate the colligations of modals in both positions in each corpus and to supply enough data that would allow the explanations of why differences occurred. For example, in TCF it was observed that modals head affirmative statements in requests in 52.6 % of all modal verbs in theme position, yes/no questions in 32.9 % of all modal verbs in theme position, choice questions in 5.3 % of all modal verbs in theme position, that they precede main verbs in WH/questions in four per cent of all modal verbs in theme position, that they appear in relative clauses in 2.6 % of all modal verbs in theme position, in an *If* clause in 1.3 % of all modal verbs in theme position and in a clause after a verb in 1.3 % of all modal verbs in theme position.

3.7 OBJECTIVE FIVE: MODAL VERBS AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL IN REQUEST LETTERS

This section compared the frequencies and percentages of occurrence of modal verbs in theme and in rheme position at paragraph level in sentences making requests as well as of the sentences that contained modals to make requests and which occurred in the first sentence of paragraphs with those of the sentences that contained modals to make requests which occurred later. After these figures were worked out, the chi-square Goodness-of-Fit test was performed to observe if there were any significant differences in the proportions of requests containing modals at the beginning of paragraphs and afterwards. This will be exemplified with the following comparison. It was observed that 37.1% of the sentences carrying modal verbs and making request in TXTCF were the first sentence of a paragraph. The same applied to 31.6 % of the sentences carrying modal verbs and making request in TXTCI. The chi square test showed a low chi square score (.497) and a significance of $p = .481$, which expressed that the proportions of sentences with verbs in theme and in rheme position in both samples were not significantly different.

Once these differences were established, examples of the types of requests with modals at the beginning of paragraphs were given to be able to make concrete cross corpora comparisons as regards the role played by requests with modal verbs at the beginning of paragraphs in the organisation of the letters written in/by the three samples as one of the research questions corresponding to this objective enquired. It was revealed, for example, that 44 % per cent of the sentences carrying modal and making requests in the first sentence of paragraphs in TCF were preceded by an adverb/adverbial phrase, noun phrase or a conjunction that indicates addition such as *firstly*, *first*, *additionally*, etc. It was

also observed that sixteen per cent of the sentences making requests with modals in the first sentence of paragraphs had the adverb *also* placed between the modal and the main verb at the beginning of requests.

3.8 OBJECTIVE SIX: MODAL VERBS AT TEXT LEVEL IN REQUEST LETTERS

In this part, first the number and the percentage of letters containing modal verbs in requests in their first paragraphs were given and cross-corpora comparisons were carried out using the chi-square Goodness-of-Fit test to establish any significant differences. For instance, in TCF, 85.7 % of the letters had modal verbs in requests in their first paragraph, whereas in TXTCF these accounted for 36.4 %. The chi square test showed a high chi square score (22.060) and a significance of $p < .0001$, which expressed that the proportions of letters containing modal verbs in requests in their first paragraphs were significantly different. Second, the frequency and percentage of occurrence of modal verbs in theme and in rheme position at text level in sentences making requests were calculated.

The second stage of this section revealed the frequencies of the colligations of modal verbs in requests in the first paragraph of the sample of letters of each corpus and provided examples of each colligation to be able to answer the last research question related to this objective. For example, it was revealed that, in TCF, 37.9 % of modal verbs in theme position at text level head affirmative statements.

3.9 OBJECTIVE SEVEN: COHESIVE CHAINS CONTAINING MODAL VERBS AND USED IN REQUESTS IN REQUEST LETTERS

This section presented the cohesive chains containing modals and used in requests in each corpus. Examples of each were provided and therefore contrasted in as much detail as possible. Important data was collected since it provided information about differences in text organisation between the six corpora. A case in point is the fact that the pattern *I + would + verb* (except for the verb *to be*) chained in requests in eight letters in TCF whereas the contracted form *'d* in the pattern *I + 'd + verb* chained in requests in only two.

A series of movements were also identified and analysed as examples of encapsulation and prospection. These consisted of either an affirmative statement that explained a request carrying one or more modal verbs (example 3.4) or an affirmative statement containing one or more modal verbs that explained a request which did not comprise any modal verbs (example 3.5). Nevertheless, it is important to point out that three conditions had to be met for this to happen: the statement that explained the request had to be in another sentence or separated from the request by a semi-colon. It could not be a request itself. It could not be the reason why the letter was written. This way, an objective and common framework was adopted in the analyses of the six corpora.

3.4 *I understand that you offer accommodation. **Could** you give me more information about the arrangements?*

3.5 *I want to know when starts and finish the course and its prices. I'm a student and **can't** spend a lot of money.*

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

MODAL VERBS IN LETTERS OF REQUEST

This chapter has been divided into eight sections. Each of the first seven sections deals with the findings concerning one of the seven objectives set in *chapter one, The Research Problem*. In the first part, TCF, TCI, LCF, LCI, TXTCF and TXTCI are described and their LD (Lexical Density) compared. In addition, mean modal verb frequencies and distributions in the six corpora are contrasted. Afterwards, mean modal verb frequencies per letter in each corpus are compared.

The second section deals with modal verb collocations. The collocations of the modal verb forms which occur five or more times in either TCF or TCI are scrutinised. These are: *can, could, should, would, 'd, will* and *'ll*. There is a subsection for each of these modal verb forms. In each subsection, several calculations are worked out. Firstly, the occurrence of the collocates that follow the modal verb form in question in percentages and number of tokens in each corpus. Differences across corpora are established. Secondly, based on the observed frequencies of the verbs that follow the targeted modal verb form twice or more times in TCF, the expected frequencies of these verbs after the same modal verb form are calculated for LCF and for TXTCF and compared with the real ones, if any. The same operation is performed in the corpora of informal letters, i.e. TCI, LCI and TXTCI. Thirdly, the *t-score* for each *modal verb + verb*

collocation is reckoned to see if there is any significant difference between the EF (expected frequency) of the verb within a one word span of the modal verb form and its real frequency. Afterwards, the CF is calculated to determine whether *modal verb + verb* collocations are strong and, if so, whether they are stronger for the node or for its collocate. Finally, examples are provided to illustrate the collocations under analysis. Furthermore, those verbs that collocate twice or more times with the modal verb form under scrutiny in LCF and in TXTCF but not in TCF as well as in LCI and TXTCI but not in TCI are given.

The third part tackles the use of prefabricated lexical items to formulate requests. In this section, the frequencies and percentages of occurrence of direct requests, direct requests with modal verbs, indirect requests with mitigating phrases and indirect requests with mitigating phrases and with modal verbs in the six corpora are given. Afterwards, each of these types of requests is analysed and exemplified to make cross-corpora comparisons.

In the fourth section, the frequencies and percentages of occurrence of modal verbs in theme and in rheme position at sentence level in sentences making requests in each corpus are calculated. The chi-square Goodness-of-Fit test is reckoned to observe any significant cross-corpora differences. After that, examples are provided to illustrate the colligations of modals in both positions and to explain why differences occur.

The fifth part of this chapter calculates the frequencies and percentages of occurrence of modal verbs in theme and in rheme position at paragraph level in sentences making requests in each corpus as well as the frequencies and percentages of occurrence of sentences making requests with modal verbs in theme and in rheme position at paragraph level. The chi-square Goodness-of-Fit test is worked out to reveal any significant differences in the percentage of occurrence of these sentences in theme and in rheme position at this level across

the six corpora. Afterwards, examples are given to describe the role played by requests with modal verbs at the beginning of paragraphs in the organisation of the letters.

Section six calculates the frequencies and percentages of occurrence of modal verbs in theme and in rheme position at text level in sentences making requests in each corpus and the number and percentage of request letters containing modal verbs in requests in the first paragraph. Then, the chi-square Goodness-of-Fit test score is worked out to reveal any significant differences in the percentage of these letters across the six corpora. Finally, the colligations of modal verbs in first paragraphs in the six corpora are described and exemplified.

In the next section, examples of cohesive chains making requests and containing modal verbs in the six corpora are given and contrasted.

Finally, in the last part, some short remarks are made.

4.1 OBJECTIVE ONE: MODAL VERB FREQUENCIES

It was thought that it was necessary to provide a description of the corpora in which modal verb frequencies would be analysed. While LCF and TCF consist of formal letters of request and LCI and TCI of informal ones, TXTCF comprises eight request letters and three request emails while TXTCI includes seven request letters and nine request emails. Having said this, as in *chapter three*, the emails and letters in TXTCF and TXTCI will be referred to as *letters*. As regards the size of each corpus, it has been calculated and presented in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1
Size of the six corpora in frequencies of tokens

TCF	TCI	LCF	LCI	TXTCF	TXTCI
2,290	2,840	4,320	5,107	1,687	2,006

Table 4.1 shows that the corpora of informal letters of request are larger than the corpora of formal ones in the TC, LC and TXTC. Nonetheless, since some of the six corpora differ in the number of letters they contain (TCF = 21, TCI = 21, LCF = 41, LCI = 41, TXTCF = 11, TXTCI = 16), it was decided to calculate the average number of tokens per letter in each corpus. This is shown in table 4.2.

Table 4.2
Average number of tokens per letter in each corpus

TCF	TCI	LCF	LCI	TXTCF	TXTCI
109	135	105	125	153	125

Table 4.2 presents a different picture: in the TXTC, the average formal letter of request is longer than the average informal one. By contrast, in the TC and in the LC, the average informal letter of request is longer than the average formal one.

Before dealing with modal verb frequencies in the six corpora and in each letter in particular, the LD of TCF, TCI, LCF, LCI, TXTCF and TXTCI is presented in table 4.3. As explained in *chapter three*, Stubbs's (2002) classification of CW and FW has been adopted. In it, modal verbs belong to the latter class.

Table 4.3
LD expressed in percentages of occurrence (%) in the six corpora

	TCF	TCI	LCF	LCI	TXTCF	TXTCI
FW	49.7	49.6	52.2	51.7	48.9	49.4
CW	50.3	50.4	47.8	48.3	51.1	50.6
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Table 4.3 indicates that the proportion of FW is slightly higher in LCF and in LCI than in the other four corpora. It will be seen if this small difference in the frequencies of FW in the LC is also reflected in modal verb form frequencies, i.e. if modal verb frequencies are higher in the LC. These have been normalised to a million words and presented in table 4.4.

Table 4.4
Modal verb form frequencies per million words in the TC, the LC and the TXTC

Modal Verbs	TC	LC	TXTC
Must	195	849	542
May	0	318	0
Might	585	0	0
Can	6,822	4,774	5,686
Can't	975	849	1,625
Could	6,822	5,728	5,416
Couldn't	0	106	0
Shall	0	106	271
Should	6,627	2,970	2,166
Shouldn't	0	106	271
Would	10,331	12,200	12,185
'd	3,509	848	2,979
Would not	0	106	271
Wouldn't	0	212	542
Will	3,899	7,425	2,979
'll	1,949	1,167	3,250
Won't	390	212	0
Total	42,104	37,976	38,183

Table 4.4 shows that total modal verb form frequencies per million words in the three corpora are very similar (TC = 42,104; LC = 37,976; TXTC = 38,183). However, since differences in the frequencies of some modal verb forms such as *should* and *will* are noteworthy, it was decided to calculate correlations between the three samples. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test indicated that none of the three samples were normally distributed (TC = $p < .01$; LC = $p < .0001$; TXTC = $p < .05$). Consequently, a non-parametric correlation test had to be used. Spearman's Rank Order correlation test will show if the rank order of modal verbs across the three samples is significantly different. The results are presented in table 4.5.

Table 4.5
Correlation Matrix of modal verb frequencies per million words in the TC, the LC and the TXTC

	TC	LC	TXTC
TC	-	.84*	.82*
LC	.84*	-	.86*
TXTC	.82*	.86*	-

*** $p < .0001$**

Table 4.5 reveals that there is a strong ($r_s = .84$; $r_s = .82$; $r_s = .86$) and statistically significant ($p < .0001$) rank order correlation between the frequencies of individual modal verb forms in the TC, the LC and the TXTC.

It was also decided to establish whether mean modal verb form frequencies in the three corpora were significantly different. With this view, the following operation was performed. As already explained, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test indicated that none of the three samples were normally distributed. Therefore, the Kruskal-Wallis test was carried out. Table 4.6 shows the results.

Table 4.6
Kruskal-Wallis Test for modal verb frequencies per million words in the
TC, the LC and the TXTC

	Sample	n	Mean Rank	Chi-Square	Significance
Modal verb frequencies	TC	17	25.29	.063	.969*
	LC	17	26.53		
	TXTC	17	26.18		

* $p > .05$

The test reveals that the mean rankings in the three samples are very similar (TC = 25.29; LC = 26.53; TXTC = 26.18). Besides, the Chi-Square score (.063) and its significance ($p > .05$) confirm that mean modal verb form frequencies in the three samples are not significantly different.

With the aim of seeing whether register had an impact on modal verb form frequencies and their frequency rankings across the three corpora and, thus, of observing whether any significant differences could be detected when this variable, register, was introduced, modal verb form frequencies in TCF, TCI, LCF, LCI, TXTCF and TXTCI were normalised to one million words and presented in table 4.7.

Table 4.7
Modal verb form frequencies per million words in TCF, TCI, LCF, LCI,
TXTCF and TXTCI

Modal Verbs	TCF	TCI	LCF	LCI	TXTCF	TXTCI
Must	0	352	463	1,175	0	997
May	0	0	0	587	0	0
Might	437	704	0	0	0	0
Can	4,803	8,451	2,546	6,658	4,149	6,979
Can't	0	1,761	463	1,175	0	2,991
Could	10,917	3,521	3,241	7,832	9,484	1,994
Couldn't	0	0	231	0	0	0
Shall	0	0	0	196	0	499
Should	437	11,620	926	4,699	1,186	2,991
Shouldn't	0	0	0	196	0	499
Would	18,777	3,521	16,898	8,224	23,118	2,991

Modal Verbs	TCF	TCI	LCF	LCI	TXTCF	TXTCI
'd	3,493	3,521	1,157	587	0	5,484
Would not	0	0	231	0	593	0
Wouldn't	0	0	231	196	0	997
Will	3,930	3,873	5,324	9,203	3,557	2,493
'll	0	3,521	231	1,958	0	5,983
Won't	0	704	231	196	0	0
Total	42,794	41,549	32,173	42,882	42,087	34,898

When register is added to the analyses, bigger differences may be observed. For instance, while *could* is preferred in formal letters of request in the TC and in the TXTC, in the LC, it is more frequent in informal ones. Before confirming any possible correlations between the six groups in table 4.7, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used to find out whether the frequencies in the six samples were normally distributed. It was observed that none of the six samples were normally distributed (TCF = $p < .0001$; TCI = $p < .05$; LCF = $p < .0001$; LCI = $p < .0001$; TXTCF = $p < .0001$; TXTCI = $p < .05$). As a result, Spearman's Rank Order correlation was calculated to observe if the rank order of modal verbs across the three samples was significantly different. The results are shown in table 4.8.

Table 4.8
Correlation Matrix of modal verb form frequencies per million words in TCF, TCI, LCF, LCI, TXTCF and TXTCI

	TCF	TCI	LCF	LCI	TXTCF	TXTCI
TCF	-	.75****	.76*****	.66**	.80*****	.50*
TCI	.75****	-	.77*****	.79*****	.61**	.78*****
LCF	.76*****	.77*****	-	.80*****	.75*****	.68**
LCI	.66**	.79*****	.80*****	-	.67**	.75****
TXTCF	.80*****	.61**	.75*****	.67**	-	.39
TXTCI	.50*	.78*****	.68**	.75***	.39	-

*** $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$ **** $p < .0001$**

The correlation matrix shows that there is no significant rank order correlation ($p > .05$) between modal verb forms in the following pair: TXTCF and TXTCI. Indeed, while the first three most frequent modal verb forms in the informal letters in the sample of B2 EFL textbooks are two present and two

contracted modal verb forms (*can*, *'ll* and *'d*), in the formal letters they are all full modal verb forms. What is more, two of them are past ones (*would*, *could* and *can*). It is also worth pointing out the strong correlation between LCI and TCF and TXTCF. While the four most frequent modal verb forms in descending order in TXTCF and in TCF are *would*, *could*, *can* and *will*, in LCI they are *will*, *would*, *could* and *can*. These findings will be discussed in the next chapter.

It was thought that differences in mean modal verb frequencies might be found when including the register variable. As table 4.7 demonstrates, modals per million words are less numerous in LCF and in TXTCI, but it remained to be seen whether these differences were significant. The fact that the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test had already indicated that none of the six samples were normally distributed led to the calculation of the Kruskal-Wallis test (see table 4.9).

Table 4.9
Kruskal-Wallis Test for modal verb form frequencies per million words
in TCF, TCI, LCF, LCI, TXTCF and TXTCI

	Sample	n	Mean Rank	Chi-Square	Significance
Modal verb frequencies	TCF	17	44	5.184	.394*
	TCI	17	55.94		
	LCF	17	51.53		
	LCI	17	58.76		
	TXTCF	17	41.82		
	TXTCI	17	56.94		

* $p > .05$

The mean rankings in the three samples are very similar (TCF = 44; TCI = 55.94; LCF = 51.53; LCI = 58.76; TXTCF = 41.82; TXTCI = 56.94). The lack of significant differences has been confirmed by the Chi-Square score (5.184) and its significance ($p > .05$). Nonetheless, it was still interesting to find out whether mean frequencies of modals per letter differed significantly in TCF, TCI, LCF, LCI, TXTCF and TXTCI. This would make it possible to carry out further comparisons.

Mean modal verb frequencies per letter per corpus are shown in table 4.10.

Table 4.10
Mean modal verb frequencies per letter per corpus

	TCF	TCI	LCF	LCI	TXTCF	TXTCI
\bar{x}	4.66	5.62	3.39	5.34	6.45	4.38

The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test revealed that three of the six samples were normally distributed (TCF, TXTCF and TXTCI were = $p > .05$; TCI, LCF and LCI were not = $p < .05$). Therefore, the Kruskal-Wallis test was performed (see table 4.11.a).

Table 4.11.a
Kruskal-Wallis Test results for modal verb frequencies per letter per corpus in TCF, TCI, LCF, LCI, TXTCF and TXTCI

	Sample	n	Mean Rank	Chi-Square	Significance
Modal verb frequencies	TCF	21	74.05	24,928	.000*
	TCI	21	93.38		
	LCF	41	51.72		
	LCI	41	86.29		
	TXTCF	11	108.14		
	TXTCI	16	69.50		

*** $p < .0001$**

The Kruskal-Wallis test showed a significant difference in the mean frequencies of modal verbs per letter per corpus (Chi square = 24,928; $p < .0001$). However, it was interesting to find to out where significant differences existed. Therefore, pair comparisons were carried out. In the comparisons of normally distributed groups, the Tukey post-hoc ANOVA score was applied (see table 4.11.b), whereas if either of the groups in any of the pairs was not normally distributed, the Mann Whitney U test was used instead (see table 4.11.c).

Table 4.11.b
Multiple comparisons of modal verb frequencies per letter per corpus: Tukey score

Pair	Mean Difference	Standard Error	Significance
TCF - TXTCF	1.78	.90	.129
TCF - TXTCI	.29	.80	.93
TXTCI- TXTCF	-2.07	.95	.084

Table 4.11.c
***U* test multiple comparisons of modal verb frequencies per letter per corpus**

Pair	Z	<i>U</i> score	Significance
TCF - TCI	-1.72	153.5	.085
TCF - LCF	-2.07	293	.038*
TCF - LCI	-1	358	.28
TCI - LCF	-4	162	.000***
TCI - LCI	-.29	411.5	.78
TCI - TXTCF	-1.67	74	.094
TCI - TXTCI	-1.64	115.5	.10
LCF - LCI	-3.46	470.5	.001**
LCF - TXTCF	-3.39	75.5	.001**
LCF - TXTCI	-1.25	258	.21
LCI - TXTCF	-1.57	156.5	.117
LCI - TXTCI	-1.21	260	.223

*** $p < .05$ ** $p < .001$ *** $p < .0001$**

Table 4.11.b indicates a trend towards significantly fewer modal verbs per letter in TXTCI than in TXTCF ($p = .084$), whereas table 4.11.c reveals that the frequencies of modal verbs per letter in LCF are significantly lower than in TCF ($p < .05$) and in TXTCF ($p < .001$).

Bearing in mind that studies have shown that L1 Spanish speakers may be more direct than L1 English speakers, and that they may tend to use primary (present) modals in contexts where the latter would use secondary (past) ones (see section 2.9.2), it was decided to compare mean frequencies of primary and of

secondary modals per letter in the six corpora. The mean frequencies of primary and of secondary modals per letter per corpus are shown in table 4.12.

Table 4.12
Mean frequencies of primary and secondary modal verbs per letter per corpus

	TCF		TCI		LCF		LCI		TXTCF		TXTCI	
	P	S	P	S	P	S	P	S	P	S	P	S
\bar{x}	0.95	3.71	2.52	3.09	0.97	2.41	2.63	2.70	1.18	5.27	2.5	1.88

As it happened with modal verb frequencies per letter per corpus, there was a combination of normal and of abnormal distributions of modals when primary and secondary modal verbs were sorted out. TCFS, LCIS and TXTCIS were reported to be normally distributed ($p > .05$), whereas the rest were not. The results of the Kruskal-Wallis test are given in table 4.13.

Table 4.13
Kruskal-Wallis Test for the frequencies of primary and secondary modal verbs per letter per corpus (TCFP, TCFS, TCIP, TCIS, LCFP, LCFS, LCIP, LCIS, TXTCFP, TXTCFS, TXTCIP and TXTCIS)

	Sample	n	Mean Rank	Chi-Square	Significance
Modal verb frequencies	TCFP	21	85.33	69.336	.000*
	TCFS	21	204.45		
	TCIP	21	166.36		
	TCIS	21	195.95		
	LCFP	41	88.13		
	LCFS	41	155.84		
	LCIP	41	166.21		
	LCIS	41	162.77		
	TXTCFP	11	98.32		
	TXTCFS	11	246.23		
	TXTCIP	16	163.69		
	TXTCIS	16	134.94		

*** $p < .0001$**

The results of the Kruskal-Wallis test show significant differences in the mean frequencies of primary and secondary modals across the six corpora (chi square = 69.336; $p < .0001$). It was interesting to spot where these differences were. In the comparisons of normally distributed groups, the Tukey post-hoc ANOVA score was applied (see table 4.14.a), whereas if either of the groups in any of the pairs was not normally distributed, the Mann Whitney U test was used instead (see table 4.14.b).

Table 4.14.a
Multiple comparisons of modal verb frequencies per letter per corpus:
Tukey score

Pair	Mean Difference	Standard Error	Significance
TCFS – LCIS	1	.58	.20
TCFS – TXTCIS	1.84	.72	.035*
LCIS - TXTCIS	.83	.64	.40

**p < .05*

Table 4.14.b
U test multiple comparisons of modal verb frequencies per letter per corpus

Pair	Z	U score	Significance
TCFP – TCFS	-4	61	.000****
TCFP - TCIP	-3.27	93.5	.001***
TCFP - TCIS	-4.23	55.5	.000****
TCFP - LCFP	-.38	406	.698
TCFP - LCFS	-3.12	225	.002**
TCFP - LCIP	-3.75	183	.000****
TCFP - LCIS	-3.01	232	.003**
TCFP - TXCFP	-.40	106	.687
TCFP - TXTCFS	-3.89	20	.000****
TCFP - TXTCIP	-3.24	65.5	.001***
TCFP - TXTCIS	-1.74	113.5	.081
TCFS – TCIP	-1.67	155	.095
TCFS – TCIS	-.85	187	393
TCFS – LCFP	-4.68	123.5	.000****
TCFS – LCFS	-2.27	279.5	.023*
TCFS – LCIP	-1.87	306.5	.062

Pair	Z	U score	Significance
TCFS – TXTCFP	-3.04	39.5	.002**
TCFS – TXTCFS	-1.96	66.5	.05*
TCFS – TXTCIP	-1.67	114	.09
TCIP – TCIS	-1.37	168	.168
TCIP – LCFP	-3.81	182	.000****
TCIP – LCFS	-.41	403.5	.682
TCIP – LCIP	-.053	427	.957
TCIP – LCIS	-.015	429.5	.98
TCIP – TXTCFP	-2.24	60.5	.025*
TCIP – TXTCFS	-2.93	43	.003**
TCIP – TXTCIP	-.27	159.5	.787
TCIP - TXTCIS	-1.078	134	.281
TCIS – LCFP	-5.09	96.5	.000****
TCIS – LCFS	-1.77	313.5	.076
TCIS – LCIP	-1.50	331.5	.131
TCIS – LCIS	-1.07	359	.281
TCIS – TXTCFP	-3.10	39	.002**
TCIS – TXTCFS	-2.68	49	.007**
TCIS – TXTCIP	-1.56	118.5	.117
TCIS – TXTCIS	-2.16	99.5	.031*
LCFP – LCFS	-3.74	447.5	.000****
LCFP – LCIP	-4.48	368.5	.000****
LCFP – LCIS	-3.59	463	.000****
LCFP – TXTCFP	-.225	216	.822

Pair	Z	U score	Significance
LCFP – TXTCFS	-4.27	40.5	.000****
LCFP – TXTCIP	-3.55	135	.000****
LCFP – TXTCIS	-1.90	225	.056
LCFS – LCIP	-.50	787	.613
LCFS – LCIS	-.43	794	.662
LCFS – TXTCFP	-1.99	138	.046*
LCFS – TXTCFS	-3.27	81	.001***
LCFS – TXTCIP	-.235	315	.814
LCFS – TXTCIS	-.805	283.5	.421
LCIP – LCIS	-0.70	833	.944
LCIP – TXTCFP	-2.43	119	.015*
LCIP – TXTCFS	-3.03	92	.002**
LCIP – TXTCIP	-.18	318	.856
LCIP – TXTCIS	-1.19	262	.232
LCIS – TXTCFP	-2.02	136.5	.043*
LCIS – TXTCFS	-2.84	99.5	.004**
LCIS – TXTCIP	-.05	325	.957
TXTCFP – TXTCFS	-3.26	11.5	.001***
TXTCFP – TXTCIP	-2.17	45	.03*
TXTCFP – TXTCIS	-1.10	66.5	.271
TXTCFS – TXTCIP	-2.74	33	.006**
TXTCFS – TXTCIS	-3.27	22.5	.001***
TXTCIP - TXTCIS	-.90	104.5	.365

*** $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$ **** $p < .0001$**

Tables 4.14.a and 4.14.b reveal that the sample of native teachers of EFL used significantly ($p < .0001$) more secondary modals per formal letter of request ($\bar{x} = 3.71$; \bar{x} rank = 204.45) than primary ones ($\bar{x} = 0.95$; \bar{x} rank = 85.33). However, in the informal letters of request, mean frequencies of primary ($\bar{x} = 2.52$; \bar{x} rank = 166.36) and secondary modals per letter are statistically comparable ($\bar{x} = 3.09$; \bar{x} rank = 195.95, $p = .168$).

As the native teachers of EFL, the sample of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners used significantly ($p < .0001$) more secondary modals per formal letter of request ($\bar{x} = 2.41$; \bar{x} rank = 155.84) than primary ones ($\bar{x} = 0.97$; \bar{x} rank = 88.13). Also, in the informal letters of request, mean frequencies of primary ($\bar{x} = 2.63$; \bar{x} rank = 166.21) and secondary modals per letter are statistically comparable ($\bar{x} = 2.70$; \bar{x} rank = 162.77, $p = .944$).

As regards the comparisons of primary and secondary modal verb frequencies across the TC and the LC, the following difference has been identified. On average, the native teachers of EFL used significantly ($p < .05$) more secondary modal verbs per formal letter ($\bar{x} = 3.71$; \bar{x} rank = 204.45) than the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners ($\bar{x} = 2.41$; \bar{x} rank = 155.84).

Concerning the sample of B2 EFL textbooks, significantly ($p < .001$) more secondary modals per letter ($\bar{x} = 5.27$; \bar{x} rank = 246.23) were used in the formal letters of request than primary ones ($\bar{x} = 1.18$; \bar{x} rank = 98.32). As with the samples of informal letters written by the native teachers of EFL and the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners, differences in the frequency of primary ($\bar{x} = 2.5$; \bar{x} rank = 163.69) and secondary modals ($\bar{x} = 1.88$; \bar{x} rank = 134.94) per letter in the informal letters are not significant ($p = .365$). Besides, there are significantly more secondary modals per letter in TXTCF than in LCF ($\bar{x} = 5.27$ and $\bar{x} = 2.41$ respectively, $p < .001$) and than in TCF ($\bar{x} = 5.27$ and $\bar{x} = 3.71$ respectively, $p < .05$).

All these findings and their pedagogical implications will be discussed in the next chapter. The next section will aim at drawing comparisons between the collocations of modals across TCF, TCI, LCF, LCI, TXTCF and TXTCI.

4.2 OBJECTIVE TWO: MODAL VERB COLLOCATIONS

This objective aims at comparing the collocates of modal verbs. As explained above, it has been decided to analyse the collocations of the modal verb forms which occur five or more times in either TCF or TCI. These are: *can*, *could*, *should*, *would*, *'d*, *will* and *'ll*. There will be a subsection to present the findings related to each of these modal verb forms.

4.2.1 CAN

The collocates of *can* are presented in table 4.15.a in percentages of occurrence and frequencies. *Can* is followed by a verb in the six corpora. However, there are two interesting remarks. Firstly, *can* is followed by an adverb in the TC and in the TXTC, but not in the LC. These adverbs are *then* (TXTCF, f = 1), *actually* and *hardly* (TCI, f = 1 each). Secondly, the native teachers of EFL preferred requesting information with *can* + *you* (TCF = 45.5 %, f = 5; TCI = 34.5 %, f = 10) to *can* + *I* (TCF = 9%, f = 1; TCI = 10.5 %, f = 3), whereas the L1Spanish B2 EFL learners preferred *can* + *I* (LCF = 8 %, f = 1; LCI = 25%, f = 10) to *can* + *you* (LCF = 0 %; LCI = 10%, f = 4). In the TXTC, *can* + *I* never occurs, while *can* + *you* only does in TXTCI (10 %; f = 2).

Table 4.15.a
Collocates of the modal verb form *can* in frequencies (f) and percentages of occurrence (%)

Collocates	TCF		TCI		LCF		LCI		TXTCF		TXTCI	
	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f
I	9	1	10.5	3	8	1	25	10				
You	45.5	5	34.5	10			10	4			10	2
We							2.5	1			5	1
Verb	45.5	5	24	7	69	9	45	18	72	5	45	9
Can't			17	5	15	2	15	6			30	6
Adverb			7	2					14	1		
Ø			7	2	8	1	2.5	1	14	1	5	1
Either											5	1
Total	100	11	100	29	100	13	100	40	100	7	100	20

Table 4.15.b shows the expected and observed frequencies of the verbs that collocate with *can* and *can't* twice or more times. In TCF, the most frequent verbal collocate is *provide* (f = 2), which never occurs in LCF or in TXTCF. In TCI, *wait* occurs five times after *can't*. This collocation has also been reported in TXTCI with a frequency which is higher than the expected one (f = 5), and in LCI with a frequency which is lower than the expected one (f = 3).

Table 4.15.b
Expected and observed frequencies of the verbs that occur after *can* and *can't*

Verb	TCF	TCI	LCF		LCI		TXTCF		TXTCI	
			E	O	E	O	E	O	E	O
Provide	2	5	2.36				1.27			
wait					6.9	3			3.4	5

E: expected frequency; O: observed frequency.

Table 4.15.c reveals that there is a significant difference between the EF of occurrence of *wait* within a one word span of *can't* based on the frequencies of *wait* in the whole corpus and its real frequency in TCI ($t = 2.24$) and in TXTCI ($t = 2.24$). A strong collocational factor has also been reported in *can't + wait* in TCI, TXTCI and LCI ($CF > 0.7$).

Table 4.15.c
t* score and CF of verbs after *can* and *can't

Corpus	CF of node	Node	f of node	f combined	<i>t</i>	f of collocate	Collocate	CF of collocate
TCF	0.25	Can	11	2	1.38	12	Provide	0.23
TCI	2.24	Can't	5	5	2.24	5	Wait	2.24
TXTCI	1.87	Can't	6	5	2.24	5	Wait	2.24
LCI	0.87	Can't	6	3	1.73	4	Wait	1.3

It should also be pointed out that the verbs that occur twice or more after *can* in LCF are *send* (f = 2) and *stay* (f = 2). In LCI, they are *see* (f = 4), *visit* (f = 3), *eat* (f = 2) and *wear* (f = 2). As for the B2 EFL textbooks, none of the *can + verb* collocations are repeated twice or more.

This section shows that the sample of native teachers of EFL used the collocations *can + you* and, to a lesser extent, *can + I* in the formal and in the informal letters whereas, in LCI, *can + I* was preferred instead. In addition, since L1 Spanish B2 EFL Learners used a higher proportion of verbs after *can* as compared to the teachers, it may be suspected that some of their requests may deviate from normally accepted word order. As a result, they may be more indirect or even wordy (see example 4.1).

4.1 *So, I'll be there for 4 days, so I don't have too much time, so you can advise me about...*

Concerning the letters from the B2 EFL textbooks, they do not prime the learner to use *can + you* or *can + I* in either of the registers.

4.2.2 COULD

Table 4.16.a shows the defective collocation *could + gerund* in LCF (*could doing*). Another defective collocation has been observed in LCF, which is not reflected in table 4.16.a: *could you telling me...?*. These two occurrences appear in two different letters. As with *can*, *could* is followed by a verb in the six corpora. Nonetheless, as opposed to *can*, L1Spanish B2 EFL learners preferred *could + you* to *could + I* to request information. As regards the TC and the TXTC, *could + I* never occurs.

Table 4.16.a
Collocates of the modal verb form *could* in frequencies (f) and percentages of occurrence (%)

Collocates	TCF		TCI		LCF		LCI		TXTCF		TXTCI	
	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f
I					7	1	10	4				
You	56	14	20	2	46	7	40	16	31	5	25	1
Verb	44	11	80	8	33	5	50	20	63	10	50	2
Couldn't					7	1						
Adverb									6	1		
All											25	1
Gerund					7	1						
Total	100	25	100	10	100	15	100	40	100	16	100	4

The most frequent verbs that collocate with *could* are *let* (TCF = 3) and *give* (TCI = 4). Neither of them appears in the other corpora (see table 4.16.b).

Table 4.16.b
Expected and observed frequencies of the verbs that occur after *could*

Verb	TCF	TCI	LCF		LCI		TXTCF		TXTCI	
			E	O	E	O	E	O	E	O
Let	3		1.8				1.92			
Give		4			16				1.6	

E: expected frequency; O: observed frequency.

Table 4.16.c reveals that there is a significant collocational factor for *could* + *give* in TCI (CF *could*: .80; CF *give*: 1.14) and for *could* + *let* in TCF (CF *let*: .72). However, in the latter, the attraction is strong for *let* but not for *could*. *Could* + *let* is part of the prefabricated lexical item *if you could let me know* in all its occurrences. This item collocates with *I would (also) be grateful* and with *I would also appreciate it*.

Could + *give* is part of an indirect request in all its occurrences: *(if) you could give me* collocates with *I was hoping* and with *I was wondering*.

Table 4.16.c
t* score and CF of verbs after *could

Corpus	CF of node	Node	f of node	f combined	<i>t</i>	f of collocate	Collocate	CF of collocate
TCF	0.2	Could	25	3	1.69	7	Let	0.72
TCI	0.80	Could	10	4	1.99	7	Give	1.14

It should be added that the verb that collocates twice or more after *could* in LCF is *tell* (f = 2), whereas in LCI these are *visit* (f = 4), *stay* (f = 3), *eat* (f = 3), *tell* (f = 4), *go* (f = 2) and *be* (f = 2). In TXTCF, one collocation has been reported: *could* + *tell* (f = 2), while in TXTCI, none.

The data in this subsection shows that the collocations of *could* for requests are more evenly distributed than those of *can*: *could* + *you* and *could* + *verb* are preferred across the six corpora. However, the two most frequent verbs after *could* in TCF and TCI, *let* and *give* respectively, do not occur in the LC or in the TXTC, even though they may be both expected to happen in prefabricated lexical items

for requests such as *if you could let me know* or *I was hoping/wondering if you could give me*.

4.2.3 SHOULD

As *can*, *should* is followed by an adverb in the TC (TCI = *particularly*) and in the TXTC (TXTCF = *very much*; TXTCI = *definitely*) only (see table 4.17.a). The expected collocation *should + verb* has been reported in all the corpora except for TCF, where *should + I* is used instead, but only once. *Should + I* occurs in the TC and in the LC only.

Table 4.17.a
Collocates of the modal verb form *should* in frequencies (f) and percentages of occurrence (%)

Collocates	TCF		TCI		LCF		LCI		TXTCF		TXTCI	
	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f
I	100	1	55	18	25	1	36	9				
We			3	1								
Verb			39	13	50	2	60	15	50	1	58	4
Shouldn't							4	1			14	1
Adverb			3	1					50	1	14	1
Have to					25	1						
It											14	1
Total	100	1	100	33	100	4	100	25	100	2	100	7

Except for one occurrence of *bring* in LCI, none of the most frequent verbal collocates of *should* in TCI have been reported in LCI or in TXTCI (see table 4.17.b).

Table 4.17.b
Expected and observed frequencies of the verbs that occur after
should

Verb	TCF	TCI	LCF		LCI		TXTCF		TXTCI	
			E	O	E	O	E	O	E	O
Bring		3			2.27	1			0.63	
Try		3			2.27				0.63	
Go		2			1.52				0.42	

E: expected frequency; O: observed frequency.

Table 4.17.c shows that there is no significant difference between the EF of *bring*, *try* or *go* in TCI or *bring* in LCI within a one word span of *should* and the real frequency within that span ($t < 2$ in all cases). Nonetheless, there is a strong CF for *try* (CF: .85) in *should* + *try* in TCI.

Table 4.17.c
t score and CF of verbs after *should*

Corpus	CF of node	Node	f of node	f combined	<i>t</i>	f of collocate	Collocate	CF of collocate
TCI	0.15	Should	33	3	1.65	13	Bring	0.38
LCI	0.04	Should	25	1	0.98	4	Bring	0.25
TCI	0.15	Should	33	3	1.69	6	Try	0.85
TCI	0.08	Should	33	2	1.33	10	Go	0.27

It is interesting to point out that, while in TCI the three occurrences of *should* + *bring* appear in requests for information (examples 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4), in LCI the only occurrence belongs to an introspective supposition (example 4.5).

4.2 *Let me know what clothes I **should bring**.*

4.3 *What clothes do you think I **should bring** with me as I've heard...*

4.4 *Do you think I **should bring** a coat just in case...*

4.5 *I suppose, I really **should bring** gloves,...*

However, in its four occurrences (examples 4.2, 4.3, 4.4 and 4.5) *should* + *bring* is located in a clause that is the object of a mental verb: *know*, *think* and *suppose*. The collocations *should* + *go* and *should* + *try* are both in requests for information as well (examples 4.6, 4.7, 4.8 and 4.9). In example 4.7, the former appears in the same pattern as in examples 4.3 and 4.4 (*do you think* + *I* + *should* + *verb*). By contrast, *should* + *try* appears in relative clauses in phrases introduced by the preparatory subject *there* in its three occurrences (examples 4.6, 4.8 and 4.9).

4.6 *Are there any places I **should go** outside the city, on day trips, or any typical foods I **should try**...*

4.7 *First of all, where do you think I **should go** to first...*

4.8 *...and let me know if there's anything else I **should try**.*

4.9 *Are there any national dishes I **should try**?*

As with *can*, while the native teachers of EFL preferred the pattern *should + personal pronoun*, the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners were more inclined to use *should + verb*. As in the findings of *can*, it may be suspected that the requests containing these collocations might be wordy (example 4.10 instead of *should I bring an umbrella?*), and/or may deviate from normally accepted word order (example 4.11 instead of *which places should I visit?*).

4.10 *I don't know if I **should** get an umbrella or no.*

4.11 *Which places I **should** visit?*

Moreover, as with *can* again, the letters in the TXTC do not contain the pattern the NS speakers chose, i.e. *should I*, in either of the two registers. Surprisingly, collocations such as *what... I should bring* or *what ... I should try* do not occur in LCI. The verbs that occur twice or more times after *should* in LCI are *visit* (f = 2), *know* (f = 2) and *take* (f = 3), while in TXTCI it is *be* (f = 2). There are no verbs that occur twice or more times after *should* in LCF, in TXTCF or in TCF.

4.2.4 WOULD

Table 4.18.a reveals a strong preference amongst L1Spanish B2 EFL learners for *like* after *would* over other verbs at a ratio of 2.49:1 in LCF and of 3:1 in LCI (the verb *be* has not been included in these ratios). This ratio is only higher in TXTCF: 4:1. By contrast, the teachers never used the collocations *would + like* or *would + verb* in the informal letters, while the ratio in TCF was much lower: 1.62:1. Conversely, the percentage of occurrence of the collocation *would + be* is high in the TC (TCF: 23%, TCI: 40%) and in the TXTC (TXTCF: 40 %, TXTCI: 37.5%) as compared to the LC (LCF: 9 %, LCI: 12%). Concerning the collocation of adverbs after *would*, the following have been reported: *also*, *greatly* and *particularly* in TCF, *definitely* in TCI, *only* in LCF, *also* in LCI and *also*, *particularly* and *very* in TXTCF. Regarding the collocation *would + you* for requests, it reports a higher percentage of occurrence in TCI, LCI and TXTCI than in TCF, LCF and TXTCF respectively.

Table 4.18.a
Collocates of the modal verb form *would* in frequencies (f) and percentages of occurrence (%)

Would	TCF		TCI		LCF		LCI		TXTCF		TXTCI	
	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f
Like	26	11			57.2	43	49	21	30	12	12.5	1
Verb	16	7			23	17	16	7	7.5	3	12.5	1
be	23	10	40	4	9	7	12	5	40	16	37.5	3
also	19	8					2.2	1	7.5	3		
Adverb	5	2	10	1	1.3	1			5	2		
I	7	3			1.3	1	2.2	1	2.5	1		
You	2	1	30	3	1.3	1	12	5	2.5	1	12.5	1
This	2	1										
Place Name			10	1	1.3	1						
It			10	1					2.5	1		
Have to					3	2	2.2	1				
Not					1.3	1			2.5	1		
Wouldn't					1.3	1	2.2	1			25	2
Have + Past + Participle							2.2	1				
Total	100	43	100	10	100	75	100	43	100	40	100	8

Table 4.18.b reveals that the frequencies of *would + be* are lower than expected in LCF (E: 17.44; O: 7) and in LCI (E: 17.2; O: 5) as compared to the observed frequencies in TCF (f = 10) and in TCI (f = 4), while in TXTCF they are higher (E: 9.3; O: 16) and in TXTCI as numerous as expected (E: 3.2; O: 3). By contrast, the frequencies of occurrence of *would + like* are higher than expected in both LCF (E: 19.18; O: 43) and in TXTCF (E: 10.23; O: 12). As regards *would + need*, it is comparatively more frequent in LCF than in TCF.

Table 4.18.b
Expected and observed frequencies of the verbs that occur after
would

Verb	TCF	TCI	LCF		LCI		TXTCF		TXTCI	
			E	O	E	O	E	O	E	O
Be	10	4	17.44	7	17.2	5	9.3	16	3.2	3
Like	11		19.18	43			10.23	12		
Need	2		3.49	5			1.86			

E: expected frequency; O: observed frequency.

A strong CF for *would + like* has been reported in TCF (CF: .82; 1.86), LCF (CF: 3.69; 5.53) and TXTCF (CF: .1; 2.69) (see table 4.18.c). However, in the three corpora, the factor is stronger for *like* than for *would*. A high *t score* in TCF, LCF and TXTCF has been reported as well (3.21; 6.43; 3.36 respectively), which shows that there is a significant difference between the EF of *like* within a one word span of *would* and its real frequency. The same comments apply to *would + be* in TXTCF, where a high *t score* (3.84) and a strong collocational factor for both *would* (1.54) and *be* (2.19) have been observed. The *t score* for *would + be* is also high in LCF (2.52), TCF (3) and LCI (2.13); while a strong CF of this pattern has been reported in TCF, TCI and LCF.

Table 4.18.c
t* score and CF of verbs after *would

Corpus	CF of node	Node	f of node	f combined	<i>t</i>	f of collocate	Collocate	CF of collocate
TCF	0.7	Would	43	10	3	28	Be	1.1
TCI	0.78	Would	10	4	1.95	29	Be	0.27
LCF	0.24	Would	75	7	2.52	20	Be	0.88
LCI	0.25	Would	43	5	2.13	28	Be	0.38
TXTCF	1.54	Would	40	16	3.84	28	Be	2.19
TXTCI	0.63	Would	8	3	1.69	18	Be	0.28
TCF	0.82	Would	43	11	3.21	19	Like	1.86
LCF	3.69	Would	75	43	6.43	50	Like	5.53
TXTCF	1	Would	40	12	3.36	15	Like	2.69
TCF	0.06	Would	43	2	1.31	8	Need	0.33
LCF	0.13	Would	75	5	1.89	45	Need	0.21

The ten occurrences of *would + be* in TCF appear in requests and are followed by adjectives that express gratitude (examples 4.12 and 4.14), interest (example 4.13), possibility (example 4.14) or appreciation (example 4.15).

4.12 *I would also be grateful if you could let me know how much...*

4.13 *Furthermore, I would be interested to know what type of accommodation...*

4.14 *If you could let me know if this **would be possible**, I would be grateful.*

4.15 *...course dates **would be extremely helpful**.*

In six of these ten occurrences, there is an adverb between *be* and the adjective (examples 4.15, 4.16 and 4.17).

4.16 *... I **would be very grateful** if you could include...*

4.17 *Any information... **would also be greatly appreciated!***

As in TCF, in TXTCF, *would + be* appears in requests and is followed by adjectives that show gratitude, interest, possibility or appreciation. Nonetheless, *would + be* is also followed by an adjective that denotes ability, and a past participle that denotes expectations. It is important to point out, though, that only one adverb, *very*, occurs between *be* and an adjective, and this in two out of the sixteen occurrences.

Besides the fact that in LCF *would + be* is used to convey requests, it is employed quite differently from TXTCF or TCF. To begin with, as already mentioned, proportionally, there are fewer occurrences (seven instead of around seventeen). Secondly, there is one adjective that expresses gratitude (example 4.18), one adjective that expresses appreciation (example 4.19) and one that denotes satisfaction (example 4.20). What is more, *would + be* is followed by past participles (example 4.21), a conjunction (example 4.22) and a noun phrase (example 4.23).

4.18 *I would be grateful if you take into consideration...*

4.19 *Secondly it would be useful to know the level of English...*

4.20 *I would be glad for hearing...*

4.21 *For that, I would need to know if my level would be accepted in...*

4.22 *I would like to know what the price of the course would be and...*

4.23 *What would be the price of it and if I...*

In TCI, *would + be* is followed by *good* (example 4.24), *best* and twice by *the best way to get* (examples 4.25 and 4.26) in requests.

4.24 *Looking like next May would be good for me...*

4.25 *...what would be the best way to get into central London...*

4.26 *...which would be the best way to get there...*

In TXTCI, *would + be* is also followed by adjectives that have positive connotations but only once by a comparative adjective in a request.

In LCI, *would + be* also precedes adjectives with positive connotations (examples 4.27, 4.28 and 4.29), but there are no comparisons whatsoever as in the previous two corpora.

4.27 *It would be marvelous.*

4.28 *... do you know any hotel or similar which would be good to...*

4.29 *It would be great, don't you think so?*

As for *would + need*, whereas in TCF it is followed by infinitives (examples 4.30 and 4.31), in LCF it is followed by infinitives and by nouns (examples 4.32, 4.33, 4.34 and 4.35). In both LCF and TCF, *would + need* collocates with *to know*.

4.30 *First of all, I would need to know the exact starting...*

4.31 *As I am not living in Bristol I would need to have ...*

4.32 *...if I would need an specific level of English to take it.*

4.33 *... I would need a stable arrangement that...*

4.34 *First of all I would need to know about...*

4.35 *For that, I would need to know if my level...*

As regards *would + like* in TCF, the native teachers of EFL *would like some + more/additional + information, to obtain/request + (some) (more) information, to enquire about the course, and to know how long the course lasts/the exact starting and finishing dates/the start and end dates*. By contrast, in TXTCF, letter authors

would understandably like to do a wider variety of actions as each letter is set in a different context. Nonetheless, the following collocations happen in both TCF and TXTCF: *would + like + further information/to know*.

Concerning LCF, in 63 % of the 43 occurrences of *would + like*, L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners *would + like + to know* something (*everything before paying...*, *how long it dures...*, *how much does it costs....*, *if I can start...*, *if I need a specific level...*, *if my English...*, *if that is enough ...*, *more about...*, *some (extra) information...*, *the accommodation...*, *the length of the course...*, *the price of the course...*, *the starting and finishing dates...*, *when the course starts and ...*, *what conditions...*,etc). While in TCF *information* is required in more than half of the occurrences of *would + like*, in LCF it is in 19 % of its occurrences. Besides, while the native teachers of EFL *would like to enquire about the course* and *obtain/request information*, L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners *would like to obtain/receive/be sent information* and *would + like + to ask you about the length of the course...*, *about the price of the course...*, *some questions about it...* Finally, two occurrences of *would + like + you + to* have been identified in LCF.

As regards other verbs that are repeated twice or more times after *would* in the LC and in the TXTC, they are the following. In LCF, these are *know* (f = 4) and *ask* (f = 3). In LCI, they are *know* (f = 2) and *appreciate* (f = 2). It is important to point out that, in the LC, *I would know* and *I would ask* act as alternative patterns to *I would like to know* and *I would like to ask*. In both TXTCF and TXTCI, no other verbs are repeated twice or more apart from the verbs discussed above.

This section indicates that the collocation *would + like* is very strong in TCF, LCF and TXTCF. As a result, it is to be expected in NS', textbook writers' and EFL learners' formal request letter writing. However, there are no occurrences of *would + like* in TCI, while in TXTCI the percentage of occurrence of this pattern is very low. It may be assumed that the sample of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners

over relied on *would + like* and *would + verb* to express preferences and requests, whereas NS' and textbooks writers' options spread along a wider variety of strategies such as *would + adverb* to give more strength to requests or preferences, *would + be* to express hypothetical states, *would + place names* or the pattern *would + you* for direct requests.

4.2.5 'D

The trends observed in the collocations of *would* are accentuated in the collocations of 'd. Table 4.19.a reveals that 'd is followed solely by *like* in LCF and in LCI, while, in TCF, TCI and TXTCI, the collocations 'd + *verb* and 'd + *be* do occur as well.

Table 4.19.a
Collocates of the modal verb form 'd in frequencies (f) and percentages of occurrence (%)

Collocates	TCF		TCI		LCF		LCI		TXTCF		TXTCI	
	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f
Like	50	4	40	4	100	5	100	3			36	4
Verb	12.5	1	40	4							55	6
be	25	2	20	2							9	1
also	12.5	1										
Total	100	8	100	10	100	5	100	3	0	0	100	11

Besides, table 4.19.b shows that the observed frequencies of ‘*d + like*’ in LCF (f = 5) and in LCI (f = 3) are higher than expected if compared to those in TCF or TCI.

Table 4.19.b
Expected and observed frequencies of the verbs that occur after
‘d

Verb	TCF	TCI	LCF		LCI		TXTCF		TXTCI	
			E	O	E	O	E	O	E	O
Like	4	4	2.5	5	1.2	3	0		4.4	4
Be	2	2	1.25		0.6		0		2.2	1
Recommend		2			0.6				2.2	

E: expected frequency; O: observed frequency.

As regards the strength of the collocations presented in table 4.19.b, table 4.19.c indicates a significant *t* score for ‘*d + like*’ in LCF (2.22). A strong CF for ‘*d + like*’ has also been reported in TCF, TCI, LCF, LCI and TXTCI. However, in TCF, LCF, LCI and TXTCI, it is stronger for ‘*d*’ than for *like*. Concerning the collocation ‘*d + be*’ or ‘*d + recommend*’, there are no significant comments to be made.

Table 4.19.c
***t* score and CF of verbs after ‘d**

Corpus	CF of node	Node	f of node	f combined	<i>t</i>	f of collocate	Collocate	CF of collocate
TCF	0.98	‘d	8	4	1.97	19	Like	0.41
TCI	0.8	‘d	10	4	1.99	5	Like	1.59
LCF	2.22	‘d	5	5	2.22	50	Like	0.22
LCI	1.72	‘d	3	3	1.72	34	Like	0.15
TXTCI	0.71	‘d	11	4	1.96	14	Like	0.56
TCF	0.34	‘d	8	2	1.35	28	Be	0.1
TCI	0.27	‘d	10	2	1.35	29	Be	0.09
TXTCI	0.08	‘d	11	1	0.9	18	Be	0.05
TCI	0.28	‘d	10	2	1.39	11	Recommend	0.25

In TCF, ‘d + like has similar collocations to *would + like*, though with a higher proportion of ‘d like to know (75 %; examples 4.36, 4.37 and 4.38) and only one hit requesting *information* (example 4.39). In LCF, I ‘d like to know (60 % of all its occurrences; examples 4.40, 4.41 and 4.42) and I’d like to ask (20 % of all its occurrences; example 4.43) have been reported.

4.36 *Finally I’d like to know what accommodation you provide...*

4.37 *I’d like to know how long the course lasts...*

4.38 *However, I’d like to know the following...*

4.39 *I’d like to get some more information...*

4.40 *...I'd like to know more about it.*

4.41 *I'd like to know when does the course start...*

4.42 *So I'd like to know how much...*

4.43 *First of all, I'd like to ask you how long...*

With reference to the informal letters, the collocations of 'd + like differ from those in the formal ones. Indeed, in TCI, all the collocations of 'd + like are different from those in TCF (*a local's opinion, to visit Hyde Park/ the local museum, to see the most important places*). In TXTCI, however, *know* still collocates with *like*, though only once. The same remark applies to LCI (example 4.44).

4.44 *What's more, I'd like to know what places are we going to visit...*

Concerning other verbs which are repeated twice or more in the LC and in the TXTC, only *love* has been reported three times in TXTCI.

Based on the data presented in this section, it may be noted that the sample of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners do not picture 'd followed by any other verb but by *like* in request letters, whereas the textbook writers and the native teachers of EFL, as it was the case with *would*, made use of other collocates such as *verbs*, *be* or *adverbs*. It is important to observe that, while the native teachers of EFL used 'd + *like*, 'd + *also*, 'd + *verb* and 'd + *be* in the formal letters, the textbook writers never did so in this register.

4.2.6 WILL

Table 4.20.a reveals that *will + verb* has a high percentage of occurrence in LCF (46 %, f = 11), LCI (54 %, f = 26) and TXTCF (50 %, f = 3), and that the second most frequent pattern in these corpora is *will + be*: LCF (25 %, f = 6), LCI (23 %, f = 11) and TXTCF (33 %, f = 2). Conversely, in TCI, *will + be* has a higher percentage of occurrence (38 %, f = 5) than *will + verb* (8 %, f = 1). The pattern for requesting *will + you* only occurs in informal register, and it has a low percentage of occurrence (TCI = 8 %, f = 1; LCI = 2.1 %, f = 1; TXTCI = 20 %, f = 1).

Table 4.20.a
Collocates of the modal verb form *will* in frequencies (f) and percentages
of occurrence (%)

Collocates	TCF		TCI		LCF		LCI		TXTCF		TXTCI	
	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f
Verb	22	2	8	1	46	11	54	26	50	3		
Noun	34	3	8	1	4	1					20	1
phrase												
It	11	1	15	2	13	3						
This	11	1										
Be	22	2	38	5	25	6	23	11	33	2		
Won't			15	2	4	1	2.1	1				
You			8	1			2.1	1			20	1
I			8	1			8.3	4			20	1
Adverb					4	1	4.2	2	17	1		
Have to					4	1						
Have +											20	1
Past												
Participle												
We							6.3	3				
That											20	1
Total	100	9	100	13	100	24	100	48	100	6	100	5

According to the data provided in table 4.20.b, the observed frequency of *will* + *be* in LCF and in TXTCF is higher than expected, whereas in LCI it is lower. Table 4.20.c will show if these collocations are strong.

Table 4.20.b
Expected and observed frequencies of the verbs that occur after
will

Verb	TCF	TCI	LCF		LCI		TXTCF		TXTCI	
			E	O	E	O	E	O	E	O
Be	2	5	5.33	6	18.46	11	1.33	2	1.92	

E: expected frequency; O: observed frequency.

The *t* score in table 4.20.c shows a significantly higher frequency of *be* within a one word span of *will* than its EF in this position in TCI ($t = 2.18$), LCF ($t = 2.41$) and LCI ($t = 3.24$). Besides, the collocation *will + be* in LCI is strong for the node and for the collocate (CF: 0.74 and 1.27 respectively), in LCF only for *be* (CF: 0.72) and in TCI for *will* (CF: 0.84).

Table 4.20.c
t score and CF of verbs after *will*

Corpus	CF of node	Node	f of node	f combined	<i>t</i>	f of collocate	Collocate	CF of collocate
TCF	0.3	Will	9	2	1.34	28	Be	0.1
TCI	0.84	Will	13	5	2.18	29	Be	0.38
LCF	0.6	Will	24	6	2.41	20	Be	0.72
LCI	0.74	Will	48	11	3.24	28	Be	1.27
TXTCF	0.45	Will	6	2	1.35	28	Be	0.1

As for the collocates of *will + be*, the following aspects may be brought to light. In TCI, *will + be* collocates with mental verbs: *hope* and *think* (examples 4.45, 4.46, 4.47, 4.48 and 4.49). Indeed, it is used to ask for the addressee's opinions/thoughts. Besides, as with *would + be* in TCI and in TXTCI, *will + be*

also collocates with the comparative *better* and the superlative *best* (examples 4.45 and 4.47).

4.45 *I'm hoping the weather **will** be a bit better than as it's towards the end of winter, right?*

4.46 *Finally, **what do you think the weather will be like** as...*

4.47 *...**what do you think will be the best way** to get to the centre?*

4.48 ***Do you think it will be safe...**?*

4.49 *...**am I right in thinking it will be** warm?*

In LCI, *will + be* is used in requests for information (examples 4.50 and 4.51) but also to talk about plans and predictions (examples 4.50, 4.52 and 4.53). It is never used with comparatives or superlatives and only once with a mental verb though not to ask for the addressee's opinion (example 4.54).

4.50 *You know that **I will visit you** next August, so now **I'm asking which places will we visit and what the weather will be like...***

4.51 *...**can we visit Magdalena's Palace, or it will be boring?***

4.52 *...**I will be arriving at seven o'clock.***

4.53 *When I will be there, it will be august, I will wear t-shirts...*

4.54 *I think that the temperature will be high.*

In connection with other verbs that occur twice or more times in the LC (none are repeated in the TXTC), the following may be cited. In LCF, they are *go* (f = 2), *live* (f = 2) and *need* (f = 2). As for LCI, these are *go* (f = 6), *visit* (f = 4), *wear* (f = 3), *see* (f = 2), *stay* (f = 2) and *search* (f = 2).

In this subsection, two remarks could also be made. The first one is that *will + you*, which may be often taught to convey requests, is one of the least frequent collocations. The second one is that the distribution of the percentage of occurrence of the collocations of *will* in informal letters of request in the TXTCI differs completely from those of the other five corpora.

4.2.7 'LL

The modal verb form 'll is mainly followed by a verb or *be* in TCI, LCI and TXTCI, while, in TCI and TXTCI, it is also followed by an adverb (*probably* in the former and *probably* and *really* in the latter). There are defective cases in LCF and in LCI (*I'll waiting* in both corpora) (see table 4.21.a).

Table 4.21.a
Collocates of the modal verb form 'll in frequencies (f) and percentages
of occurrence (%)

Collocates	TCF		TCI		LCF		LCI		TXTCF		TXTCI	
	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f
Verb			40	4			60	6			25	3
Be			30	3			30	3			59	7
Adverb			10	1							16	2
Have to			20	2								
Gerund					100	1	10	1				
Total	0	0	100	10	100	1	100	10	0	0	100	12

The collocation *'ll + be* has a comparable frequency in TCI and LCI, but a higher than expected one in TXTCI (see table 4.21.b). By contrast, the collocation *'ll + need* occurs only in TCI.

Table 4.21.b
Expected and observed frequencies of the verbs that occur after
'll

Verb	TCF	TCI	LCF		LCI		TXTCF		TXTCI	
			E	O	E	O	E	O	E	O
Be		3			3	3			3.6	7
Need		2			2				2.4	

E: expected frequency; O: observed frequency.

Table 4.21.c shows a significant CF and *t-score* for 'll + be in TXTCI only.

Table 4.21.c
***t* score and CF of verbs after 'll**

Corpus	CF of node	Node	f of node	f combined	<i>t</i>	f of collocate	Collocate	CF of collocate
TCI	0.5	'll	10	3	1.67	29	Be	0.17
LCI	0.51	'll	10	3	1.7	28	Be	0.18
TXTCI	1.52	'll	12	7	2.60	18	Be	1
TCI	0.28	'll	10	2	1.39	10	Need	0.28

The collocation 'll + be is only used for predictions and future arrangements in TXTCI. The same applies to TCI (examples 4.55 and 4.56) and to LCI (examples 4.57 and 4.58).

4.55 *It sucks you'll be working...*

4.56 *Looks like I'll be able to take you up on...*

4.57 *I'll be in the "Martin's Hotel"...*

4.58 *I'll be waiting for your letter.*

In relation to other verbs following 'll twice or more times in LCI and in TXTCI, there is one in the former (*see* f = 4) but none in the latter.

It would seem that the modal form 'll does not play a major role in requests. It follows the golden rule that it is not commonly used in formal requests in the three samples.

4.3 OBJECTIVE THREE: PREFABRICATED LEXICAL ITEMS CONTAINING MODAL VERBS AND USED IN REQUESTS

Initially, this part would provide data about the frequencies and percentages of occurrence of the prefabricated lexical items containing modal verbs and meant to convey requests in the formal and in the informal letters coming from the three samples in question. However, when these items were searched for, four types of request strategies were observed: direct requests, direct requests with modal verbs, indirect request with mitigating phrases and indirect requests with mitigating phrases and with modal verbs. The frequencies and the percentages of occurrence of these four request strategies in the six corpora are given in table 4.22.

Table 4.22
Frequencies and percentages of occurrence of request strategies in the six corpora

	TCF		LCF		TCI		LCI		TXTCF		TXTCI	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
1.	34	30	109	51.2	66	41.8	100	43.5	12	25.5	32	62.8
2.	62	54.9	92	43.2	86	54.4	120	52.2	24	51.1	19	37.2
3.	3	2.7	5	2.3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4.	14	12.4	7	3.3	6	3.8	10	4.3	11	23.4	0	0
Total	113	100	213	100	158	100	230	100	47	100	51	100

1. Direct requests. 2. Direct requests with modal verbs. 3. Indirect Requests with mitigating phrases. 4. Indirect requests with mitigating phrases and with modal verbs.

The figures presented in table 4.22 show that only TCF and LCF contain the four types of request strategies. Indeed, no occurrences of indirect requests with mitigating phrases have been reported in TXTCF, TXTCI, LCI or TCI. What is more, TCF and TXTCF show the highest percentage of indirect request with mitigating phrases and with modal verbs, whereas LCF, TCI and LCI report a much lower percentage and TXTCI none.

As for the formal registers, TCF and TXTCF have a similar percentage of direct requests with modals and a lower percentage of direct requests. By contrast, LCF contains a lower percentage of direct requests with modals and a higher percentage of direct requests than TCF or TXTCF.

As regards the informal letters, TXTCI has a very high percentage of direct requests and a much lower percentage of direct requests with modals than LCI or TCI. The percentages of occurrence of these last two are comparable.

Examples of these four types of requests will be given in the four sections that follow.

4.3.1 DIRECT REQUESTS

The data concerning this section are presented in table 4.23 below. As for TCF, the most frequent direct request types are WH questions (38.2 %, $f = 13$; example 4.59) and yes/no questions (20.6 %, $f = 7$; example 4.60) followed by affirmative statements (14.7 %, $f = 5$; example 4.61), WH questions introduced by adverbs (11.7 %, $f = 4$; example 4.62) and choice questions (8.8 %, $f = 3$; example 4.63).

4.59 *What type of accommodation do you provide?*

4.60 *Is there some kind of minimal requirement of IT knowledge in order to enroll?*

4.61 *I am writing to enquire about your webpage design course.*

4.62 *Also, what is the cost of the course?*

4.63 *Is this adequate for acceptance onto the course **or** are you looking for applicants with further computer qualifications?*

By contrast, in TXTCF, questions have not been reported except for one WH question (8 %). Conversely, affirmative statements have been observed (42 %, f = 5). Finally, as opposed to TCF, commands acting as direct requests preceded by *please* have also been revealed (50 %, f = 6).

Table 4.23 shows that also in LCF commands accompanied by *please* have been identified (1.85 %, f = 2; example 4.64), but that the most numerous request types are affirmative statements (42.2 %, f = 46) followed by WH questions (26.6 %, f = 29) and by yes/no questions (22.9 %; f = 25).

Regarding the WH questions, some grammar deviations in L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners' formal requests have been identified as compared to the ones in the TC and in the TXTC (examples 4.65 to 4.68). As for the yes/ no questions, the same has been observed (examples 4.69 to 4.72). Additionally, what has been reported in LCF but less in TXTCF (n = 2) or not at all in TCF (n = 0) is affirmative statements acting as direct requests headed by *I (also) need to know* (f = 6; examples 4.73 to 4.75) and *I (also) want to know* (f = 6; examples 4.76 and

4.77). Finally, three WH questions preceded by an adverb have also been observed as well as four choice questions.

4.64 *Please, send me an e-mail, I hope your responses.*

4.65 *And when is it finish?*

4.66 *When finish?*

4.67 *Secondly how it costs?*

4.68 *And which level I need to have to attend the course?*

4.69 *The school provides any?*

4.70 *I need a level of English?*

4.71 *And for instance does the school provides any accommodation?*

4.72 *Does the school provides any type of accommodation?*

4.73 *Finally I need to know which apartments, hotels or places...*

4.74 *I need to know this because I don't bring too money.*

4.75 *I need to know the length of the course...*

4.76 *And finally I want to know if I have...*

4.77 *To continue, I want to know if I need a really high English level...*

In connection with direct requests in informal letters, two affirmative statements headed by *I need to know* have been reported in TCI (examples 4.78 and 4.79). However, as in TCF, the direct requests that have been repeated the most in TCI have been WH questions (45.5 %, f = 30) and yes/no questions (31.8 %, f = 21).

4.78 *So, I need to know what the best way to get there is...*

4.79 *I also need to know which places are best to visit.*

Yes/no questions (41 %, f = 13) and WH questions (31 %, f = 10) are also the most frequent request types present in TXTCI, though there is a higher percentage of commands than in TCI or in LCI. Nine per cent are commands with *please* (f = 3) and sixteen per cent commands without it (f = 5).

As regards LCI, most requests are WH questions (36 %; f = 36), affirmative statements (25 %, f = 25; examples 4.80 to 4.82) and yes/no questions (22 %, f = 22). As in LCF, deviations from standard questions in WH questions and yes/no questions have been reported in LCI (examples 4.83 to 4.86). The same applies to choice questions (examples 4.87 to 4.89).

4.80 *To finish, I want to ask you about the weather because ...*

- 4.81 ... *I need now your advice about how to get there and where to stay.*
- 4.82 *I'm going this summer to your city, so I need some kind of advice.*
- 4.83 *What kind of clothes I have to put in my case?*
- 4.84 *What's about the weather in here?*
- 4.85 *It's important you say me how to get to your house?*
- 4.86 ...*but I haven't decided yet how to get there, any suggest?*
- 4.87 ... *shorts and a t-shirt is ok? Or I've to wear colder?*
- 4.88 *I don't have car, so I have to go by train, by bus?*
- 4.89 *In August there it's warm or hot?*

Table 4.23
Frequencies (f) and percentages of occurrence (%) of direct request types
across the six corpora

Request Types	TCF		LCF		TXTCF		TCI		LCI		TXTCI	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Yes/No questions	7	20.6	25	22.9			21	31.8	22	22	13	41
WH questions	13	38.2	29	26.6	1	8	30	45.5	36	36	10	31
Adverb + WH questions	4	11.7	3	2.75			1	1.5				
Adverb + Yes/No questions	1	3					1	1.5				
WH question + choice questions	1	3										
Please + Commands			2	1.85	6	50	1	1.5	6	6	3	9
Commands							1	1.5	4	4	5	16
Affirmative Statements	5	14.7	46	42.2	5	42	9	13.7	25	25	1	3
Choice Questions	3	8.8	4	3.7			2	3	7	7		
Total	34	100	109	100	12	100	66	100	100	100	32	100

4.3.2 DIRECT REQUESTS WITH MODAL VERBS

Direct requests with modals in formal letters have been divided into three groups (see table 4.24 below): questions, affirmative statements and commands accompanied by *please*. Table 4.24 shows that, in LCF and in TXTCF, the most numerous group is affirmative statements (78.3 %, f = 72 and 58 %, f = 14 respectively), while in TCF it is questions (51.6 %, f = 32). However, the gap between the number of affirmative statements and questions that request information is wider in LCF (1: 3.79) than in TXTCF (1: 1.56) , which shows that, in the sample of letters written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners, the tendency to make enquiries with affirmative statements carrying modals is stronger than in the other two samples. Prefabricated lexical items carrying modals and used in requests in TCF, TXTCF and LCF are provided below. In *section 2.12*, it was explained that the targeted prefabricated lexical items would be those highly structured, fixed and predictable combinations of more than one word that convey requests. To make sure that they were highly structured, fixed and predictable, only those which have occurred twice or more have been cited.

In TCF, the following recurrent prefabricated lexical items containing modal verbs to make requests in questions may be mentioned: *could you tell me...* (f = 3); *could you let me know...* (f = 3); *can you tell me...* (f = 2); *could you (please) inform me...* (f = 2); *could you (also) send me...* (f = 2); *could you (please) give me...* (f = 2); and *would I need to...?* (f = 2). As it may be seen, all the recurrent questions are yes/no ones.

As regards affirmative statements, the following have been reported: *I would (particularly/also) like to know...* (f = 7); *I would like some (more/additional) information...* (f = 4); *I'd like to know...* (f = 3); *I would (also) be interested to*

know... (f = 2); I would need to... (f = 2) and I would like to request (some) more information... (f = 2).

In TXTCF, there is but one sample of *could you give me...*, but the only item that occurs twice or more is *could you also (please) let me know... (f = 2)*. In connection with affirmative statements, as in TCF, the following prefabricated lexical item occurs: *I would be interested to know....* However, the only ones that are repeated twice or more are *I would like to know... (f = 3)* and *I/We would also/very much welcome... (f = 2)*.

In LCF, *could you give me...* and *could you please send me...* have also been reported, though the items that occur twice or more are: *when will it/the course start and finish? (f = 3)* and *could you (please) tell me... (f = 2)*. In relation to affirmative statements, those prefabricated lexical items that re-occur are: *I would like to know... (f = 27); I would know... (As an alternative to I would like to know, f = 4); I would ask you about... (As an alternative to I would like to ask you about..., f = 3); I'd like to know... (f = 3); I would like to obtain some/more information... (f = 3); I would like to ask you about... (f = 2); I would need to know... (f = 2); I would need + noun phrase (f = 2); and I would like you to... (f = 2).*

Table 4.24
Frequencies and percentages of occurrence of direct requests with modals
across the corpora of formal letters

Request Types	TCF		LCF		TXTCF	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
Questions	32	51.6	19	20.6	9	38
Affirmative Statements	30	48.4	72	78.3	14	58
Please + Commands			1	1.1	1	4
Total	62	100	92	100	24	100

Following the same categorization in the analysis of the informal letters, the most frequent request type carrying modal verbs found was questions in LCI (60 %, f = 72), TCI (82.5 %, f = 71) and TXTCI (73.7 %, f = 14). However, the corpus that contains the highest percentage of affirmative statements carrying modals and acting as requests is LCI (37.5 %, f = 45; see table 4.25 below).

In TCI, the only prefabricated lexical item in affirmative statements carrying a modal verb that is repeated twice or more is *you'll have to tell me...* (f = 2). As for commands, the following items have been observed: *let me know* (f = 2; examples 4.90 and 4.91) and *get/write back (to me)* (examples 4.92 and 4.93).

4.90 *Let me know what clothes I **should** bring.*

4.91 *P.S. If you **can** recommend any hotels, airlines, please let me know!*

4.92 *Anyway, please get back to me when you **can**!*

4.93 Write back when you **can**!

Regarding questions, the following items reoccurred: *can you (also) recommend...* (f = 4); *what (kind of) clothes should I bring...* (f = 4); *should I (also) bring (some) summer/warmer clothes ...* (f = 3); *can you (also) tell me...* (f = 2); *should I pack...* (f = 2); *can you suggest...* (f = 2); *what clothes do you think I should...* (f = 2), *where do you think I should...* (f = 2); *are there any typical foods/national dishes I should try?* (f = 2) and *what/which would be the best way to...* (f = 2).

TXTCI provides the following prefabricated lexical item *let me know* in commands. With reference to other prefabricated lexical items, the following have been found as well, though they occurred once: *can you tell me...* and *what kind of clothes do you think I should....*

In connection with direct requests carrying modals in LCI, the prefabricated lexical items that occur in affirmative statements are: *I would like to know...* (f = 8); *I would like you to inform me/give me/help me/let me know...* (f = 3); *I hope you/we could...* (f = 2); *I don't know where I/we could/can stay...* (f = 2); *I would (also) ask you* (for *I would (also) like to ask you*; f = 2) and *I would know....* (instead of *I would like to know*; f = 2).

With respect to WH questions, the following items are to be mentioned: *what (kind of) clothes should I wear...?* (f = 2); *how can I get there?* (f = 2); *what clothes will I wear?* (f = 2); *which places will we visit...* (f = 2); *what (more type of) food will I/we eat?* (f = 2); *what/which places would you recommend me to...?* (f = 2) and *which places can I visit?* (f = 2). As regards yes/no questions, the following prefabricated lexical items have been observed: *could you tell me...* (f = 5); *can I stay at your place?* (f = 2); *could you say me* (for *could you tell me*; f = 2) and *could you recommend me...* (f = 2).

Table 4.25
Frequencies and percentages of occurrence of direct requests with modals
across the corpora of informal letters

Request Types	TCI		LCI		TXTCI	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
Questions	71	82.5	72	60	14	73.7
Affirmative Statements	11	12.8	45	37.5	3	15.8
Please + Commands	2	2.35	2	1.70		
Commands	2	2.35	1	0.8	2	10.5
Total	86	100	120	100	19	100

4.3.3 INDIRECT REQUESTS WITH MITIGATING PHRASES

Table 4.22 revealed that, as for the formal request letters, there were indirect requests with mitigating phrases in TCF (2.7 %, f = 3) and in LCF (2.3 %, f = 5) only. In TCF, these consisted of the following prefabricated lexical items: *I also wanted to know* (f = 1; example 4.94) and *I was (just) wondering* (f = 2; example 4.95). Both types of requests are also present in LCF, but with some differences in standard language (examples 4.96 to 4.99). In addition, there is one phrase with the verb *wonder* in the present continuous tense (example 4.100).

As regards the informal letters, indirect requests were not present in any of the three corpora.

4.94 *I also wanted to know if I need any prior knowledge of...*

4.95 *Also, I was wondering how much it is, and...*

4.96 *..., but I wanted to know how much it cost,...*

4.97 *I wanted to know what the starting and finishing dates.*

4.98 *And finally I wanted to know the accommodation like apartments...*

4.99 *Secondly, I was wondering the fees of the course.*

4.100 *First of all, I am wondering how long the course is,...*

4.3.4 INDIRECT REQUESTS WITH MITIGATING PHRASES AND WITH MODAL VERBS

In formal register, table 4.22 showed that TCF (f = 14; 12.4 %), LCF (f = 7; 3.3 %) and TXTCF (f = 11; 23.4 %) contain indirect requests with mitigating phrases and with modal verbs. In TCF, five types of strategies have been spotted. The first type contains the verb *wondering* (f = 3; example 4.101). The second type includes the verb *appreciate* (f = 3; example 4.102). The third type carries the adjective *grateful* (f = 4; example 4.103). The fourth contains adjectives that denote gratitude and appreciation (apart from *grateful*, which has a class of its own) in conditional constructions (f = 3; examples 4.104 and 4.105). The fifth type carries the verb *hoping* (f = 1; example 4.106).

- 4.101 *...and I was wondering if you could provide me with more information...*
- 4.102 *I would also appreciate it if you could let me know what...*
- 4.103 *Finally, I would be very grateful if you could tell me if there are...*
- 4.104 *Specific course dates would be extremely helpful.*
- 4.105 *Any relevant information you can provide would be greatly appreciated.*
- 4.106 *I was hoping you could answer a few questions.*

TXTCF contains samples of the first type (though with *I wonder* and *I wondered*, $f = 3$), of the second type ($f = 1$), of the third type ($f = 6$) and of the fourth type (but with the adjective *pleased*, $f = 1$).

As for LCF, two requests with *wondering* have been reported (example 4.107). As for the fourth type ($f = 4$), variations have been identified as compared with TCF (examples 4.108, 4.109 and 4.110). Indeed, the conditional has not been used in the main clause in any examples. In the only occurrence of the third type, it is the subjunctive that was omitted (example 4.111).

- 4.107 *I was wondering if you could tell me the length of the course,...*
- 4.108 *...I will very please if you could answer them,...*

4.109 *I will be pleased if you could tell me the fees.*

4.110 *...so it will be helpful if you tell me when is the course starting...*

4.111 *I would be grateful if you take into consideration...*

As regards the informal request letters, in TCI, *wondering* is also used in indirect requests (f = 2; example 4.112). In all the other requests (f = 4), *hoping* is used instead (example 4.113). In TXTCI, no indirect requests with mitigating phrases and with modal verbs have been found.

4.112 *I was wondering if you could give me...*

4.113 *I was hoping you could give me some recommendations...*

In LCI, by contrast, examples of three of the five types that were identified in TCF have been observed. As for the first type, see example 4.114 (f = 5, though one example with the verb *wonder* in the present simple tense and another one in the present continuous tense have been reported). Two occurrences of the second type have been observed, though one without the pleonastic *it* (example 4.115, f = 2). As regards the fourth type, example 4.116 may be cited. The two remaining examples are introduced by the mitigating phrases *If you don't mind...* and *I also wanted to ask you....*

4.114 *I was wondering if you could tell me which places are...*

4.115 *..., so I would appreciate if you tell me how are the restaurants there.*

4.116 *And it would be awesome if you could send me a list of...*

4.4 OBJECTIVE FOUR: MODAL VERBS AT SENTENCE LEVEL IN REQUEST LETTERS

Table 4.26 reveals the frequencies and percentages of occurrence of modal verbs in theme and in rheme position at sentence level in sentences making requests. It may be observed that the proportion of modals in theme position is higher than the proportion of modals in rheme position in the six corpora.

Table 4.26
Frequencies (f) and percentages of occurrence (%) of modal verbs in theme and in rheme position at sentence level in sentences making requests

	TCF		LCF		TCI		LCI		TXTCF		TXTCI	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Theme	76	79.2	89	69	60	60.6	113	63.8	32	59.3	17	68
Rheme	20	20.8	40	31	39	39.4	64	36.2	22	40.7	8	32
Total	96	100	129	100	99	100	177	100	54	100	25	100

Table 4.27 shows the chi test results for the multiple comparisons of actual and expected distributions of modal verbs in theme and in rheme position at sentence level in sentences making requests. The results reveal that it is only in TCF that distributions differ from those of all the other corpora ($p < .05$ in the five comparisons). A significant difference has also been reported in the LCF and TXTCF comparison.

Table 4.27
Multiple comparisons of the proportion of modal verbs in theme and in
rheme position at sentence level in sentences making requests

Comparisons	Chi square	<i>p</i>
TCF – TCI	13.860	.000***
TCF – LCF	4.639	.031*
TCF – LCI	9.815	.002**
TCF – TXTCF	15.699	.000***
TCF – TXTCI	5.501	.019*
TCI – LCF	3.261	.071
TCI – LCI	.437	.508
TCI – TXTCF	.07	.791
TCI – TXTCI	2.487	.115
LCF – LCI	1.506	.220
LCF – TXTCF	5.021	.025*
LCF – TXTCI	.058	.809
LCI – TXTCF	1.513	.219
LCI – TXTCI	1.406	.236
TXTCF – TXTCI	1.896	.169

****p* < .05 ** *p* < .01 ****p* < 0001**

The reasons why TCF has such a high proportion of modals in theme position at sentence level in requests are the following. First, modals head affirmative statements in requests (f = 40; 52.6 % of all modal verbs in theme position;

example 4.117). Second, modal verbs head yes/no questions (f = 25; 32.9 % of all modal verbs in theme position; example 4.118). Third, modal verbs head choice questions (f = 4; 5.3 % of all modal verbs in theme position; example 4.119). Then, modal verbs precede main verbs in WH questions (f = 3; 4 % of all modal verbs in theme position; example 4.120). Finally, modal verbs appear in relative clauses (f = 2; 2.6 % of all modal verbs in theme position; example 4.121), in an *If* clause (f = 1; 1.3 % of all modal verbs in theme position; first *If* clause in example 4.122) and in a clause after a verb (f = 1; 1.3 % of all modal verbs in theme position; second *If* clause in example 4.122) before the main verb.

4.117 *I **would** also like to know about what level of computer literacy is required for attendance.*

4.118 ***Could** you let me know how long they take and what dates they are available?*

4.119 ***Would** I need to find my own accommodation or does your school provide its students with B and Bs, hotels or homestays for example?*

4.120 *Furthermore, what accommodation does the school provide and how much **will** this cost?*

4.121 *Any relevant information you **can** provide would be greatly appreciated.*

4.122 *If you **could** let me know if this **would** be possible, I would be grateful.*

The following cases of modals in rheme position have been observed in TCF. First, clauses after main verbs (f = 13; 65 % of all modal verbs in rheme position; example 4.123). Then, modal verbs in *if* clauses after adjectives (f = 3; 15 % of all modal verbs in rheme position; example 4.124). Afterwards, modal verbs heading clauses of purpose (f = 2; 10 % of all modal verbs in rheme position; example 4.125). Finally, modal verbs appear in a relative clause in a noun phrase which is not inside another clause after a verb (f = 1; 5 % of all modal verbs in rheme position; example 4.126) and also head a clause of reason (f = 1; 5 % of all modal verbs in rheme position; example 4.127) after the main verb.

4.123 *I was hoping you **could** answer a few questions.*

4.124 *I would also be grateful if you **could** let me know how much ...*

4.125 *First of all, I would need to know the exact starting and finishing dates, as well as how much the course costs so that I **can** make arrangements ...*

4.126 *Finally, could you also send me some information on the type of accommodation you **can** provide for students...*

4.127 *I am writing to enquire about the webpage design course offered by your school as advertised in yesterday's 'El País' newspaper, as I **would** be very interested in enrolling on it.*

In LCF, proportionally, there are fewer modal verbs placed before main verbs in sentences making requests than in TCF (69 % and 79.2 % respectively). Seven positions have been identified. The first group consists of modal verbs that head affirmative statements in requests (f = 66; 74.2 % of all modal verbs in theme position; example 4.128). The second group is composed of modal verbs that head yes/no questions (f = 13; 14.6 % of all modal verbs in theme position; example 4.129). The third group comprises modal verbs before main verbs in WH questions (f = 5; 5.6 % of all modal verbs in theme position, example 4.130). The next type shows modal verbs in relative clauses (f = 2; 2.3 % of all modal verbs in theme position, example 4.131). The last three groups are modal verbs in *if* clauses (f = 1; 1.1 % of all modal verbs in theme position; example 4.132), in choice questions (f = 1; 1.1 % of all modal verbs in theme position; example 4.133) and in clauses after verbs (f = 1; 1.1 % of all modal verbs in theme position; example 4.134).

4.128 *I **would** like you to send me all the new information you have.*

4.129 *Finish, **could** you give me an address to academy?*

4.130 *And when **will** it start and finish?*

4.131 *Other question I **would** like it's the level of English because I'm...*

4.132 *Finally, if you **can** send me an email about the accommodation school.*

4.133 *If there are, the food **will** be provide as well, or do we have to eat out of the school?*

4.134 *In order to know if I **could** doing it, I have few questions first.*

In rheme position, also seven positions have been observed. The largest one has been modal verbs in clauses after verbs (f = 23; 57.5 % of all modal verbs in rheme position; example 4.135). The second largest group is composed of modal verbs heading clauses of reason (f = 7; 17.5 % of all modal verbs in rheme position, example 4.136). The third type consists of modal verbs in relative clauses in noun phrases which are not inside other clauses after verbs (f = 5; 12.5 % of all modal verbs in rheme position; example 4.137). The fourth type comprises modal verbs in *if* clauses following an adjective (f = 2; 5 % of all modal verbs in rheme position, example 4.138). The last three groups consists of modal verbs heading *If* clauses (f = 1; 2.5 % of all modal verbs in rheme position, example 4.139), clauses of time (f = 1; 2.5 % of all modal verbs in rheme position, example 4.140) and in adjuncts of purpose (f = 1; 2.5 % of all modal verbs in rheme position, example 4.141).

4.135 *Firstly I would like to know if my English **should** be so good.*

4.136 *I would like to know how long it dures because I **would** have to travel.*

- 4.137 *Also I **would** like to know the price of the course and the level of English that I need to understand it because I don't want to lose my money in something expensive or in something that I **won't** understand.*
- 4.138 *Secondly, I will be pleased if you **could** tell me the fees.*
- 4.139 *And can I start another day if I **can't** that day?*
- 4.140 *Thanks for your attention and write me back as soon as you **can**...*
- 4.141 *Finally I need to know what type of accommodation provides the school during the course to **can** live there.*

As shown in table 4.26, TXTCF has reported the lowest proportion of modals in theme position at sentence level in sentences making requests in formal letters (59.3 %). In addition, fewer positions have been observed: four in total. First, modal verbs that head affirmative statements in requests (f = 23; 72 % of all modal verbs in theme position). The second type consists of modal verbs heading yes/no questions (f = 7; 22 % of all modal verbs in theme position). The last two groups include modal verbs before main verbs in WH questions (f = 1; 3 % of all modal verbs in theme position) and in clauses of time (f = 1; 3 % of all modal verbs in theme position).

Concerning modals in rheme position at sentence level in TXTCF, five positions have been observed. First, modal verbs in clauses after verbs (f = 14; 63.7 % of all modal verbs in rheme position). Second, modal verbs in *if* clauses after adjectives (f = 5; 22.8 % of all modal verbs in rheme position). Modal verbs

heading clauses of time (f = 1; 4.5 % of all modal verbs in rheme position), of reason (f = 1; 4.5 % of all modal verbs in rheme position) and in a relative clause in a noun phrase which is not inside another clause after a verb (f = 1; 4.5 % of all modal verbs in rheme position) have also been reported.

Regarding the informal request letters, the proportion of modal verbs in theme position at sentence level in requests is lower in TCI (60.6 %) than in LCI (63.8 %) or in TXTCI (68 %). In TCI, six positions have been reported. The largest group is composed of modal verbs as heads of yes/no questions (f = 24; 40 % of all modal verbs in theme position; example 4.142). The second largest group consists of modal verbs before main verbs in WH questions (f = 21; 35 % of all modal verbs in theme position; example 4.143). The third group comprises modal verbs heading affirmative statements in requests (f = 10; 17 % of all modal verbs in theme position, example 4.144). The next group is that of modal verbs in choice questions (f = 3; 5 % of all modal verbs in theme position; example 4.145). Finally, the last two groups are those of modal verbs in *If* clauses (f = 1; 1.5 % of all modal verbs in theme position, example 4.146) and in relative clauses (f = 1; 1.5 % of all modal verbs in theme position, example 4.147).

4.142 *Can you tell me where the best markets are?*

4.143 *What else should I try?*

4.144 *You'll have to tell me about everything so I can start making ...*

4.145 *Should I bring summer clothes or is that a bit ambitious?*

4.146 *P.S. If you **can** recommend any hotels, airlines, please let me know!*

4.147 *Any food I **should** particularly prepare myself for?*

In relation to modals in rheme position in TCI, four positions have been identified. The largest type is modal verbs in clauses after verbs (f = 27; 69.3 % of all modal verbs in rheme position; example 4.148). The second largest group is modal verbs in relative clauses in noun phrases which are not inside another clause after a verb (f = 8; 20.5 % of all modal verbs in rheme position; example 4.149). The last two kinds are modal verbs heading clauses of time (f = 2; 5.1 % of all modal verbs in rheme position; example 4.150) and of purpose (f = 2; 5.1 % of all modal verbs in rheme position; example 4.151).

4.148 *Let me know what clothes I **should** bring.*

4.149 *Are there any Spanish specialities you'**d** recommend I try?*

4.150 *Anyway, please get back to me when you **can**!*

4.151 *You'll have to tell me about everything so I **can** start making some ...*

As regards modal verbs in theme position in TXTCI, the following positions have been spotted. Modal verbs heading yes/no questions are the largest group (f = 8; 47 % of all modal verbs in theme position). This group is followed by modal verbs heading affirmative statements in requests (f = 5; 29.4 % of all modal verbs in theme position). Modal verbs before main verbs in WH questions have also been observed (f = 2; 11.8 % of all modal verbs in theme position). Finally, modal

verbs in *If* clauses (f = 1; 5.9 % of all modal verbs in theme position) and choice questions (f = 1; 5.9 % of all modal verbs in theme position) have also been found.

Modals in rheme position in TXTCI are but a few. Most of them appear in clauses after verbs (f = 7; 87.5 % of all modal verbs in rheme position) and one in a tag question (f = 1; 12.5 % of all modal verbs in rheme position).

As for LCI, the placement of modal verbs before main verbs (63.8 %) is accounted for by the following reasons. First, the use of modal verbs heading affirmative statements in requests (f = 47; 41.6 % of all modal verbs in theme position; example 4.152). The second group shows modal verbs before main verbs in WH questions (f = 27; 23.9 % of all modal verbs in theme position; example 4.153) while the third consists of modal verbs heading yes/no questions (f = 25; 22.1 % of all modal verbs in theme position; example 4.154). Modal verbs also head choice questions (f = 8; 7 % of all modal verbs in theme position; example 4.155). The next type consists of modal verbs before main verbs in clauses of time (f = 3; 2.7 % of all modal verbs in theme position; example 4.156). Finally, modal verbs also appear in clauses after verbs (f = 1; 0.9 % of all modal verbs in theme position; example 4.157), in *If* clauses (f = 1; 0.9 % of all modal verbs in theme position; example 4.158) and in relative clauses (f = 1; 0.9 % of all modal verbs in theme position; example 4.159) before main verbs.

4.152 *I **would** like to ask you about some issues related to my visit.*

4.153 *I want to visit some interesting places of your town, which places **can** I visit?*

- 4.154 *For example, **could** you tell me ten of the most common place to ...?*
- 4.155 *I mean, **can** we visit Magdalena's Palace, or it **will** be boring?*
- 4.156 *As soon as you **can**, I'll waiting your answer.*
- 4.157 *Talking about where **would** I stay, could I stay at your place until...?*
- 4.158 *If you **could** go with me, it would be marvelous.*
- 4.159 *And other really good question I **would** you to ask is about the clothes I should I have to wear, ...*

Modal verbs after main verbs in LCI have been sorted out into the following positions. The largest one is modal verbs in clauses after verbs (f = 40; 62.5 % of all modal verbs in rheme position; example 4.160). The second group is composed of modal verbs in relative clauses in noun phrases which are not inside another clause after a verb (f = 17, 26.5 % of all modal verbs in rheme position; example 4.161). The third group is modal verbs heading clauses of reason (f = 2; 3 % of all modal verbs in rheme position; example 4.162). Finally, modal verbs occur in *if* clauses (f = 1; 1.6 % of all modal verbs in rheme position; example 4.163), head clauses of time (f = 1; 1.6 % of all modal verbs in rheme position; example 4.164), appear in tag questions (f = 1; 1.6 % of all modal verbs in rheme position; example 4.165), in yes/no questions (f = 1; 1.6 % of all modal verbs in rheme position; example 4.166) and in *if* clauses after adjectives after main verbs (f = 1; 1.6 % of all modal verbs in rheme position; example 4.167).

- 4.160 *I need to know which interesting places I **could** visit, how **may** they cost and if they ...*
- 4.161 *I don't know which places are the most important to visit, could you do for me a timetable with the places that I **must** visit, ...*
- 4.162 *Do you know any good restaurants in the area, because I **would** like to eat good food.*
- 4.163 *When I get at the airport, what should I take, if you **can't** come ...?*
- 4.164 *I hope that we could go out together when I **will** visit you.*
- 4.165 *I should buy a flight, **shouldn't** I?*
- 4.166 *When I will be there, it will be august, I will wear t-shirts and shorts, **won't** you?*
- 4.167 *And it would be awesome if you **could** send me a list of restaurants where we can eat ...*

4.5 OBJECTIVE FIVE: MODAL VERBS AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL IN REQUEST LETTERS

The present section offers a comparison of the frequencies and percentages of occurrence of modal verbs in theme and in rheme position at paragraph level in sentences making requests (see table 4.28).

Table 4.28
Frequencies (f) and percentages of occurrence (%) of modal verbs in theme and in rheme position at paragraph level in sentences making requests

	TCF		LCF		TCI		LCI		TXTCF		TXTCI	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Theme	38	39.6	76	58.9	21	21.2	75	42.4	19	35.2	8	32
Rheme	58	60.4	53	41.1	78	78.8	102	57.6	35	64.8	17	68
Total	96	100	129	100	99	100	177	100	54	100	25	100

It also compares the frequencies and percentages of occurrence of sentences making requests with modal verbs in theme and in rheme position at paragraph level, i.e. it compares the frequencies and percentages of occurrence of sentences that make requests and contain modals which occur in the first sentence of paragraphs with those of the sentences that make requests and contain modals but which occur afterwards. Tables 4.28 and 4.29 indicate that, except for LCF, modal verbs are placed mostly in rheme position at paragraph level and that sentences making requests with modal verbs occur mostly after the first sentence of paragraphs as well.

Table 4.29
Frequencies (f) and percentages of occurrence (%) of sentences making requests with modal verbs in theme and in rheme position at paragraph level

	TCF		LCF		TCI		LCI		TXTCF		TXTCI	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Theme	32	42.1	58	58.6	18	19.6	54	41.5	13	37.1	6	31.6
Rheme	44	57.9	41	41.4	74	80.4	76	58.5	22	62.9	13	68.4
Total	76	100	99	100	92	100	130	100	35	100	19	100

The chi-square test (see table 4.30) reveals that there are significant differences in the proportion of sentences making requests with modal verbs in theme and in rheme position at paragraph level within the TC (TCF – TCI $p < .0001$), the LC (LCF – LCI $p < .001$), and, within the same register, between the TC and the LC (TCF – LCF $p < .01$; TCI – LCI $p < .0001$), the LC and the TXTC (LCF – TXTCF $p < .0001$; LCI – TXTCI $p < .05$) and the TC and the TXTC (TCI – TXTCI $p < .05$). No significant differences have been reported between TXTCF and TXTCI.

Table 4.30
Multiple comparisons of the proportion of sentences making requests with modal verbs in theme and in rheme position at paragraph level

Comparisons	Chi square	<i>p</i>
TCF – TCI	24.427	.000****
TCF – LCF	8.523	.004**
TCF – LCI	.011	.915
TCF – TXTCF	.816	.366
TCF – TXTCI	3.880	.049*
TCI – LCF	57.782	.000****
TCI – LCI	18.233	.000****
TCI – TXTCF	12.122	.000****
TCI – TXTCI	6.165	.013*
LCF – LCI	11.904	.001***
LCF – TXTCF	19.585	.000****
LCF – TXTCI	33.355	.000****
LCI – TXTCF	1.097	.295
LCI – TXTCI	5.941	.015*
TXTCF – TXTCI	.497	.481

****p* < .05 ***p* < .010 ****p* < .001*****p* < .0001**

Forty-four per cent of the sentences making requests with modals in the first sentence of paragraphs in TCF are preceded by an adverb/adverbial phrase, noun phrase or a conjunction that indicates addition of requests. These are: *firstly*

(example 4.168), *first* (example 4.169), *additionally* (example 4.170), *first of all* (example 4.171), *furthermore* (example 4.172), *finally* (example 4.173) and *the last thing* (example 4.174). Besides, sixteen per cent of the sentences making requests with modals in the first sentence of paragraphs contain the adverb *also* between the modal and the main verb at the beginning of requests (examples 4.175 to 4.177). This indicates the importance of modals at the beginning of paragraphs to create cohesive formal request letters (see *section 5.5.1*). The rest of the requests are affirmative statements (34 % example 4.178), yes/no questions (16 %; example 4.179), and indirect requests with mitigating phrases and with modals (6 %; example 4.180).

4.168 *Firstly, I would like to know how long the course lasts...*

4.169 *First, could you inform me when the course will start and finish.*

4.170 *Additionally can you please provide all relevant details...*

4.171 *First of all, I would need to know the exact starting...*

4.172 *Furthermore, I would be interested to know what type...*

4.173 *Finally, could you please inform me about...*

4.174 *The last thing I would like to obtain information on...*

4.175 *I would also like to know what the requirements to enroll...*

- 4.176 *I'd also be interested to know what assistance the school...*
- 4.177 *Finally, I would also like to know the type of accommodation...*
- 4.178 *As I am not living in Bristol I would need to have some accommodation arranged for me.*
- 4.179 *Could you please send some information about the course ...?*
- 4.180 *I saw your advertisement in the South London Herald and I was wondering if you could provide me with more information...*

In LCF, adverb/adverbial phrases, noun phrases or conjunctions that add requests occur at the beginning of 48.3 % of the sentences in theme position at paragraph level. These head words/phrases are *finally* (example 4.181), *first of all* (example 4.182), *firstly* (example 4.183), *secondly* (example 4.184), *thirdly* (example 4.185), *to finish* (4.186), *in addition* (example 4.187), *besides* (example 4.188), *also* (example 4.189), *finish* (example 4.190), *at last* (for *finally*; example 4.191), *at least* (for *finally*; example 4.192), *other question/important thing* (for *another question/important thing*; example 4.193) and *another thing important* (for *another important thing*, example 4.194). No examples of *also* between a modal verb and a main verb have been reported. The rest of the requests in this position are affirmative statements (37.9 %, example 4.195), yes/no questions (6.9 %; example 4.196), indirect requests with mitigating phrases and with modals (3.5 %; example 4.197), commands with *please* (1.7 %; example 4.198) and choice questions (1.7 %; example 4.199).

- 4.181 *Finally, if you **can** send me an email about the accommodation...*
- 4.182 *First of all I would like to know the length of the course...*
- 4.183 *Firstly, I would like to know if I can start the next month,...*
- 4.184 *Secondly, I will be pleased if you could tell me the fees.*
- 4.185 *Thirdly, I would like to know what the fewest level of English is...*
- 4.186 *To finish, I would like to know the accommodation of the school.*
- 4.187 *In addition, I would like to know the price of the course,...*
- 4.188 *Besides, I like to know if I would have to do an exam.*
- 4.189 *Also I would like to know if I need a specific level of English...*
- 4.190 *Finish, could you give me an address to academy?*
- 4.191 *At last, would the Bristol School offer me some type of ...*
- 4.192 *At least, would I need a specific level of English to attend the course?*
- 4.193 *Other question I would like it's the level of English because I'm...*

- 4.194 *Another thing important to know is how much I will spend...*
- 4.195 *I've already read your advertisement in the newspaper and I would like to obtain some information about it.*
- 4.196 *Could you please tell me what is the length of the course and...?*
- 4.197 *I was wondering if you could tell me the length of the course,...*
- 4.198 *... and write me back as soon as you can, please.*
- 4.199 *If there are, the food will be provide as well, or do we have to eat out of the school?*

As regards TXTCF, two examples of *firstly* and one of *finally* heading a request have been reported in the first sentence of paragraphs. No examples of *also* between a modal verb and a main verb at the beginning of sentences in requests have been observed. As for the rest of the requests, four are affirmative statements, five indirect requests with mitigating phrases and with modal verbs and one is a WH question.

In informal letters, adverbs/adverbial phrases, conjunctions or linking noun phrases heading and adding requests have a low frequency of occurrence. In TCI, for example, these are four: *firstly*, *finally*, *also* and *another thing* (22.3 % of all requests in theme position at paragraph level; examples 4.200, 4.201, 4.202 and 4.203 respectively). One example of *also* between a modal verb and a main verb at the beginning of a request has been observed (5.5 %; example 4.204). Indeed, the fact that the percentage of sentences making requests with modals at the

beginning of paragraphs in TCI (19.6 %) is lower than in TCF (42.1 %, see table 4.29) and that, in them, the occurrence of adverbs/adverbial phrases, conjunctions or linking phrases much less frequent as well would indicate that these sentences play a minor role in making informal request letters cohesive. Sentences for making requests with modal verbs at the beginning of paragraphs are a mix of yes/no questions (44.5 %; example 4.205), indirect requests with mitigating phrases and with modal verbs (11.1 %; example 4.206), commands (11.1 %; example 4.207), WH questions (5.5 %; example 4.208) and affirmative statements (5.5 %; example 4.209).

4.200 ***Firstly**, I'm unaware what to pack; I know it's hot in Madrid...*

4.201 ***Finally**, what do you think the weather **will** be like as...*

4.202 ***Also**, what clothes do you think I **should** wear?*

4.203 ***Another thing** – what clothes **should** I bring?*

4.204 ***Can** you **also** recommend any good hotel where I can...*

4.205 *...but **can** you recommend any other places worth seeing that aren't in the guidebooks?*

4.206 ***I was hoping** you **could** give me some recommendations...*

4.207 *P.S. If you **can** recommend any hotels, airlines, **please let me know!***

4.208 ... so how **should** I dress to fit in?

4.209 I hope you **will** have time to catch up over a few beers...

In LCI, a smaller percentage of sentences making requests with modals at the beginning of paragraphs introduced by adverbs/adverbial phrases, conjunctions or linking phrases for adding information (18.5 % of all requests in theme position at paragraph level) have been observed as compared to LCF. Those observed start with the following items: *firstly* (example 4.210), *finally* (example 4.211), *and other really good question* (for *another really ...*; example 4.212), *to sum up* (example 4.213), *first of all* (example 4.214), *also* (example 4.215) and *to finish* (example 4.216). No examples of *also* between a modal verb and a main verb have been revealed. The rest of the sentences that occur at the beginning of paragraphs making requests and carrying modals in LCI comprise affirmative statements (35.2 %; example 4.217), yes/no questions (24 %; example 4.218), WH questions (11.1 %; example 4.219), indirect requests with mitigating phrases and with modal verbs (5.5 %; example 4.220) commands (1.9 %; example 4.221), choice questions (1.9 %; example 4.222) and question tags (1.9 %; example 4.223).

4.210 **Firstly** I have to know the important places, monuments or museums that I **must** visit, ...

4.211 **Finally**, I **should** know how **can** I get to your house, **can** I go...

4.212 **And other really good question** I **would** you to ask is about...

- 4.213 *To sum up, I have been looking for a place to sleep in, but...*
- 4.214 *First of all I would like to know which places I should visit...*
- 4.215 *Also, I was wondering what clothes I should take.*
- 4.216 *To finish do you know where can I stay?*
- 4.217 *I would need to know, more or less, how the weather will be like...*
- 4.218 *By the way, can I stay at your place?*
- 4.219 *I'm very special with the food, what type of food I will find there?*
- 4.220 *... and I wonder if you could tell me where to go.*
- 4.221 *Please Ana answer my questions and I will see you soon!*
- 4.222 *Could I sleep in your bedroom or I need to rent one of them?*
- 4.223 *I should buy a flight, shouldn't I?*

No adverbs/adverbial phrases, conjunctions or linking phrases to add requests have been reported in TXTCI. This corpus comprises four yes/no questions, one WH question and one command in theme position at paragraph level.

4.6 OBJECTIVE SIX: MODAL VERBS AT TEXT LEVEL IN REQUEST LETTERS

Table 4.31 reveals that it is TCF that has the highest percentage of letters containing modal verbs in requests in the first paragraph (85.7 %). Indeed, table 4.32 shows a significant difference in the proportion of letters of requests containing modal verbs in requests in the first paragraph in all the comparisons that include TCF. In addition, there is a significant difference between TCI and TXTCI ($p < .0001$), LCI and TXTCI ($p < .0001$) and LCF and TXTCF ($p < .05$) as far as corpora of the same register are concerned.

Table 4.31
Number (n) and percentage (%) of request letters containing modal verbs in requests in the first paragraph

	TCF		LCF		TCI		LCI		TXTCF		TXTCI	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Theme	18	85.7	21	51.2	12	57.1	22	53.6	4	36.4	3	18.8
Rheme	3	14.3	20	48.8	9	42.9	19	46.4	7	63.6	13	81.2
Total	21	100	41	100	21	100	41	100	11	100	16	100

Table 4.32
Multiple comparisons of the proportion of letters of request containing modal verbs in the first paragraph

Comparisons	Chi square	<i>p</i>
TCF – TCI	7.019	.008**
TCF – LCF	10.012	.002**
TCF – LCI	8.708	.003**
TCF – TXTCF	22.060	.000***
TCF – TXTCI	61.595	.000***
TCI – LCF	.297	.586
TCI – LCI	.106	.745
TCI – TXTCF	3.903	.048*
TCI – TXTCI	20.224	.000***
LCF – LCI	.093	.760
LCF – TXTCF	3.889	.049*
LCF – TXTCI	28.228	.000***
LCI – TXTCF	5.275	.022*
LCI – TXTCI	32.635	.000***
TXTCF – TXTCI	2.223	.136

****p* < 05***p* < 01****p* < 0001**

Table 4.31 demonstrated that TXTCF and TXTCI contained the lowest percentage of letters of requests containing modal verbs in requests in the first paragraph. Furthermore, table 4.33 adds that both TXTCF and TXTCI have the

lowest percentage of modal verbs in theme position at text level in sentences making requests.

Table 4.33
Frequencies (f) and percentages of occurrence (%) of modal verbs in theme and in rheme position at text level in sentences making requests

	TCF		LCF		TCI		LCI		TXTCF		TXTCI	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Theme	37	38.5	46	35.7	44	44.4	60	33.9	12	22.2	7	28
Rheme	59	61.5	83	64.3	55	55.6	117	66.1	42	77.8	18	72
Total	96	100	129	100	99	100	177	100	54	100	25	100

As regards the colligations of modal verbs in theme position at text level, seven types have been observed in TCF. They head affirmative statements (37.9 % of all modals in theme position at text level; example 4.224), occur before verbs in yes/no questions (27 % of all modals in theme position at text level; example 4.225), appear in clauses after verbs (21.6 % of all modals in theme position at text level; example 4.226), occur before verbs in choice questions (5.4 % of all modals in theme position at text level; example 4.227) occur before verbs in WH questions (2.7 % of all modals in theme position at text level; example 4.228) and head a clause of reason (2.7 % of all modals in theme position at text level; example 4.229) and a clause of purpose (2.7 % of all modals in theme position at text level; example 4.230).

4.224 *I would particularly like to know the length of the course and its starting and finishing dates in more detail.*

- 4.225 *Could you let me know when the course runs and how much it costs?*
- 4.226 *I saw your advertisement in the South London Herald and I was wondering if you could provide me with more information...*
- 4.227 *Would I be staying with a family or in a bed and breakfast?*
- 4.228 *...what types of accommodation might be available, Apartments, homestays?*
- 4.229 *I am writing to enquire about the webpage design course..., as I would be very interested in enrolling on it.*
- 4.230 *I would love to be able to stay with a family so I could practice at home.*

In LCF, modal verbs in theme position at text level head affirmative statements (56.5 % of all modals in theme position at text level; example 4.231), occur in clauses after verbs (10.8 % of all modals in theme position at text level; example 4.232) and in relative clauses in noun phrases which are not inside another clause after a verb (8.7 % of all modals in theme position at text level; example 4.233), head clauses of reason (8.7 % of all modals in theme position at text level; example 4.231), occur before verbs in yes/no questions (6.5 % of all modals in theme position at text level; example 4.234), head a clause of result (2.2 % of all modals in theme position at text level; example 4.235), an *if* clause (2.2 % of all modals in theme position at text level; example 4.236) and occur before a verb in a WH question (2.2 % of all modals in theme position at text level;

example 4.236) as well as in an *if* clause after an adjective (2.2 % of all modals in theme position at text level; example 4.237). In this example, it is assumed the author meant *I will be very pleased*.

4.231 *I **would** like to obtain more information about the length of the course, because I **must** finish my grade.*

4.232 *First of all, I'd like to ask you how long the course **will** takes?*

4.233 *And the last thing I **would** ask you where I am going to stay if I can do the course?*

4.234 ***Could** you please send me more information about the length of the course and the price?*

4.235 *I think my English level is bad, so I'd like a English level which I could understand, please.*

4.236 *What **would** be the price of it and **if** I would need an specific level of English to take it.*

4.237 *I would like to ask you some questions about it and I will very please if you **could** answer them, ...*

In TXTCF, modal verbs in theme position at text level head affirmative statements (58.4 % of all modals in theme position at text level), occur in clauses after verbs (25 % of all modals in theme position at text level), head a clause of

time (8.3 % of all modals in theme position at text level) and occur in an *if* clause after an adjective (8.3 % of all modals in theme position at text level).

In relation to the informal letters, in TCI modal verbs in theme position at text level occur before verbs in WH questions (27.3 % of all modals in theme position at text level; example 4.238), head yes/no questions (18.1 % of all modals in theme position at text level; example 4.239), occur in clauses after verbs (22.7 % of all modals in theme position at text level; example 4.240), head affirmative statements (20.4 % of all modals in theme position at text level; example 4.241), appear before verbs in choice questions (6.9 % of all modals in theme position at text level; example 4.242) and head a clause of result (2.3 % of all modals in theme position at text level; example 4.243) and of purpose (2.3 % of all modals in theme position at text level; example 4.244).

4.238 *What **will** the weather be like in August?*

4.239 ***Should** I bring summer clothes?*

4.240 *Do you think I **should** bring a coat just in case it gets cold?*

4.241 *You **must** tell me something about the city.*

4.242 ***Should** I bring summer clothes or is that a bit ambitious?*

4.243 *...is famous for its sushi and Asian food in general so you'**ll** have to tell me the best places to go!*

4.244 *...do you think you could find me a few possible hotels near the centre so I **can** choose the best one.*

In LCI, modal verbs in theme position at text level head affirmative statements (23.2 % of all modals in theme position at text level; example 4.245), occur in clauses after verbs (22.6 % of all modals in theme position at text level; example 4.246), before verbs in WH questions (18.2 % of all modals in theme position at text level; example 4.247), head yes/no questions (15 % of all modals in theme position at text level; example 4.248), appear in relative clauses in noun phrases which are not inside another clause after a verb (8.2 % of all modals in theme position at text level; example 4.249), occur before verbs in choice questions (3.2 % of all modals in theme position at text level; example 4.250), head clauses of result (3.2 % of all modals in theme position at text level; example 4.251), time (1.6 % of all modals in theme position at text level; example 4.252), reason (1.6 % of all modals in theme position at text level; example 4.253), an *if* clause (1.6 % of all modals in theme position at text level; example 4.254) and occur after an adjective in an *if* clause (1.6 % of all modals in theme position at text level; example 4.255).

4.245 *As I'm going to visit your city, I **would** like you to give me some advices about it.*

4.246 *I want to see chocolate shops but I was wondering which other places you **would** recommend.*

4.247 *For other part, how **can** I get there?*

- 4.248 ...**could** you said me another interesting and beautiful place to visit?
- 4.249 I'm also interesting in knowing a good restaurant where I **could** eat your typical food.
- 4.250 ... **can** we visit Magdalena`s Palace, or it **will** be boring?
- 4.251 I'm very happy to tell you that I`m having one free week at work, so I **will** go to Florida to visit you and I wonder if you could...
- 4.252 When I **will** be there, it will be august, I will wear t-shirts and shorts, won`t you?
- 4.253 Before going to the city, I would know anything about what places are hottest to stay about fifteen days, because I **can`t** support low temperatures...
- 4.254 If you **could** go with me.
- 4.255 And it would be awesome if you **could** send me a list of restaurants where we...

In TXTCI, modal verbs in theme position at text level occur in clauses after verbs (n = 2), head yes/no questions (n = 2), an affirmative statement (n = 1), an *if* clause (n = 1) and occurs before a verb in a WH question (n =1).

4.7 OBJECTIVE SEVEN: COHESIVE CHAINS CONTAINING MODAL VERBS AND USED IN REQUESTS IN REQUEST LETTERS

The cohesive devices (see section 2.15) containing modal verbs and used in requests in each of the six corpora will be provided and compared in this section.

In TCF, chains made up of the repetition of modal verb patterns used in requests were clearly found in fourteen out of the twenty-one letters. These chains have been grouped as follows. The pattern *I + would + verb* (except for the verb *to be*) was repeated in requests in eight letters (example 4.256). The contracted form *'d* in the pattern *I + 'd + verb* also occurred repeatedly, but in two letters (example 4.257). But other modal verbs have been reported in chains through repetition as well. *Can + you (please) + verb* occurred in two letters (example 4.258), while the past form *could + you (also/please) + verb* in three (examples 4.259). Finally, it is worth noting that the following chains through repetition occurred, albeit only in one letter each. First, the verb *will* in a succession of WH questions (example 4.260). The second case is that of *would* heading questions (example 4.261), whereas the third one is that of *I + would + be* followed by an adjective (example 4.262). The last one is *you + could* in nominal clauses (example 2.263). It is also noteworthy that the repetition of the verb *tell* contributes to the creation of cohesion in three letters (example 4.264).

4.256 *Firstly, I would like to know how long the course lasts and the exact start and finish dates.*

The last thing I would like to obtain information on is the accommodation that the school provides.

- 4.257 ***I'd like to know*** how long the course lasts and what it costs.
I'd also be interested to know what assistance the school provides with regard to accommodation.
- 4.258 ***Can*** you please advise me as to the following: ...
Additionally ***can*** you please provide all relevant details as to the accommodation provided.
- 4.259 ***Could*** you tell me when it is expected to start and finish?
And finally ***could*** you tell me how much the course ***will*** be?
- 4.260 What ***will*** the level of the course be? Furthermore, what accommodation does the school provide and how much ***will*** this cost?
- 4.261 ***Would*** this hinder me being admitted on to the course?
Would I need to find my own accommodation or does your school provide its students with B and Bs, hotels or homestays for example?
- 4.262 ***I would*** be very interested in enrolling on it.
Furthermore, ***I would*** be interested to know what type of accommodation is offered
Finally, ***I would*** be very grateful if you ***could*** tell me if there are any basic requirements in terms of knowledge of computers...

4.263 *I would also appreciate it **if you could** let me know what the total cost of the course is...*

*Finally, I would be very grateful **if you could** tell me if there are any basic requirements in terms of knowledge of computers...*

4.264 ***Can you tell me** the duration of the course and when it starts?*

*Finally, **can you tell me** if the school provides accommodation?*

In TXTCF, cohesive chains made up of the repetition of modal verb patterns used in requests have been observed in seven letters. The repetition of the pattern *I + would + verb* (except for the verb *to be*) has been observed in three letters. That of the pattern *you + could* in three letters as well. The following occurred only once. *I need to know* chains through repetition with *I need to know* with the conditional *would* occurring in the nominal clause that acts as direct object of the verb *know*. Finally, a chain contains *I + would + be + adjective*. The repetition of the verb *tell* has not been reported in TXTCF as it has in TCF.

Cohesive chains made up of the repetition of modal verb patterns used in requests also occur in LCF. In it, these have been reported in nineteen letters out of forty-one. The largest group is that of requests expressed through the repetition of the pattern *I + would + verb* (except for the verb *be*), which occurred in sixteen letters (example 4.265). It is worth pointing out that, in two letters, *I would know* was used instead of *I would like to know* (example 4.266), while, also in two letters, *I would ask* was employed instead of *I would like to ask* (example 4.267). No chains through the repetition of *I + would + be* have been observed. Finally, the repetition of *I + 'd + verb* has been revealed in two letters (example 4.268) and that of *will* in successive questions in one letter (example 4.269). In this corpus, the repetition of the verb *tell* has not been reported.

- 4.265 *I would like to do it but first I should know some information about it. First of all I would like to know the length of the course and specially the starting and finishing dates. Also I would like to know the price of the course and the level of English...*
- 4.266 *I would know the length of the course because I've found... I would know if I need high level of English. On the other hand, I would know about the apartments, bed and breakfasts, hotels.*
- 4.267 *First of all, I would ask you about the dates of that course. I'm likely to go, but I need to know to plan my future. Thirdly, I would ask you about the English level I should have to do this course.*
- 4.268 *I'm really interested of taking the "Learn to Design your Own Webpage" course; I'd like to know more about it. I'd like to know when does the course start and when does it finish.*
- 4.269 *I am interested in taking these classes and I would like you to inform me about the length of the course, **when will it** start and finish? About the fees, what **will it cost** me and if this price is reduced if you are a student.*

In relation to the informal letters of request, examples of the first three types of cohesive devices bearing modal verbs and presented below have been found in thirteen letters in TCI.

Firstly, the repetition of parallel constructions: *WH word + (noun phrase) + do you think + clause containing a modal verb* (in four different letters; example 4.270) and *let me know + clause containing a modal verb* (in one letter; example 4.271).

Secondly, repeated simple modal verb patterns have also been observed: *can + you + verb* (in three letters; example 4.272), *should I* (in four letters; example 4.273) and *WH word + would + be...* (in one letter; example 4.274).

Thirdly, it is also worth mentioning that repetitions of verbs in requests carrying modals have also been detected as a way of adding cohesion: *tell* (in one letter; example 4.275), *recommend* (in one letter; example 4.276) and *suggest* (in one letter; example 4.277).

Finally, series of movements which contribute to the cohesive organisation of text have been reported. These movements are examples of encapsulation and prospection. They may consist of an affirmative statement that explains a request which contains one or more modal verbs (in twelve letters; example 4.278) or of an affirmative statement containing one or more modal verbs that explains a request which does not comprise any modal verbs (in three letters; example 4.279).

- 4.270 **When do you think I should visit?**
What clothes do you think I should bring with me as I've heard the weather is very changeable and...?
... but once I'm there what do you think will be the best way to get to the centre?
- 4.271 **Let me know what clothes I should bring.**
You have to tell me where to go for the best steak in town too and let me know if there's anything else I should try.
- 4.272 **Can you tell me where the best markets are?**
Can you also recommend any good hotel where I can actually ...?
- 4.273 **What should I do first? Where do I have to go? What clothes should I bring with me?**
- 4.274 *I'm landing in the early morning at Heathrow, what would be the best way to get into central London at that time?*
I still haven't found anywhere to stay, where would be best?
- 4.275 **You must tell me something about the city.**
Can you also tell me about places to visit?
- 4.276 **Do you have a favourite dish that you'd recommend?**
P.S. If you can recommend any hotels, airlines, please let me know!

4.277 ... and **can you suggest** an airline?

... and also **can you suggest** some good places to eat as English food has got such bad reputation.

4.278 Let me know what clothes I **should** bring. I have no idea.

4.279 My last question – what restaurants are affordable but tasty? I'm vegetarian remember so it **can** be difficult sometimes.

Besides the fact that *will* + *clause* is repeated in a yes/no question and in a choice question in one letter, that the pattern *would* + *like* + *to* is repeated in another letter and that of *I* + *'d* + *verb* is repeated in a third letter, TXTCI does not contain any samples of cohesive chains through repetition of patterns with modals in requests per se. Some of the patterns that appear in TCI occur in TXTCI though, but not repeatedly: *can* + *you* + *verb* in two letters, *WH word* + (*noun phrase*) + *do you think* + *clause containing a modal verb* in two letters, *let* + *me* + *know* + *clause containing a modal verb* in two letters, *could* + *you* + *verb* in one letter.

Nonetheless, as in TCI, movements consisting of an affirmative statement that explains a request which contains one or more modal verbs have been revealed in ten letters as well as of an affirmative statement containing one or more modal verbs that explains a request which does not comprise any modal verbs in five letters.

LCI includes some of the cohesive devices found in TCI and/or in TXTCI. To begin with, the repetition of the patterns employed in requests and cited in this paragraph occurs in 23 letters: *could* + *you* + *verb* (in six letters; example 4.280), *you* + *could* + *verb* (in one letter; example 4.281), *could* + *I* + *verb* (in one letter,

example 4.282), *I + could + verb* (in one letter, example 4.283), *must + I + verb* with *I + must + verb* (in one letter; example 4.284), *should + I + verb* (in one letter; example 4.285), *I + should + verb* (in two letters; example 4.286), *can + I + verb* (in three letters; example 4.287), *I + can + verb* (in two letters; example 4.288), *we + can + verb* (in one letter; example 4.289), *will + I + verb* (in one letter; example 4.290), *will + we + verb* (in one letter; example 4.291) and *I + would + verb* (in seven letters; example 4. 292). As in LCF, there has been one letter in which *I would know* replaces *I would like to know* (example 4.293) and another one in which *I would ask* has been used instead of *I would like to ask* (example 4.294). No chains through the repetition of *I + would + be* have been reported. As regards the repetition of verbs in requests carrying modal verbs, the following may be mentioned: *tell* (in five letters; example 4.295).

Secondly, one of the constructions that were parallel in TCI appears in LCI but not repeatedly: *do you think + clause containing a modal verb* (in one letter; example 4.296).

Finally, the movements composed of an affirmative statement that explains a request which contains one or more modal verbs (in twenty letters; example 4.297) or of an affirmative statement containing one or more modal verbs that explains a request which does not comprise any modal verbs (in seven letters; example 4.298) reported in TCI and in TXTCI have also been detected in LCI.

- 4.280 ... *where you can stay for a cheap amount of money so **could you recommend me somewhere to stay?***
*I have to organize myself with the clothes I have to take in the bag so **could you tell me the weather it will be doing the week...?***

- 4.281 ... so I will go to Florida to visit you and I wonder if **you could tell me** where to go. If **you could go with me**. It would be marvelous.
- 4.282 How **could I possibly get** there?
..., **could I stay** at your place until I found another thing?
- 4.283 I need to know **which interesting places I could visit**, how may ...
You know that I don't like so much food, so, **what food I could eat?**
- 4.284 I can wear t-shirts? **Or must I take a jumper?**
In the airport there are some taxis **or I must take the bus?**
- 4.285 ... **what should I put** in the luggage, I mean, what kind of clothes?
... so please, **what kind of food should I take?**
- 4.286 First of all I would like to know **which places I should** visit while I'm there.
Also, I was wondering **what clothes I should take**.
- 4.287 ... **which places can I visit?** Some museums, or parks, or a famous street.
To finish do you know **where can I stay?** Some hotels.

- 4.288 *If you don't mind, I need to know some **places I can visit**, what **clothes I can wear**, your city is normally cold or warm? What kind of **food I can eat** there?*
- 4.289 *... because we don't know **where we can stay**, we need an affordable place because...
And it would be awesome if you could send me a list of restaurants **where we can eat** and also which buses or trains ...*
- 4.290 *What clothes **will** I wear? I think that the temperature will be high.
What food **will** I eat? It's very important.
I can't spend a lot of money, and I want to know if I go to Rome. **Will** I stay with you in your house?*
- 4.291 *Which places **will we** visit? You know that I like the museums, don't forget it.
Also I want to eat pasta and pizza!! What more type of food **will we** eat?*
- 4.292 *I have planned to go there in August and **I would like to know** if I could stay in your house instead being in a hotel...
I would need to know, more or less, how the weather will be like to pack and prepare everything...*

- 4.293 *Before going to the city, I **would** know anything about what places are hottest to stay about fifteen days, because I **can't** support low temperatures and I **would** know what are the most representative places you **can** see as monuments or football stadiums.*
- 4.294 *I **would** ask you which places you are thinking to visit with me, because I really interests in visit so places, so I **would** like to talk with you about that to organize this.*
- 4.295 *For example, **could you tell me** ten of the most common place to see for its beautifulness?
I would appreciate anything you could tell me about this.*
- 4.296 ***Do you think I should** take some jackets with me?*
- 4.297 *Which places I **should** visit? I was thought to see the Louvre Museum, The Eiffel Tower and the Sena's river.*
- 4.298 *I **will** stay in Mary's flat. So don't be worry about me.*

Before finishing this chapter, it was decided to provide the frequencies of the two movements described above in the corpora of formal letters. In TCF, three letters contain examples of an affirmative statement that explains a request carrying one or more modal verbs (example 4.299), while one letter reports an affirmative statement containing a modal verb that explains a request which does not comprise any modal verbs (example 4.300).

4.299 *I understand that you offer accommodation. **Could** you give me more information about the arrangements?*

4.300 *Thirdly, what previous knowledge of computers is required to attend the course? **I'd** be willing to do some training prior to the course if it was necessary.*

In TXTCF, only cases of an affirmative statement that explains a request carrying one or more modal verbs have been observed in eight letters.

In LCF, by contrast both movements have been identified: an affirmative statement that explains a request carrying one or more modal verbs in six letters (example 4.301) and an affirmative statement containing one or more modal verbs that explains a request which does not comprise any modal verbs in two letters (example 4.302).

4.301 *Firstly I **would** like to know if my English **should** be so good. My level of English is medium and I have the FCE.*

4.302 *I want to know when starts and finish the course and its prices. I'm a student and **can't** spend a lot of money.*

4.8 FINDINGS: SOME REMARKS

Each of the seven sections above has provided data related to one of the research objectives presented in *chapter one* by using the methodology described in *chapter three*.

As anticipated in that chapter (see *section 3.1*), this study is exploratory by nature. Thanks to data exploration, it has been possible to obtain some findings which are not required to attain the research objectives, but which are still relevant and enlightening. Two examples of this assertion are the following. The first one is the data concerning requests without modal verbs presented in the findings regarding objective three. The second example is the identification of the series of movements that contribute to the cohesive organisation of requests with or without modals. These were introduced together with the findings related to cohesive chains containing modal verbs and used in requests in the letters under scrutiny (see *section 4.7*).

In *section 3.1*, it was also advanced that collecting data using different methods would make it possible to see modal verbs in requests from different angles. This was defined as *methodological triangulation* (Mackey & Gass, 2008). Based on the findings using these methods and presented in this chapter, the answers to the research questions and the attainment of the research objectives will be dealt with in the next two chapters.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

DISCUSSION OF MODAL VERBS IN LETTERS OF REQUEST

As in *Chapter three, Methodology*, and in *chapter four, Findings*, in this chapter, there is a section devoted to one of the objectives of this study. Indeed, each of the first seven sections of this chapter (*section 5.1 to section 5.7*) centres on the discussion of the answers to the research questions corresponding to one of the research objectives. From *section 5.8* onwards, conclusive remarks on the pedagogical implications of this discussion are made. Furthermore, possible connections between the discussion of the answers to the research questions and the topics covered in the theoretical background are also made with a view to concluding how the findings of this thesis build on existing theory.

5.1 OBJECTIVE ONE: DISCUSSION OF MODAL VERB FREQUENCIES

In *chapter one*, it was stated that objective one consisted in comparing the frequencies of modal verbs in a set of formal and of informal letters of request written by a sample of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners with the frequencies of modal verbs in a set of formal and of informal letters of request written by a sample of native teachers of EFL and with those found in a sample of B2 EFL textbooks. It was also explained that this was done with the aim of answering the research questions that are discussed in the following sections.

Section 5.1.1 gives some background information to the letters under analysis. In *Section 5.1.2*, the answer to the research question concerning LD in all the sets of letters is discussed.

The three remaining questions, i.e. if the sample of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners used modal verbs more or less often than the sample of native teachers of EFL and how these frequencies compared to the ones in the sample of B2 EFL textbooks, as well as if there were any differences in the choice and frequencies of individual modal verbs between the sets of formal and of informal letters of request, are discussed in the sections that follow. *Section 5.1.3* deals with modal verb form frequencies in the informal letters of requests, whereas *section 5.1.4* discusses modal verb form frequencies in the formal ones. Finally, *section 5.1.5* tackles modal verb frequencies per letter. The possible pedagogical implications of this discussion are provided at the end of each of these sections.

5.1.1 THE AVERAGE SIZE OF LETTERS: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Chapter four showed that eleven formal letters of request and sixteen informal ones had been included in the TXTTC. It may be argued that this is a low number of letters considering that ten B2 EFL textbooks have been scrutinised and that request letters are an important component of EFL international examinations at B2 level. However, as explained in *chapter three, Methodology*, B2 EFL textbooks also provide a wide range of activities for EFL learners to identify the lexico-grammatical features that distinguish formal from informal request letters. Nonetheless, tasks based on the identification of the lexico-grammatical features, text-pattern, textualisation and structural interpretation of a given text-genre requires the observation of complete pieces of writing (Tribble, 2001). Owing to the conflict between this requirement and the fact that, as discussed in *Limitations of the Study* in *chapter one*, B2 EFL textbooks may

provide only a few pieces of writing of each text-genre due to the diversity of EFL learners' needs, EFL learners' exposure to supplementary pieces of writing written by NS may be considered a suitable option to receive further priming.

In relation to the size of the letters, table 4.2 showed that, except in the TXTC, the informal letters are longer than the formal ones. It was thought that this could be due to the fact that, while the formal letters would contain just the necessary sentences to carry out the specific linguistic formulae that are required to produce requests, informal letter writing would make use of more and/or longer sentences not only to convey more personal information, but also to carry out more personal functions such as telling anecdotes, bringing back memories, sharing thoughts, etc. Tables 5.1 and 5.2 show that, after leaving out the salutations and the writers' names and signatures to focus on the main body of the letters, indeed, the informal ones contain, on average, more but shorter sentences than the formal letters.

Table 5.1
Average number of sentences per letter in each corpus

	TCF	TCI	LCF	LCI	TXTCF	TXTCI
n	7.23	11.52	7.27	9.7	8.9	10.63

Table 5.2
Average number of tokens per sentence in each corpus

	TCF	TCI	LCF	LCI	TXTCF	TXTCI
n	14.57	11.33	14.2	12.50	16.42	11.5

However, it is still to be explained why the average letter in TXTCF is much longer than that in the other five corpora (see table 4.2) if TXTCF is also composed of fewer but longer sentences than TCI, LCI and TXTCI as TCF and

LCF are. It was supposed that this could be due to any of the following three reasons.

The first one was that the letters belonging to TCF and to LCF as well as to TCI and to LCI would contain a similar number of requests due to the fact that the subjects who wrote them followed the same set of instructions. By contrast, the letters appearing in TXTCF were set in many different situations and, consequently, would contain more requests than those in the TC, the LC and also in TXTCI. Table 4.22 shows that 47 request strategies were observed in TXTCF, i.e. 4.30 requests per letter, 113 in TCF, i.e. 5.40 requests per letter, 213 in LCF, i.e. 5.20 requests per letter, 158 in TCI, i.e. 7.52 requests per letter, 230 in LCI, i.e. 5.61 requests per letter and 51 in TXTCI, i.e. 3.19 requests per letter. This proves that this explanation may partly explain why the average letter in TXTCF is longer than the average one in TXTCI only. Indeed, the other four corpora contain, on average, more requests per letter than TXTCF.

The second reason consisted in the necessity for textbook writers to provide a good number of prefabricated lexical items to prime EFL learners to use indirect requests with mitigating phrases and with or without modal verbs in formal requests. Since these request types tend to be long, their being used repeatedly would partly account for the fact that, on average, the letters in TXTCF were the longest. Table 4.22 reveals that eleven indirect requests with mitigating phrases were written in TXTCF, i.e. one per letter, seventeen in TCF, i.e. 0.81 per letter, twelve in LCF, i.e. 0.29 per letter, six in TCI, i.e. 0.29 per letter, ten in LCI, i.e. 0.24 per letter and none in TXTCI. The fact that the average number of indirect requests with mitigating phrases and with or without modal verbs in TXTCF is much higher than in LCF, TCI, LCI and TXTCI may partly account for the longer letters in the former. Nonetheless, the average figures in TCF (0.81) and in TXTCF (1) are not too different and, consequently, they may not explain the longer letters in TXTCF solely.

The third reason was that, while the writers of the letters in TCF, LCF, TCI and LCI restricted themselves to answering the questions in the given instructions in a set number of lines, the textbook writers felt free to incorporate as much background information in their formal request letters as they felt was necessary, even more than in the informal letters.

Based on the information discussed in this section, it is interesting to highlight the fact that TCF and TCI contain, on average, more requests per letter than TXTCF (TCF, n: 5.40; TCI, n: 7.52; TXTCF, n: 4.30) but fewer tokens per letter (TCF, n: 109; TCI, n: 135; TXTCF, n: 153, see table 4.2). This shows EFL learners that the number of requests request letters comprise is not necessarily positively correlated with the number of tokens they contain: adding requests is not concomitant with a proportionally higher increase in the number of tokens. This goes to show that EFL learners' reading formal letters of request present in EFL textbooks and formal letters of request written by NS would allow them to establish similarities and differences between them and, as a result, to be aware of language variation (Conrad, 2004) in this specific genre as far as content, number of requests and length of request letters are concerned. What is more, comparing requests in EFL textbooks and NS' letters may be done with a view to noticing not only language variation in this specific genre, but also, as explained in the first paragraph of this section, to being exposed to further priming than that given by textbook English alone.

5.1.2 LEXICAL DENSITY IN LETTERS OF REQUEST

As regards LD in the six corpora, table 4.3 shows that it is within the parameters established by Ure (1971, see *section 2.1.1 Lexico-grammatical features in chapter one*). Nonetheless, it has been slightly lower in the LC than in the TC or in the TXTC. In spite of this small difference, it was still thought that it was worth putting forward a possible explanation for it: EFL learners' writing

long sentences and, as a result, more complex and/or compound and/or wordy ones (see comments on examples 4.1 and 4.10 in *chapter four*). This would require a higher number of conjunctions. The average number of tokens per sentence in each corpus was given in table 5.2 above.

Table 5.2 indicated that, in the three samples, the average sentence size varies according to register and not to corpus: sentences are longer on average in the formal letters of request than in the informal ones in the three samples. In addition, the average sentence in LCF is shorter than in TCF and in TXTCF, while in LCI it is slightly longer than in TCI and in TXTCI, which would reject the above-mentioned argument which said that EFL learners would write longer sentences requiring more conjunctions than the letters from the TC or the TXTC. Still, it could certainly be argued that, in LCI and/or in LCF, more complex and/or compound and/or wordy sentences could have been written despite their length. It was decided to calculate the frequency of conjunctions in each corpus per million words (see table 5.3).

Table 5.3
Conjunctions per million words in each corpus

	TCF	TCI	LCF	LCI	TXTCF	TXTCI
n	55,459	41,197	64,815	59,134	53,350	53,340

Table 5.3 reports a much higher number of conjunctions in the LC, which, indeed, would indicate more complexity in its sentences despite their average length.

It was also decided to explain table 4.3 from a different angle. The TC and the TXTC would contain slightly more CW as a result of the use of descriptive language reflected, in part, in a high proportion of adjectives. The L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners would make use of long noun phrases accompanied by several lexical verb phrases instead. Both long noun phrases and accompanying lexical

verb phrases require FW to build them. To find this out, it was necessary to calculate the occurrence of adjectives and lexical verbs as a percentage of the total number of CW. Here, the writers' names and/or signatures as well as the salutations containing the addressees' names at the beginning of the letters were omitted to establish comparisons of the content of the letters. Table 5.4 shows this data.

Table 5.4
Percentages of occurrence of adjectives and lexical verbs in the total number of CW in the six corpora

	TCF	TCI	LCF	LCI	TXTCF	TXTCI
Adjectives	19.2	15.9	13.8	13.8	20.8	15.7
Verbs	31	38.8	37.2	40.5	31	37.5
Total	50.2	54.7	51	54.3	51.8	53.2

Table 5.4 confirms a lower percentage of occurrence of adjectives and a higher percentage of occurrence of lexical verbs in the LC in each register. Examples 5.1 and 5.2 illustrate the phenomenon described above. The former was written by a teacher, the latter by an EFL learner.

5.1 *I would also **appreciate a price list** and some information on whether any prior knowledge of computers is **needed** in order to be able to **take** the course.*

5.2 *I would **like to know the price of the course**, because I **read** that it **cheap**, but I don't **know** the price.*

In example 5.1, *price* is used as an adjective in attributive position in *price list*. Besides, three lexical verbs have been reported in the 28 tokens of example 5.1: *appreciate*, *needed* and *take*. *Appreciate* refers to *a price list*, *needed* to *prior knowledge of computers* and *take* to *the course*. In example 5.2, four lexical verbs have been reported in 22 tokens: *like*, *know*, *read* and *know*. All of them refer to the *course* and/or to the *price of the course*. *Like* refers to the knowledge of *the price of the course*, *know* to *the price of the course*, *read* to *the course being cheap* and *know*, again, to *the price of the course*. So, in example 5.2, more FW are employed to ask about the price of the course than in sentence 5.1, where *I would also appreciate a price list* is enough. Examples 5.3 and 5.4 illustrate this further. The former was written by a teacher, the latter by an EFL learner.

5.3 *Firstly, I would **like** to **know** how long the course **lasts** and the **exact start and finish** dates.*

5.4 *I'd **like** to **know** when **does** the course **start** and when **does** it **finish**.*

Example 5.3 uses three adjectives in attributive position to modify *dates*: *exact*, *start* and *finish*. By contrast, example 5.4 uses verbs, instead, accompanied by the auxiliary *does*: *start* and *finish*. Example 5.3 carries three lexical verbs that refer to the length of the course: *like*, *know* and *lasts*. Example 5.4 carries one more lexical verb in a shorter request that also refers to the length of the course: *like*, *know*, *start* and *finish*. After omitting *I would like to know* in example 5.3 and *I'd like to know* in example 5.4, what remains is *how long the course lasts and the exact start and finish dates* in the former, and *when does the course start and when does it finish* in the latter. The former item has four FW: *the*, *and*, *the*, *and*. This means 33 % of all its tokens. The latter item contains five FW tokens: *does*, *the*, *and*, *does*, *it*. This is 50 % of all its tokens.

This tentative interpretation of a higher number of FW in the letters written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners would emphasise the need to train EFL learners to analyse the degree of complexity of sentences in requests written by NS and to compare it with their sentences. This training would also encourage EFL learners to use the collocations that NS use in order to save on unnecessary words and wordy constructions that might make requests sound unnatural and, as a result, far from native-like.

5.1.3 MODAL VERB FORM FREQUENCIES IN THE INFORMAL LETTERS OF REQUEST

It could be deduced that a higher percentage of occurrence of lexical verbs in the LC (77.7 %) than in the TC (69.8 %) or the TXTC (68.5 %, see table 5.4) would also mean a higher frequency of modal verbs as modal verbs tend to accompany lexical verbs. Nonetheless, the evidence indicates the opposite.

Table 4.4 reveals that modal verb form frequencies per million words are very similar in the TC ($f = 42,104$), the LC ($f = 37,976$) and the TXTC ($f = 38,183$). Indeed, no statistically significant differences have been observed in mean modal verb form frequencies (see table 4.6) whereas strong rank correlations have (see table 4.5). Nonetheless, when mean modal verb form frequencies and rank correlations in TCF, TCI, LCF, LCI, TXCTF and TXTCI were compared, the former did not reveal any significant differences (see table 4.9) whereas the latter reported no significance in one TXTC comparison (see table 4.8): TXTCF did not correlate significantly with TXTCI. In *chapter four*, it was pointed out that this was due to the fact that *can*, *'ll* and *'d* were the three most frequent modal verb forms in the informal letters taken from the sample of B2 EFL textbooks while, in the formal ones, these were *would*, *could* and *can*. These rankings underline the fact that the B2 EFL textbooks recommend using contracted modal verb forms in informal request letters, whereas full modal verb forms are prescribed in formal

request ones. Indeed, in TXTCI, the frequency of *'ll* is higher than that of *will* (2.40:1). In the same vein, in the same corpus, the frequency of *'d* is higher than that of *would* (1.83:1). However, since the native teachers of EFL have reported very similar frequencies, i.e. a ratio of 0.9:1 for the former comparison and of 1:1 for the latter, by contrasting these figures, EFL learners would find a mismatch between textbook English and NS' English and, as a result, conclude that the native teachers of EFL have either broken the well-established rule which stipulates that contracted forms should be used instead of full forms in informal registers, or that “[...] the mythology will prove no match for the facts” (Sinclair, 1997: 30, see *section 2.6, Corpora as EFL teaching and learning materials*). By contrast, the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners adhered to neither of the trends: they neither preferred the two contracted forms to their corresponding full forms as in the letters from the B2 EFL textbooks nor used similar frequencies as the native teachers of EFL did. They stuck to the use of the full forms *will* (4.70:1) and *would* (14:1) as the native teachers of EFL and the B2 EFL textbook writers did in the formal letters. It is also worth adding that the use of contracted forms is said to be not only a feature of informal registers but also a feature of spoken English (Leech, Rayson & Wilson, 2001). This data would indicate that the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners preferred written English as far as the frequencies of contracted modal verb forms are concerned in spite of their major presence in TXTCI.

So far, statistically significant differences regarding correlations have been discussed. However, one of the limitations of the Spearman's Rank Order correlation is that it provides data about significant differences and/or similarities between rankings only. It was thought that raw figures deserved to be discussed as well. Indeed, it is to be mentioned that LCI reported a high frequency of the past modal verb forms *could* (f = 7,832; 3rd rank) as TCF (f = 10,917; 2nd rank) and TXTCF did (f = 9,484; 2nd rank), and of *would* (f = 8,224; 2nd rank) as TCF (f = 18,777; 1st rank) and TXTCF (f = 23,118; 1st rank) did as well (see table 4.7).

Besides, by comparing these modal verb form frequencies in LCI with those in TCI and in TXTCI, the following observations may be made (see table 4.7). In the informal letters, the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners overused *could* (f = 7,832; 3rd rank) and *would* (f = 8,224; 2nd rank) as compared to the native teachers of EFL (*could*, f = 3,521; 4th rank; *would*, f = 3,521; 4th rank) and the B2 EFL textbooks (*could*, f = 1,994; 6th rank; *would*, f = 2,991; 4th rank). Besides, while the native teachers of EFL and the B2 EFL textbooks preferred *can* to *could* (2.4:1 and 3.5:1 respectively), the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners preferred *could* to *can* (1.18:1).

This would indicate a transfer of primings from formal contexts to informal ones amongst the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners. In an attempt to sound polite and/or tentative, they may have resorted to the use of the past modals *could* and *would* as the native teachers of EFL and the B2 EFL textbook writers did in the formal letters.

As regards the frequencies of other modal verbs in the informal letters of request (see table 4.7), a very high frequency of *should* has been observed in TCI (1st rank) as compared to LCI (2.47:1; 5th rank) and TXTCI (3.88:1; 4th rank). These differences will be accounted for when the collocations of *should* are discussed in the next section. Finally, the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners used *will* (1st rank) much more frequently than the native teachers of EFL (2.38:1; 3rd rank) or the B2 EFL textbooks (3.69:1; 5th rank). In fact, it is the modal verb form they used most often. It may be pointed out that this finding ties up with Dafouz et al's (2007) which shows that, in a sample of Spanish speakers' lectures in English, *we* + *will* is one of the two most frequent clusters containing a modal verb; with Montero et al's (2007) which argues that, in discussion forums, *will* is also one of the two most frequent modal verbs in messages written by Spanish speakers; with Debbie's (2009) which indicates that in Bruneian English *will* occurs more often than *would* in requests and with Wells's (1979) which reveals that *will* is one of

the two modal verbs that a sample of children used first as well as one of the modals that their mothers used most often.

This sub-section reveals the adoption of linguistic features in LCI that are mainly present in the formal letters in the TC and in the TXTC such as the high frequencies of the past modals *could* and *would* and of the full forms *will* and *would* instead of the corresponding contracted forms. Besides, while in TCI and in TXTCI the frequencies of *can* prevailed over those of *could*, in LCI the opposite happened. This would attest the presence of written and formal language in L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners' writing in informal registers. Also, there is an anomalous high frequency of *will* in LCI as compared to TCI and TXTCI. This finding goes hand in hand with findings provided by previous studies and cited above and in the *Theoretical Background* chapter. As for the TCI-TXTCI comparison, it was found that while the frequencies of *would* and *'d* and *will* and *'ll* were similar in the former, the contracted forms were more frequent in the latter.

These observations highlight the need for L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners to distinguish between the modal verb forms used by NS in different registers when making requests. Indeed, it would seem that the sample of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners are not fully aware of the fact that informal written requests share some of the modal verb features of spoken English and fewer of the modal verb features of formal written requests. If this were the case, it would be useful for them to read both the letters from the TC and from the TXTC in order to identify which modal verb forms are used in either register in either corpus. Besides identifying modal verb forms, discussing any possible change in meaning when they are replaced with one another would also be a challenging and worthwhile task.

5.1.4 MODAL VERB FORM FREQUENCIES IN THE FORMAL LETTERS OF REQUEST

In connection with the formal request letters, comments related to the frequencies of *will* and of contracted modal verb forms may also be made. For one thing because, even though *will* is not the most frequent modal verb in LCF, it comes second after *would*. As regards TXTCF and TCF, it comes fourth (see table 4.7). What is more, *will* occurs 1.35 more times in LCF than in TCF and 1.5 more times than in TXTCF. As for the frequencies of contractions, while TXTCF abode by the rule that they should never be used in formal registers, TCF infringed it: *'d* occurred three more times in TCF than in LCF. Nonetheless, a few more differences may also be established.

While in the informal letters the native teachers of EFL and the B2 EFL textbooks preferred *can* to *could* (2.4:1 and 3.5:1 respectively) and the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners preferred *could* to *can* (1.18:1, see *section 5.1.3*), in the formal letters, conversely, the native teachers of EFL and the B2 EFL textbooks strongly opted for *could* instead of *can* (2.27:1 and 2.28:1 respectively) while the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners' ratio was less pronounced (1.27:1). Moreover, the native teachers of English used *can* and *could* more often than the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners (1.89:1 and 3.37:1 respectively) and so did the B2 EFL textbooks (1.63:1 and 2.93:1 respectively). This remark may be related to the fact that 67.3 % of the requests in TCF and 74.5 % in TXTCF contained modals whereas in LCF only 46.5 % did (see table 4.22).

As for the pedagogical implications of these remarks, it may be argued that L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners' observation and discussion of the use of modal verb forms in the formal request letters in TCF and in TXTCF besides *will*, such as *can* and *could*, may provide them with alternative lexico-grammatical features to produce formal requests. For example, it would be worth their observing the use of *'d* in TCF and discussing the extent to which this use may affect the tone of a

formal letter. Furthermore, L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners' discussion of the use of modal verb forms in formal requests written by NS and in B2 EFL textbooks should not only give them more of the tools that NS count on in their own formal request writing as far as modal verbs are concerned but also encourage them to question their own use of modal verbs in formal requests.

5.1.5 PRIMARY AND SECONDARY MODAL VERB FREQUENCIES

Tables 4.6 and 4.9 showed that mean modal verb form frequencies across the six corpora were not significantly different. However, since corpora differed in the number of letters they contained (TCF = 21, TCI = 21, LCF = 41, LCI = 41, TXTCF = 11, TXTCI = 16), it was suspected that mean modal verb frequencies per letter per corpus would differ significantly. This is what table 4.11.a confirmed: TXTCF reported the highest frequency ($\bar{x} = 6.45$; \bar{x} rank = 108.14). This much higher number of modal verbs per letter in TXTCF could be explained by the fact that it contains longer but fewer letters than the other five corpora. At the same time, LCF reported the lowest mean frequency ($\bar{x} = 3.39$; \bar{x} rank = 51.72). Furthermore, table 4.11.c showed that the frequencies of modal verbs per letter in LCF were significantly lower than in TCF ($p < .05$) and in TXTCF ($p < .001$).

The lower number of modal verbs in LCF confirms the data provided by previous studies that have shown that EFL speakers make use of fewer modal verbs than NS. In *chapter two, Theoretical Background*, Mason's (2007) research showed that a sample of young EFL learners used fewer modal verbs in story telling than a sample of young NS. Lambert (1995) also observed low modal verb frequencies in French advanced EFL university students' speech and writing. Spanish EFL speakers have also been reported to incorporate fewer modals such as *would* and *may* in their presentations than NS (Camiciottoli, 2004 & Dafouz et al, 2007). The same has been observed in EFL Spanish university students'

argumentative writing (Neff et al, 2003) and contributions in discussion forums (Montero et al, 2007).

In *chapter two*, reasons for the difference in modal verb frequencies between NS' linguistic production and Spanish EFL speakers' were cited. Wald (1993) argued that the modal system is more complex in English than in Spanish and that it is impossible to establish a direct analogy between both systems. Besides, while the English modals may be used to express the conditional and the subjunctive, in Spanish this is conveyed by means of verbal inflections. Marín-Arrese et al's (2004) comparative study on the expression of deontic and epistemic modality in English and Spanish newspapers was brought up to support this argument. However, it may be wondered why modal verb frequencies per letter were significantly lower in LCF but not in LCI.

Apart from these differences between the modal system in Spanish and in English, it is worth mentioning the fact that EFL speakers and L1 Spanish speakers in particular may be less indirect than NS when making requests (Debbie, 2009; Díaz Pérez, 2002; Blum-Kulka and House, 1989). This is clearly shown in table 4.22, where the percentage of occurrence of indirect requests with mitigating phrases and with modal verbs in the formal letters written by the native teachers of EFL is 3.75 times higher than in the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners' formal letters, while in the formal letters written in the B2 EFL textbooks it is 7.10 times higher. By contrast, the same table shows that this type of request is not frequent in any of the samples of informal letters. Since the use of past or, what Perkins (1983) calls, secondary modal verbs makes the meaning of propositions more hypothetical, formal, polite, tentative and indirect than that of present or primary ones (Perkins, 1983), it is presumed, then, that the tendency for Spanish EFL learners to be more direct in requests would result in a lower frequency of past modals in LCF than in TCF or in TXTCF, which would explain the significantly lower modal verb frequencies in LCF.

Table 4.13 revealed statistically significant differences in the frequencies of primary and secondary modal verbs across the six corpora. Besides, table 4.14.b showed that, in the formal letters written by the native teachers of EFL, the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners and in the B2 EFL textbooks, there are significantly more secondary modals than primary modals. This agrees with Perkins's (1983) theory that past modals convey formality, politeness, tentativeness and indirectness. Nonetheless, it must also be pointed out that the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners used significantly fewer secondary modals per formal letter than the other two samples (see table 4.14.b). This explains the significantly lower frequencies of modal verbs in the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners' formal letters and confirms the need for them to incorporate past modals in this genre in this register. This fact clashes with the significantly highest frequency of past modal verbs in the formal letters written in the B2 EFL textbooks, which may be explained as an attempt to overemphasise the use of past modals in formal register.

In connection with the frequencies of secondary modals in the informal letters, it may be observed that they are not significantly different from the frequencies of primary modals in any of the three samples (see table 4.14.b). However, while the frequencies of secondary modals per informal letter are slightly higher than the frequencies of primary modals per informal letter in TCI (1: 1.23) and in LCI (1: 1.03), in TXTCI it is the other way around (0.75: 1; see table 4.12). This indicates that, in the sample of informal request letters written in the B2 EFL textbooks, the norms that says that primary modals should be used instead of secondary modals has come to light, while it has not in the letters written by the other two samples.

The data discussed in this section confirms significantly lower past modal verb frequencies in LCF than in TCF and in TXTCF and, as a result, calls for stronger primings amongst the sample of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners as far as the use of past modal verbs in requests in formal register is concerned. This requires the need for L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners to analyse full letters of request obtained from EFL textbooks and from NS' samples with a view to observing and

discussing the use of primary and secondary modals in them. It also requires L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners to identify which requests without modals they themselves used and how the modal verb forms used by/in the other two samples may be incorporated into them. Ultimately, the goal of these tasks should not only be to recognise the importance of the use of modal verbs in the way NS write requests, but also to put this knowledge into practice when writing requests to sound as native-like as possible.

5.2 OBJECTIVE TWO: DISCUSSION OF THE COLLOCATES OF MODAL VERBS

In *chapter one*, it was explained that objective two was to compare the frequencies of the collocates of modal verbs in a set of formal and of informal letters of request written by a sample of native teachers of EFL with the frequencies of the collocates of modal verbs in a set of formal and of informal letters of request written by a sample of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners and in a sample of B2 EFL textbooks. It was also explained that the following research questions would be answered.

First, what the frequencies of the collocates of modal verbs in the set of formal and of informal letters of request written by the sample of native teachers of EFL are, and how they compare with the ones in the letters written by the sample of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners and in the sample of B2 EFL textbooks. *Section 5.2.1.1* deals with this research question in the sample of informal request letters whereas *section 5.2.2.1* does so in the sample of formal request letters.

Second, what the t-scores and CF of the verbs that collocate most frequently with modal verbs in the requests written by the sample of native teachers of EFL are and how they compare with theirs in the other two samples. Third, how the real frequencies of these verbs in these two other samples compare with their expected ones using the formal and the informal letters written by the native

teachers of EFL as a reference. *Section 5.2.1.2* deals with these two questions with reference to the informal request letters, and *section 5.2.2.2* does so in connection with the formal ones. The pedagogical implications of each of the answers to these questions are discussed at the end of each of these sections.

5.2.1 DISCUSSION OF THE COLLOCATES OF MODAL VERBS IN THE INFORMAL REQUEST LETTERS

5.2.1.1 THE FREQUENCIES OF THE COLLOCATES OF MODAL VERBS IN THE INFORMAL REQUEST LETTERS

In the discussion of objective one, it was observed that, in the informal letters, the native teachers of EFL and the B2 EFL textbooks preferred *can* to *could* (2.4:1 and 3.5:1 respectively), whereas the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners preferred *could* to *can* (1.18:1). However, only the native teachers of EFL strongly opted for the collocation *can* + *you* (f = 10; 34.5 % of all the collocates of *can*) if compared to the frequencies of this collocation in TXTCI (f = 2; 10 % of all the collocates of *can*, see table 4.15.a). This low percentage of occurrence in TXTCI matches that in LCI (f = 4; 10 % of all the collocates of *can*). By contrast, the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners preferred the collocation *can* + *I* (f = 10; 25 % of all the collocates of *can*) as opposed to the B2 EFL textbooks (0 % of all the collocates of *can*) and the native teachers of EFL (f = 3; 10.5 % of all the collocates of *can*).

As for the collocates of *could* (see table 4.16.a), the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners preferred *could* + *you* (f = 16; 40 % of all the collocates of *could*) to *could* + *I* (f = 4; 10 % of all the collocates of *could*). Only the former collocation occurred in TCI and in TXTCI, but its occurrences are lower (f = 2, 20 % of all the collocates of *could* in TCI; and f = 1, 25 % of all the collocates of *could* in TXTCI).

In the discussion of objective one, it was also pointed out that another verb that was overused in LCI was *would*. Here, noticeable differences between LCI and TCI and TXTCI may also be addressed (see table 4.18.a). The L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners used *would + like*, *would + verb* and *would + be* in descending order of frequency (f = 21, 49 % of all the collocates of *would* for the first collocation; f = 7, 16 % of all the collocates of *would* for the second collocation; and f = 5, 12 % of all the collocates of *would* for the third collocation). By contrast, TCI only reported *would + be* (f = 4; 40 % of all the collocates of *would*) whereas TXTCI the three but in different order and lower percentages of occurrence (f = 1, 12.5 % of all the collocates of *would* for *would + like*; f = 1, 12.5 % of all the collocates of *would* for *would + verb*; and f = 3, 37.5 % of all the collocates of *would* for *would + be*).

In addition, in the discussion of objective one it was revealed that high frequencies of *will* had been observed in LCI. Indeed, high frequencies of *will + verb* (f = 26; 54 % of all the collocates of *will*) and of *will + be* (f = 11; 23 % of all the collocates of *will*, see table 4.20.a) were observed in LCI, whereas none in TXTCI and a higher percentage of occurrence of the latter (f = 5; 38 % of all the collocates of *will*) than of the former (f = 1; 8 % of all the collocates of *will*) in TCI.

In the discussion of objective one above, it was also mentioned that *should* occurred more frequently in TCI than in LCI or in TXTCI. The most frequent collocation in TCI was *should + I* (f = 18; 55 % of all the collocates of *should*) followed by *should + verb* (f = 13; 39 % of all the collocates of *should*, see table 4.17.a). Conversely, in LCI, *should + verb* (f = 15; 60 % of all the collocates of *should*) was more frequent than *should + I* (f = 9; 36 % of all the collocates of *should*). In TXTCI, only *should + verb* occurred (f = 4; 58 % of all the collocates of *should*).

Regarding the collocations of contracted modal verb forms, when objective one was discussed, it was also observed that their frequencies were similar to their corresponding modal verb forms in TCI, lower in LCI and higher in TXTCI. The collocation *'d + like* was the only one that occurred in LCI (f = 3; 100 % of all the collocates of *'d*, see table 4.19.a) while in TCI and in TXTCI *'d + like*, *'d + verb* and *'d + be* did. As regards *'ll + verb* and *'ll + be*, they occurred in the three samples (see table 4.21.a).

Far from intending this section to be an accumulation of arid and abstract data, important concrete remarks with practical learning applications can be made. The native teachers of EFL made use of collocations that had very low frequencies in the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners' letters. These are *can + you* and *should + I*. These differences are important considering that the frequency of *can* is 1.27 times higher in TCI than in LCI and that that of *should* is 2.47 times higher (see table 4.7). In addition, the B2 EFL textbooks provided very weak primings of the first one (the percentage of occurrence of *can + you* is 3.45 times higher in TCI than in TXTCI, see table 4.15.a) and none of the second one. Therefore, EFL learners' analyses of modal verb collocations in requests written by NS to supplement textbook material is more than justified as EFL learners would be able to focus on the way modal verbs are used by them. This justification is based not only on the fact that lower frequencies of *can + you* and *should + I* have been reported in TXTCI and in LCI than in TCI, but also on the assumption that the sample of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners "know" these two collocations even though they did not use them as frequently as the native teachers of EFL did. It may certainly be argued that these frequencies are just coincidences as mini-corpora are being dealt with. However, based on previous findings that have also argued that EFL learners tend to underuse all or some of the modal verbs that NS use, the pedagogical implications of the findings that are being discussed may prove useful.

At the same time, it was also observed that the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners used collocations that the other samples did not use or did but to a much lesser extent. These are *can + I*, *could + you*, *could + I*, *would + like*, *would + verb*, *would + be*, *will + verb* and *will + be*. This fact ties up with the finding presented in the discussion of objective one, which said that the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners overused the verbs *could*, *would* and *will* as compared with the frequencies of these in TCI and in TXTCI. Consequently, it could also be argued that the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners would benefit from the adoption of the modal verb collocations used by the native teachers of English as this would widen the range of modal verb collocations available to the them. The next section will look into more differences between *modal verb + verb* collocations to exploit these findings further.

5.2.1.2 THE FREQUENCIES OF THE VERB COLLOCATES OF MODAL VERBS IN THE INFORMAL REQUEST LETTERS

Since the letters in TXTCI were written in many different situations whereas those in TCI and LCI were written following the same sets of instructions, it was expected that modal verbs in TXTCI would not be accompanied by the same verbs as in TCI and LCI. Nevertheless, comparisons are worth making to arrive at the analyses of comparative primings.

As for *can*, the strongest collocation has been that of *can't + wait*. However, its frequency has been lower than expected in LCI (see table 4.15.b). In addition, while *can't + wait* has shown a strong CF in TCI, LCI and TXTCI, its *t* score has been lower than two in LCI but higher in TCI and in TXTCI (see table 4.15.c). This does not indicate a significant difference between the occurrence of *wait* within one-word span of *can't* and its EF within that span in LCI.

Furthermore, it has also been suggested that the high percentage of occurrence of the *can + verb* collocation in LCI could have been due to very indirect or wordy requests whose patterns deviate from normally accepted word order. Example 4.1 was given to illustrate this. Indeed, in this sentence, the request containing *can* appears in the last clause after two introductory clauses. What is more, the heading of the three clauses by the conjunction *so* contributes to the indirectness and wordiness of this request. Looking into further *can + verb* collocations in LCI, more examples of requests that carry these features have been observed.

Examples 5.5 and 5.6, for example, show *can + verb* collocations in requests for information in which, in Standard English, *can + I + verb* would be more suitable. Examples 5.7 and 5.8 share more of the features of example 4.1: they are very long requests, their patterns are complex and more than indirect. They may be close to hints according to Blum-Kulka and House's (1989) classification of requests (see *section 2.10*). In example 5.7, *you can tell me* was taken as a non-standard version of *perhaps you could tell me* and *I would know* in example 5.8 as a non-standard version of *I would like to know*.

5.5 *What kind of food I **can** eat there?*

5.6 *I **can** wear t-shirts?*

5.7 *If you stay we **can** see each other and have a time together, if you're not it's ok, you **can** tell me some places to visit and what's the best food of the city and things like this.*

5.8 *Before going to the city, I **would** know anything about what places are hottest to stay about fifteen days, because I **can't** support low temperatures and I would know what are the most representative places you **can** see as monuments or football stadiums.*

Moving onto the findings of the collocates of *could*, one *could* + *verb* collocation that has occurred more than twice was observed in TCI: *could* + *give*. It was also found that this collocation occurs in the prefabricated lexical item *if you could give me* in its four occurrences. This item follows *I was wondering* and *I was hoping*.

As for *should*, *should* + *bring*, *should* + *go* and *should* + *try* occur more than twice in TCI (see table 4.17.b). However, only *try* reports a strong CF (see table 4.17.c). What is more, only *should* + *try* occurs in LCI, and this happens only once (see table 4.17.b). It is worth mentioning that, as with *could* + *give*, several common features have been detected in these collocations. In the case of *should* + *bring*, it appears in a nominal clause that acts as the direct object of a mental verb in requests for information in three different letters in TCI (see examples 4.2 to 4.4). Regarding the three occurrences of *should* + *try*, they also appear in three different letters in TCI and, in the three of them, in a relative clause in a phrase introduced by the preparatory subject *there* in requests for information (see examples 4.6, 4.8 and 4.9). With regard to the two occurrences of *should* + *go*, one occurs in the same type of pattern as *should* + *bring* and the other in the same type of pattern as *should* + *try* (see examples 4.6 and 4.7). Furthermore, as with *can*, the higher percentage of occurrence of *should* + *verb* in LCI than in TCI, it was suspected, could have been due to, wordy and/or non-standard requests for information in LCI. Examples 4.10 and 4.11 were given as examples of this. Examples 5.9 and 5.10 show two more cases of non-standard word order in

requests for information, while example 5.11 is an indirect request whose ending parallels that of 4.10, though they occurred in two different letters.

5.9 *In your opinion, what clothes I **should** wear there?*

5.10 *And what kind of clothes we **should** carry?*

5.11 *I am also wondering if I **should** take my waterproof coat with me or not.*

The collocations with *would* have also reported big differences between TCI, LCI and TXTCI. The percentage of occurrence of the collocation *would + like* has been 49 % in LCI, 12.5 % in TXTCI and none in TCI (see table 4.18.a). What is more, if the collocations *would + like* and *would + verb* were added, they would account for 65 % of all the collocations of *would* in LCI, for 25 % of all the collocations of *would* in TXTCI, and for none of the collocations of the same modal in TCI. By contrast, while the frequencies of *would + be* have been almost equivalent in TCI and in TXTCI, in LCI they have been lower than expected (see table 4.18.b). Interestingly though, the *t* score of this pattern has been statistically significant in LCI (see table 4.18.c). This indicates that, comparatively, *would + be* occurs less often in LCI than in TCI and in TXTCI, but that there is a significant difference between the occurrence of *be* within one-word span of *would* and its EF within that span. This is owing to the fact that *be* proportionally occurs less often in LCI than in TCI or in TXTCI. In addition, it is worth indicating that the few occurrences of *would + be* have been followed by adjectives with positive connotations in the three corpora of informal letters, but by superlative and comparative adjectives in TCI and in TXTCI only. These data

indicate a clear difference in *would + verb* collocations between LCI and TCI and TXTCI.

The findings concerning *would + like* have been accentuated in the collocations of *'d*, as they show that, while in TCI and TXTCI they made use of *'d + like*, *'d + verb* and *'d + be*, in LCI they used the first only (see table 4.19.a). Furthermore, *'d + like* reported a much higher than EF in LCI (see table 4.19.b). Nonetheless, neither *'d + like* nor *'d + be* showed a high *t* score.

With regard to *will*, while the most frequent collocation in TCI has been *will + be* and then *will + verb* and in LCI the other way around, in TXTCI neither of them occurred (see table 4.20.a). Besides, the frequency of *will + be* in LCI has been lower than expected (see table 4.20.b). Nonetheless, both in TCI and in LCI, *will + be* has shown a high *t* score (see table 4.20.c) and strong collocational factors. It is worth remarking that, as with *could + give*, *should + bring*, *should + go* and *should + try*, trends have been observed in TCI, which have not appeared in LCI. In its five occurrences in TCI, *will + be* occurs in requests for information in clauses after mental verbs. Also, it has been followed by comparative and superlative adjectives in TCI but not in LCI (see examples 4.45 to 4.49). By contrast, *'ll + be* has occurred to express predictions and arrangements in LCI, TCI and TXTCI. The frequency of this collocation has been higher than expected in TXTCI (see table 4.21.b), and its *t* score and CF has also been strong in the same corpus (see table 4.21.c).

Finally, even though *modal verb + adverb + verb* collocations have not been strong in any corpora, they have been observed in four modal verb collocations in TCI (*can + hardly + verb*, *can + actually + verb*, *should + particularly + verb*, *would + definitely + verb* and *'ll + probably + verb*), whereas in three modal verb collocations in TXTCI (*should + definitely + verb*, *'ll + probably + verb* and *'ll + really + verb*) and in LCI (*would + also + verb*, *will + finally + verb* and the non-standard *will + very + verb*).

The analyses of *modal verb + verb* collocations in the informal letters of request confirm the need for the sample of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners to be exposed to the letters written by the NS of English and those written in the B2 EFL textbooks owing to four reasons.

First, as discussed in the previous section, the sample of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners made choices of verbs after certain modal verbs that differed clearly from the choices made by the other two samples. This has been the case of the overuse of *would + like*, *would + verb* and *will + verb* other than *be*.

The second reason has been the inexistence of certain collocations in LCI that have been repeated more than twice in TCI and that would be useful for L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners when they request information, as they would add to the collocations that are available to them and, thus, compensate for their reliance on their seemingly ready-made lists of collocations. Examples of these collocations have been *if you could give me* after *I was wondering* and *I was hoping*, the use of *should + verb* in relative clauses in phrases introduced by preparatory subjects starting with *there* or in nominal clauses after *let me know* or *do you think*.

Thirdly, L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners' analysing the requests written by the native teachers of EFL and comparing them with their own may awaken them to the fact that, as discussed in the section devoted to the number of FW and CW (section 5.1.2), their requests may deviate from word order in Standard English, and, as result, if too long, may end up being too complex and/or sounding wordy. This was the case of the requests for information containing the modals *can* and *should*.

Finally, even though the presence of adverbs in *modal verb + adverb + verb* collocations has been very low in TCI and in TXTCI, highlighting these collocations may increase the number of resources available to L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners at the time of conveying modality in requests for information. Moreover, exploring the use of comparative and superlative adjectives in requests after *would + be* would also be recommended for two reasons. Firstly, this section

has revealed that comparative and superlative adjectives are used after *would + be* in TCI and TXTCI only. Secondly, as *section 5.1.2* revealed, the native teachers of English and the B2 EFL textbooks used adjectives more often than the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners, possibly resulting in the less native-like writing of the last group.

5.2.2 DISCUSSION OF THE COLLOCATES OF MODAL VERBS IN THE FORMAL REQUEST LETTERS

5.2.2.1 THE FREQUENCIES OF THE COLLOCATES OF MODAL VERBS IN THE FORMAL REQUEST LETTERS

The discussion of objective one showed that the sample of native teachers of EFL and the B2 EFL textbooks used *can* more often than the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners in the formal request letters. By looking at the collocations of *can* (see table 4.15.a), it may be observed that, while *can + you* accounted for 45.5 % of the collocations of this modal verb in TCF, it did not account for any in either LCF or in TXTCF. In these last two corpora, by contrast, the most frequent collocations were *can + verb* (69 and 72 % respectively).

The discussion of objective one also pointed out that the sample of native teachers of English and the B2 EFL textbooks used *could* more often than the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners in the formal request letters as well. Table 4.16.a showed that, even though *could + you* and *could + verb* are the most frequent patterns in TCF, LCF and TXTCF, the percentage of occurrence of the former collocation is higher in TCF than in LCF and in TXTCF. This difference may be considered substantially important in the TCF and LCF comparison, bearing in mind that the frequency of *could* is 3.37 times higher in the former than in the latter.

Should (see table 4.17.a) is not a modal verb that deserves any important remarks as its frequencies in LCF, TCF and TXTCF are very low compared to LCI, TCI and TXTCI, and no trends may be observed in the first three corpora.

As for the collocations of *would*, the percentages of occurrence of *would + like*, *would + verb*, *would + be* and *would + also + verb* are the highest in both TCF and TXTCF (see table 4.18.a). In relation to LCF, as in LCI, the percentage of occurrence of *would + like* is higher than in TCF and in TXTCF. Conversely, and also as in LCI, the percentage of occurrence of *would + be* is lower. This trend proved to be stronger in the collocations of *'d*. While LCF reported *'d + like* only, TCF reported *'d + like*, *'d + verb*, *'d + be* and *'d + also + verb*, but with a much lower frequency than the same collocations with *would* instead (see table 4.19.a). As mentioned in the discussion of objective one, TXTCF reported no occurrences of *'d*.

In the discussion of objective one, it was observed that *will* occurs more often in LCF than in TCF or in TXTCF. As in LCI, the most frequent collocations of *will* in LCF have been *will + verb* and *will + be*. The same applies to TXTCF (see table 4.20.a). Finally, except for one occurrence of *'ll* in LCF, no others have been observed in TCF or in TXTCF (see table 4.21.a).

As pointed out in the discussion of the frequencies of the collocates of modal verbs in the informal request letters (see *section 5.2.1.1*), the purpose of this section is not to provide lists of differences and similarities in the frequencies of the collocates of modal verbs in the formal request letters across corpora per se, but to provide pedagogical observations.

Like *section 5.2.1.1*, this section has indicated differences in modal verb collocations between the letters written by the native teachers of English and in the B2 EFL textbooks. While *can + you* and *could + you* occurred in TCF, the former did not in TXTCF and the latter did but much less frequently. This would emphasise the need to supplement textbook English with extra materials written

by NS to increase the range of primings that L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners could receive from complete letters of request.

Furthermore, as suggested in *section 5.2.1.1* with respect to the informal letters, it may also be argued that it would be advantageous for the sample of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners to supplement some of the collocations that prevail in their request letters such as *would + like*, *would + verb* and *'d + like* with the collocations that, by contrast, have been used more often in TXTCF and/or in TCF such as *would + be*, *would + also + verb*, *'d + verb*, *'d + be* and *'d + also + verb*. The goal of this argument would not be to have L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners' writing resemble NS' writing for its own sake, but to enable the former group to free themselves from their dependence on a limited range of collocations and to experiment the comfort that the availability of wider ranges of collocations provides when communicating requests.

5.2.2.2 THE FREQUENCIES OF THE VERB COLLOCATES OF MODAL VERBS IN THE FORMAL REQUEST LETTERS

As explained in *section 5.2.1.2*, it was highly probable that the verb collocates of modal verbs in the letters from the TXTC would differ from those in the TC and in the LC, as the former were written in different situations and against different backgrounds from those in the TC and in the LC. Nonetheless, comparisons with interesting pedagogical implications are expected to be made.

It would seem that no interesting comments could be made concerning the verb collocations of the modal *can* except for the fact that the high percentage of occurrence of *can + verb* collocations in LCF could be due to the existence of unnecessarily long, complex, indirect and non-standard (as far as word order is concerned) requests in this corpus as in LCI. The observation of the sentences containing *can* in LCF confirmed so. Examples 5.12 and 5.13 show two requests for information in which the word order of the collocations containing *can* differs

from that in Standard English. In example 5.12, the presence of *can* in the split infinitive is not necessary and it could have been replaced with *to be able to*, whereas, in example 5.13 the expected word order would have been *can + I + go*. Example 5.14 shows a very long and complex request for information carrying five clauses. Examples 5.15 and 5.16 consist of two requests which are in between indirect requests and hints.

5.12 *Finally I need to know what type of accommodation provides the school during the course to **can** live there.*

5.13 *Or I **can** go if I don't have many idea of English?*

5.14 *I am from Madrid so if I attend the course I will have to stay somewhere in the UK, so I need to know what type of accommodation the school provides, if I **can** stay in an apartment, in a hotel, in a home stays, etc.*

5.15 *Finally, if you **can** send me an email about the accommodation school.*

5.16 *If you want you **can** send me a test for knowing my level.*

However, apart from these analyses, when looking at the two occurrences of the weak collocation *can + provide* (see tables 4.15.b and 4.15.c), it was observed that they both occurred in relative clauses in requests for information in two different letters (see examples 5.17 and 5.18).

5.17 ...*could* you also send me some information on the type of accommodation you **can** provide for students...

5.18 Any relevant information you **can** provide would be greatly appreciated.

With regard to *could*, the collocation *could* + *let* happened in the prefabricated lexical item *if you could let me know* after *I would (also) be grateful* and *I would also appreciate it* in its three occurrences in TCF only (see table 4.16.b). A parallel comment was made regarding the item *if you could give me* in TCI in section 5.2.1.2.

Concerning *should*, there are no comments worth making, as no verb has occurred twice or more times in LCF, TCF or TXTCF after it (see tables 4.17.a, 4.17.b and 4.17.c). By contrast, there are interesting remarks regarding the verb collocations of the next secondary modal verb: *would*. The following collocations will be dealt with: *would* + *be*, *would* + *like* and *would* + *need*.

Would + *be* has reported a higher than EF in TXTCF but a lower one in LCF as compared to TCF (see table 4.18.b). However, it has been observed that the CF (but only for *be* in LCF) and *t* score of this collocation have been significant in the three samples (see table 4.18.c). This shows that this *modal verb* + *verb* collocation is an important feature of formal request letters. When looking into possible prefabricated lexical items containing this collocation, it was remarked that *would* + *be* had been followed by adjectives that denoted gratitude, interest, possibility and appreciation in TCF and in TXTCF; whereas, in LCF, gratitude and appreciation in adjectives after *would* + *be* had been conveyed in only one sentence each. It is also worth mentioning that an adverb has been placed between *would* + *be* and an adjective in 60 % of the occurrences of *would* + *be* in TCF and in 12.5 % of the occurrences in TXTCF, but in none in LCF.

As for *would + like*, its occurrences have been higher than expected in both TXTCF and LCF as compared to TCF (see table 4.18.b). This collocation has also shown a significant CF and *t* score in LCF, TCF and TXTCF. These data show that *would + like* is also a collocation that defines formal request letters. Nevertheless, when looking at the verb phrases of this collocation, it was discovered that the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners made frequent use of the collocation *would + like + to + know* as opposed to the native teachers of EFL and the B2 EFL textbooks, the letters of which reported a wider range of verbs. Besides, the native teachers of EFL made more use of *information* in requests for information after *would + like* as compared to the sample of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners.

Would + need has occurred in LCF and in TCF. In LCF, its frequency has been higher than expected (see table 4.18.b). However, in neither of these two corpora has this collocation been significant (see table 4.18.c). *I would need* collocates with *to know* in both LCF and TCF, but it is also followed by noun phrases in LCF. This could be considered a sign of directness in requests. It would seem that *I would need to have a stable arrangement* sounds less direct than example 4.33.

The collocation *'d + like* has occurred in TCF and in LCF only (see table 19.a). In the latter, its frequency has been higher than expected (see table 4.19.b). Even though *'d + like* has shown a significant *t* score in LCF only, it has reported a strong CF in both TCF and LCF for *'d* only (see table 19.c). Indeed, *like* has occurred more often with *would* in both corpora. As for the context of this collocation, *I'd like to know* is the prefabricated lexical item that has occurred most often in LCF and in TCF.

With respect to *will + be*, its frequency has been higher than expected in TXTCF and in LCF as compared to its frequency in TCF (see table 4.20.b). Nonetheless, it cannot be said it is an essential feature of formal request letters, as

its *t* score and CF have only been high in LCF. No data worth commenting on have been presented in relation to this collocation.

As regards *modal verb + adverb + verb* collocations in formal request letters, they have occurred in the TXTC and in the TC mainly, as found in the informal request letters. In TXTCF, the following have been observed: *can + then + verb*, *could + possibly + verb*, *should + very much + verb*, *would + also + verb*, *would + particularly + verb*, *would + very much + verb* and *will + only + verb*. In TCF, the following *modal + adverb + verb* collocations have occurred: *would + also + verb*, *would + greatly + verb*, *would + particularly + verb*, and *'d + also + verb*. In relation to LCF, the following two collocations have been reported: *would + only + verb* and the non-standard *will + very + verb*.

This section has shown a few gaps between the English of the sample of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners in formal request letters and the English of the other two samples in the same gender and register. The difference provided in the previous paragraph is perhaps the most illustrative. While the sample of B2 EFL textbooks presented the widest range of *modal verb + adverb + verb* collocations, the sample of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners reported the narrowest. As discussed in *section 5.2.1.2*, the acquisition of the *modal verb + adverb + verb* collocations that occur in the TC and in the TXTC by the sample of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners would not only diversify their range of requesting strategies, but also their means for conveying modality (see example 2.13 in *section 2.8*).

It is also interesting to add that it is not the frequent repetition of collocations in NS' written English that determines their usefulness in L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners' writing. The two occurrences of *can + provide* in relative clauses in requests for information in only two letters in TCF as well as the only three occurrences of *if you could let me know* after *I would (also) be grateful* and *I would also appreciate* in requests for information also in TCF are enough evidence to justify the acquisition of further primings by L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners. Indeed, the goal of the acquisition of these collocations is not only for L1

Spanish B2 EFL learners to do away with non-standard collocations as those in examples 5.12 and 5.13 in this section, but also to have alternative resources to be able to supplement the collocations they have used most often but which the other two samples have never used, or have, but to a much lesser extent: *I + would + like + to + know* is a case in point.

Finally, the importance for L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners to supplement textbook English with NS' English and vice versa has been clearly brought to light by the fact that, while the former offered a wider range of *modal verb + adverb + verb* collocations, the latter provided more examples of *would + be + adverb + adjective* collocations. The L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners, by contrast, provided very few of the former, as already mentioned, but none of the latter. As discussed above, in an attempt to convey modality as NS do, L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners should be trained to incorporate these patterns.

5.3 OBJECTIVE THREE: DISCUSSION OF PREFABRICATED LEXICAL ITEMS CONTAINING MODAL VERBS AND USED IN REQUESTS

In chapter one, it was established that the third objective was to compare the frequencies of prefabricated lexical items containing modal verbs and used in requests in a set of formal and of informal letters of request written by a sample of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners with the frequencies of prefabricated lexical items containing modal verbs and used in requests in a set of formal and of informal letters of request written by a sample of native teachers of EFL and in a sample of B2 EFL textbooks.

The two research questions linked to this objective were the following. The first one was to find out whether the frequencies of the prefabricated lexical items to which modal verbs belonged and were employed in requests in the formal and in the informal letters of request in the sample of B2 EFL textbooks were similar to those in the formal and in the informal letters written by the native teachers of

EFL and the other way around. This will be discussed in *section 5.3.1*. The second question asked whether the frequencies of prefabricated lexical items containing modal verbs and used in requests in the letters written by the sample of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners were similar to the ones in the letters in the other two samples. The answer to this question will be discussed in *section 5.3.2*. Finally, *section 5.3.3* will discuss an issue that was not present in the research questions, but which came up when data were collected. This was the frequencies of requests without modal verbs in the letters from the three samples. Possible pedagogical implications will be discussed in each section.

5.3.1 THE FREQUENCIES OF PREFABRICATED LEXICAL ITEMS CONTAINING MODAL VERBS AND USED IN REQUESTS IN THE FORMAL AND IN THE INFORMAL LETTERS FROM THE TC AND THE TXTC

This section will discuss the formal letters first and the informal ones afterwards.

Table 4.22 showed that, with respect to the formal letters, those written by the native teachers of EFL reported a similar percentage of occurrence of direct request with modals to those in the B2 EFL textbooks (54.9 % and 51.1 % respectively). By contrast, the formal letters in the sample of B2 EFL textbooks contained more indirect requests with mitigating phrases and with modal verbs than the formal letters written by the native teachers of EFL (23.4 % and 12.4 % respectively). This would indicate a more indirect tone in the letters included in TXTCF. Direct requests with modals will be dealt with first, and then indirect requests with mitigating phrases and with modal verbs.

When the direct requests with modals in TCF and in TXTCF were analysed, they were sorted out into three different groups: questions, affirmative statements and *please* + commands. Table 4.24 revealed that only TXTCF reported *please* + commands (4 % of all requests in TXTCF). Besides, TCF reported more questions than affirmative statements (51.6 % and 48.4 % of all the direct requests with modals respectively). Conversely, TXTCF reported more affirmative statements than questions (58 % and 38 % of all the direct requests with modals respectively). Nonetheless, more concrete differences were observed when the prefabricated lexical items were cited.

TCF reported a wider range of interrogative prefabricated lexical items repeated twice or more times than TXTCF: *could you tell me...* (f = 3); *could you let me know...* (f = 3); *can you tell me...* (f = 2); *could you (please) inform me...* (f = 2); *could you (also) send me...* (f = 2); *could you (please) give me...* (f = 2); and *would I need to...?* (f = 2) occurred in TCF, as compared to *could you also (please) let me know...* (f = 2) in TXTCF. It was pointed out that all these items are yes/no questions. Regarding the affirmative statements, *I would (particularly/also) like to know...* (f = 7); *I would like some (more/additional) information...* (f = 4); *I'd like to know...* (f = 3); *I would (also) be interested to know...* (f = 2); *I would need to...* (f = 2) and *I would like to request (some) more information...* (f = 2) were observed in TCF, as compared to *I would like to know...* (f = 3) and *I/We would also/very much welcome...* (f = 2) in TXTCF.

In relation to the indirect requests with mitigating phrases and with modal verbs in the formal letters, TCF also reported wider and more numerous ranges of them than TXTCF. Indeed, three items containing the verb *wondering*, three items containing the verb *appreciate*, four items carrying the adjective *grateful*, three items comprising adjectives that denote gratitude and appreciation apart from *grateful* in conditional constructions and one item containing the verb *hoping* were reported in TCF. By contrast, TXTCF reported three items containing *I*

wonder and *I wondered*, one item containing the verb *appreciate*, six items comprising *grateful* and one item carrying an adjective that denotes gratitude.

In connection with the informal letters, table 4.22 reported a higher percentage of direct requests with modals in the letters written by the native teachers of EFL (54.4 %) than in the sample of B2 EFL textbooks (37.2 %). As for the indirect requests with mitigating phrases and with modal verbs, while they were very few compared to the other types in TCI (3.8 %), they were inexistent in TXTCI.

By looking at the percentages of occurrence of direct requests with modals in TCI and in TXTCI (see table 4.25), it was observed that they were similar: questions were the most numerous ones, followed by affirmative statements and commands. However, as in the formal letters, more prefabricated lexical items that occurred twice or more times were reported in the sample of letters written by the native teachers of EFL than in TXTCI.

As for the questions, these were *can you (also) recommend...* (f = 4); *what (kind of) clothes should I bring...* (f = 4); *should I (also) bring (some) summer/warmer clothes ...* (f = 3); *can you (also) tell me...* (f = 2); *should I pack...* (f = 2); *can you suggest...* (f = 2); *what clothes do you think I should...* (f = 2), *where do you think I should...* (f = 2); *are there any typical foods/national dishes I should try?* (f = 2) and *what/which would be the best way to...* (f = 2), as compared to none in TXTCI. With reference to affirmative statements, *you'll have to tell me...* (f = 2) was reported in TCI as opposed to none in TXTCI. In connection with commands, *let me know* (f = 2) and *get/write back (to me)* were reported in TCI as compared to *let me know* (f = 2) in TXTCI.

Regarding the indirect requests with mitigating phrases and with modal verbs, two items containing *wondering* and four comprising *hoping* were reported in TCI.

This section shows that, in total, the native teachers of EFL used proportionally slightly fewer requests with modals in the formal letters than the sample of B2 EFL textbooks (67.3 % and 74.5 %, see table 4.22). It is also worth noting that the percentage of occurrence of indirect requests with mitigating phrases and with modal verbs was higher in TXTCF than in TCF (see table 4.22). However, when looking at the items employed in the two samples of letters, it was observed that the native teachers of EFL offered a wider range of prefabricated lexical items that occurred two or more times as far as direct requests with modals and indirect requests with mitigating phrases and with modal verbs are concerned. Nonetheless, it is worth pointing out that, in the B2 EFL textbooks, the prefabricated item *I would be grateful if you...* is proportionally more numerous than in TCF.

As for the informal letters, a higher percentage of requests with modals were reported in TCI than in TXTCI (58.2 % and 37.2 % respectively). Besides, as opposed to TCI, no indirect requests with mitigating phrases and with modal verbs were reported in TXTCI (see table 4.22). When looking at the prefabricated lexical items used two or more times, it was also revealed that a wider variety of them was supplied by the letters in TCI than in TXTCI.

The argument for L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners to supplement textbook material with text written by NS when learning to write requests becomes more solid and concrete in this section since, while the two previous ones dealt with more abstract data and few concrete examples of the prefabricated lexical items used in the TC and in the TXTC, the information discussed in this section clearly brings to light the wider range of repeated linguistic strategies that text written by NS may offer as far as direct requests with modals and indirect requests with mitigating phrases and with modal verbs are concerned. This pedagogical implication may sound obvious since, as already discussed, it is not possible for textbooks to provide large numbers of formal and of informal request letters. However, the data provided in the previous chapter and discussed in this one

indicate in what ways the letters written by the native teachers of English and the B2 EFL textbooks differ, and also what aspects of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners' letters should be focused on for them to write requests in a more native like way. So far, information about modal verb frequencies and collocations in the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners' letters has been discussed. The next section deals with prefabricated lexical items used in requests in the request letters written by the sample of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners.

5.3.2 THE FREQUENCIES OF PREFABRICATED LEXICAL ITEMS CONTAINING MODAL VERBS AND USED IN REQUESTS IN THE FORMAL AND IN THE INFORMAL LETTERS WRITTEN BY THE L1 SPANISH B2 EFL LEARNERS

In this section, as in the previous one, the formal letters will be discussed first; the informal ones will be approached afterwards.

In the formal request letters written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners, the percentage of occurrence of requests containing modal verbs was lower than in TCF and in TXTCF: 46.5 %, 67.3 % and 74.5 % respectively (see table 4.22). This data is closely linked to that presented in the discussion of objective one, which indicated that the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners used, on average, fewer modal verbs per letter as compared to the other two samples.

As for the direct requests with modals in the formal request letters, the percentage of occurrence of affirmative statements was much higher in the letters written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners than in the letters written by the native teachers of EFL and in the sample of B2 EFL textbooks: 78.3 %, 48.4 % and 58 % respectively (see table 4.24).

Indeed, when the prefabricated lexical items were reported, it was observed that the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners used a much narrower range of interrogative prefabricated lexical items twice or more times than the sample of native teachers

of EFL. These were *when will it/the course start and finish?* (f = 3) and *could you (please) tell me...* (f = 2). Conversely, the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners used a much wider range of affirmative statements: nine as compared to two in TXTCF and six in TCF. These were *I would like to know...* (f = 27); *I would know...* (as an alternative to *I would like to know*, f = 4); *I would ask you about...* (As an alternative to *I would like to ask you about...*, f = 3); *I'd like to know...* (f = 3); *I would like to obtain some/more information...* (f = 3); *I would like to ask you about...* (f = 2); *I would need to know...* (f = 2); *I would need + noun phrase* (f = 2); and *I would like you to...* (f = 2).

As for the indirect requests with mitigating phrases and with modal verbs in LCF, two items with *wondering* were reported, one item carrying the adjective *grateful* and four items carrying adjectives that denote gratitude and appreciation. Nonetheless, the last two items were constructed differently from the way the NS did as far as the subjunctive and the conditional are concerned (see examples 4.108 to 4.111).

When plunging into the analyses of the informal letters, it was observed that, as opposed to the formal letters, the percentage of occurrence of requests with modals in the letters written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners was very similar to that in the letters written by the native teachers of EFL and higher than in the sample of B2 EFL textbooks: 56.5 %, 58.2 % and 37.2 % respectively (see table 4.22). Indeed, in the discussion of objective one, no significant difference in the frequencies of modal verbs per letter between LCI and TCI and TXTCI were reported.

As for the percentage of occurrence of request types in LCI, that of affirmative statements (37.5 %) was lower than that of questions (60 %) as in TCI and in TXTCI, though higher than the percentage of occurrence of affirmative statements in TCI (12.8 %) and in TXTCI (15.8 %, see table 4.25). Indeed, six items in affirmative statements were repeated twice or more times in LCI as opposed to one in TCI and none in TXTCI. These consisted of eight

prefabricated lexical items consisting of *I would like to know...*, three items comprising *I would like you to inform me/give me/help me/let me know...*, and two items consisting of *I hope you/we could...*, *I don't know where I/we could/can stay...*, *I would (also) ask you* (for *I would (also) like to ask you*) and *I would know....* (instead of *I would like to know*).

Concerning the questions, eleven items in questions were observed in LCI as compared to ten in TCI and none in TXTCI. These were the following. Five prefabricated lexical item consisting of *could you tell me* and two items composed of each of the following: *what (kind of) clothes should I wear...?*, *how can I get there?*, *what clothes will I wear?*, *which places will we visit...*, *what (more type of) food will I/we eat?*, *what/which places would you recommend me to...?*, *which places can I visit?*, *can I stay at your place?*, *could you say me* and *could you recommend me....*

Regarding the indirect requests with mitigating phrases and with modal verbs, five examples with *wondering* and *wonder* were observed, two with *appreciate* (though with problems with the pleonastic *it*) and one with an adjective denoting appreciation. Besides, two items that did not appear in the other two samples were also used: *If you don't mind* and *I also wanted to ask you*.

This section shows that, in the case of the formal letters, an attempt should be made by the sample of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners to incorporate requests with modal verbs in their letters. This has not been the case in the set of informal ones, where the percentage of occurrence of requests with modal verbs in LCI is similar to that in TCI and even higher than in TXTCI. It may be wondered why in the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners' formal letters the percentage of occurrence of requests with modals is lower than in their informal letters. By looking at table 4.22 and at the discussion in this and in the previous section, it may be concluded that L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners should increase the number and range of indirect requests with mitigating phrases and with modal verbs to attain native like standards in their formal letters. This would be achieved by using the indirect

requests with mitigating phrases and with modal verbs not only employed in TXTCF, but also in TCF. Indeed, while TXTCF placed more emphasis on the prefabricated lexical item *I would be grateful if you could*, the native teachers of EFL used more of the other strategies discussed in the previous section.

Nonetheless, L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners' incorporation of indirect requests with mitigating phrases and with modal verbs should be accompanied by the acquisition of direct requests with modal verbs as well. Indeed, L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners' using the wider range of questions containing modal verbs that was employed in TCF would broaden the variety of requesting tools available to them when making requests, and also compensate for their strong reliance on affirmative prefabricated lexical items starting with *I + would*. The need to provide alternative collocations to *I + would* was also observed in the comments of modal verb collocations in the discussion of objective two.

In the case of the informal letters, while the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners reported a higher percentage of occurrence of requests with modal verbs than the sample of B2 EFL textbooks and a similar one to the sample of native teachers of EFL, they still reported a higher percentage of occurrence of affirmative statements than the other two samples. At the same time, the number of prefabricated lexical items containing modal verbs in questions and occurring twice or more times in the letters written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners was close to the one in the letters written by the NS of English. However, when looking at these items, substantial differences may be observed (see table 5.5).

Table 5.5
Questions containing modal verbs and repeated more than twice in LCI
and in TCI

TCI	LCI
1. <i>can you (also) recommend...</i>	11. <i>could you tell me</i>
2. <i>what (kind of) clothes should I bring...</i>	12. <i>what (kind of) clothes should I wear...?,</i>
3. <i>should I (also) bring (some) summer/warmer clothes ...</i>	13. <i>how can I get there?,</i>
4. <i>can you (also) tell me...</i>	14. <i>what clothes will I wear?,</i>
5. <i>should I pack...</i>	15. <i>which places will we visit...,</i>
6. <i>can you suggest...</i>	16. <i>what (more type of) food will I/we eat?,</i>
7. <i>what clothes do you think I should...</i>	17. <i>what/which places would you recommend me to...?,</i>
8. <i>where do you think I should...</i>	18. <i>which places can I visit?,</i>
9. <i>are there any typical foods/national dishes I should try?</i>	19. <i>can I stay at your place?,</i>
10. <i>what/which would be the best way to...</i>	20. <i>could you say me</i>
	21. <i>could you recommend me....</i>

First, the native teachers of EFL mostly used prefabricated lexical items containing the collocations *can + you*, *should + verb* and *should + I*. The collocational context in which *should* occurs in TCI was discussed in section 5.2.1.2. By contrast, the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners mostly used *can + I*, *could + you* and *will*. Section 5.2.1.1 highlighted the highest percentage of occurrence

of *can + I* in LCI and *section 5.1.3* the higher frequency of *will* and *could* in LCI than in TCI and in TXTCI .

When the collocations *can + you* and *should + I* were discussed in *section 5.2.1.1*, it was pointed out that, ideally, an increase in the frequencies of modal verbs in the request letters written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners should not be achieved by a concomitant increase in the frequencies of the modal verb collocations that the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners had already used but that the other two samples had never done so, but by the incorporation of the modal verb collocations used in the TC and in the TXTC instead. Indeed, the native teachers of EFL made use of relatively complex prefabricated lexical items when employing *should* (see examples 7, 8 and 9 in table 5.5), while the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners used simple patterns in all the interrogative prefabricated lexical items apart from mixing up the use of *will* for requesting information about future plans with that for asking about predictions (see examples 14, 15 and 16 in table 5.5). Therefore, in an attempt for the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners to cut down on affirmative requests starting with *I + would*, they should not employ more of the questions they have made use of, but brush up on their request strategies by comparing them with those written by L1 English speakers with a view to acquiring the complexity, accuracy and fluency (Lewis, 2001) that the requests of the former group entail.

5.3.3 THE FREQUENCIES OF PREFABRICATED LEXICAL ITEMS WITHOUT MODAL VERBS BUT USED IN REQUESTS

In this section direct requests without modal verbs will be discussed first. The discussion of indirect requests with mitigating phrases without modal verbs will follow.

As for direct requests without modal verbs in the formal request letters, as occurred with the direct requests with modals, a higher percentage of affirmative statements were observed in the letters written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners than in those written by the native teachers of EFL (see table 4.23). Conversely, as with the direct requests with modals as well, a higher percentage of questions were observed in the formal letters written by the native teachers of EFL than in the ones written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners.

Concerning the questions written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners, several examples have revealed differences in word order from word order in Standard English (see examples 4.65 to 4.72). This comment matches similar observations about Non-Standard English in the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners' letters which were made in the discussion of LD in *section 5.1.2*, of the verb collocates of modal verbs in the informal request letters in *section 5.2.1.2* and of the verb collocates of modal verbs in the formal request letters in *section 5.2.2.2*. Regarding the affirmative statements, the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners laid emphasis on the use of the prefabricated lexical items *I (also) need to know* and *I (also) want to know*, as they did on the prefabricated items with modal verbs in requests starting with *I + would*.

In relation to the letters written in the B2 EFL textbooks, they reported only one question and more *please + commands* than affirmative statements (see table 4.23). This remark really justifies supplementing textbooks with alternative sources of priming such as, in this case, with the letters written by the native teachers of EFL. These letters have provided many more alternative ways of making requests than the letters in the B2 EFL textbooks, such as yes/no questions, WH questions preceded by adverbs, choice questions and even more WH questions. What is more, this remark is even more justified when the findings reveal word order deviations in simple interrogative constructions at B2 level in the L1 Spanish EFL learners' formal request letters and in the informal ones.

Indeed, as in the sample of formal letters, word order that disagrees with that in Standard English has been observed in the questions of the informal letters written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners (see examples 4.83 to 4.89). It is also worth mentioning that the informal letters in the B2 EFL textbooks and those written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners provided more commands than those written by the native teachers of EFL. This is an indicator of a more direct style in the first two samples.

Moreover, even though questions report the highest percentage of occurrence in TCI, LCI and TXTCI, as with the direct requests with modals, the percentage of occurrence of affirmative statements in the informal letters written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners is the highest in the three samples, which may also require that the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners incorporate more of the interrogative strategies existing in the other two samples.

Finally, indirect requests with mitigating phrases without modal verbs have only been reported in TCF and in LCF, but their percentages of occurrence have been very low: 2.7 % and 2.3 % respectively (see table 4.22). *I also wanted to know* and *I was (just) wondering* were observed in the letters written by the native teachers of EFL. As for the letters written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners, both items occurred, but revealing differences from Standard English. This fact may also require that the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners should be further exposed to NS' English.

5.4 OBJECTIVE FOUR: DISCUSSION OF MODAL VERBS AT SENTENCE LEVEL IN REQUEST LETTERS

In *chapter one*, it was explained that objective four meant to compare the position of modal verbs at sentence level in requests in a set of formal and of informal letters of request written by a sample of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners, by a sample of native teachers of EFL and in a sample of B2 EFL textbooks.

Three research questions were established. The first one was where modal verbs in requests are placed at sentence level in the formal and in the informal letters of request written in the sample of B2 EFL textbooks. The second asked how the position of modal verbs at sentence level in requests in the letters written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners compared with the position of modal verbs at sentence level in requests in the letters in the other two samples. The third question meant to compare the colligations of modal verbs in theme and in rheme position at sentence level in requests in the formal and in the informal letters written in the sample of B2 EFL textbooks with those in the letters written by the other two samples.

Table 4.26 showed that more modal verbs in theme position than in rheme position at sentence level in requests had been observed in all the corpora. However, significant differences in the proportion of modal verbs in theme position were reported between the formal letters written by the sample of native teachers of EFL and all the other sets of letters, and between the formal letters written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners and in the B2 EFL textbooks (see table 4.27).

This section will be divided into two. *Section 5.4.1* will deal with modal verbs at sentence level in formal request letters, and *section 5.4.2* will be concerned with modal verbs at sentence level in informal request letters.

5.4.1 MODAL VERBS AT SENTENCE LEVEL IN FORMAL REQUEST LETTERS

Since this section comprises a lot of data concerning modal verb colligations, it has been decided to illustrate them in two tables. Table 5.6 shows modal verb colligations in theme position at sentence level in requests, whereas table 5.7 reveals modal verb colligations in rheme position at sentence level also in requests.

Table 5.6
Modal verb colligations in theme position at sentence level in requests in formal request letters

Modal verb colligations	TCF	LCF	TXTCF
	%	%	%
Head of affirmative statements in requests	52.6	74.2	72
Head of Yes/no questions	32.9	14.6	22
Before verbs in choice questions	5.3	1.1	
Before verbs in WH questions	4	5.6	3
Relative clause	2.6	2.3	
<i>If</i> clause	1.3	1.1	
Clause after a verb	1.3	1.1	
Clause of time			3
Total	100	100	100

The information presented in table 5.6 matches that of table 4.24. While table 4.24 reports a higher percentage of occurrence of affirmative statements in LCF and in TXTCF than in TCF and, conversely, a higher percentage of occurrence of questions in TCF than in LCF and in TXTCF, table 5.6 reports a higher percentage of occurrence of modal verbs as heads of affirmative statements in requests in LCF and in TXTCF than in TCF. Indeed, from the information in table 5.6, it may be assumed that, if the sample of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners analysed the requests written by the native teachers of EFL, they would receive further primings concerning the use of modal verbs in theme position in questions than from the sample of letters in the B2 EFL textbooks. Furthermore, it may also be observed that the letters in the B2 EFL textbooks provide a narrower range of

primings than the letters written by the native teachers of EFL as far as the variety of modal verb colligations are concerned.

These observations reinforce the idea of supplementing textbook material with text written by NS with a view to priming modal verb colligations before main verbs, since one of the problems observed in some of the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners' letters consisted of differences in word order in questions from word order in questions in Standard English. This was illustrated with examples 5.5, 5.6, 5.9 and 5.10 in *section 5.2.1.2*, with example 5.13 in *section 5.2.2.2* and with example 4.1 in *section 4.2.1*. What is more, it is worth bringing back to light the fact that the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners and the B2 EFL textbooks employed a narrower range of interrogative prefabricated lexical items that occurred twice or more times in requests in the formal letters than the sample of native teachers of EFL (two and one as against seven respectively (see *sections 5.3.1* and *5.3.2*)), and the observation that, conversely, the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners employed many more affirmative prefabricated lexical items that occurred twice or more times in requests than the native teachers of EFL (see *sections 5.3.1* and *5.3.2*).

Table 5.7
Modal verb colligations in rheme position at sentence level in requests in formal request letters

Modal verb colligations	TCF	LCF	TXTCF
	%	%	%
Clause after main verb	65	57.5	63.7
<i>If</i> clause after adjective	15	5	22.8
Head of clause of purpose	10		
Relative clause in a noun phrase which is not inside another clause after a verb	5	12.5	4.5
Head of a clause of reason	5	17.5	4.5
Head of a clause of time		2.5	4.5
Head of an <i>if</i> clause		2.5	
Adjunct of purpose		2.5	
Total	100	100	100

In the case of modal verbs in rheme position in formal requests (see table 5.7), the letters written by the native teachers of EFL and in the B2 EFL textbooks have reported very similar percentages of occurrence of modal verb colligations. However, table 4.26 revealed that the B2 EFL textbooks provided a significantly higher percentage of occurrence of modal verbs in rheme position than the letters written by the native teachers of EFL. This high frequency may be explained by the high percentage of occurrence of modals as heads of affirmative statements in the B2 EFL textbooks (see table 5.6) which have clauses with modal verbs after their main verbs. The L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners, by contrast, employed a lower percentage of occurrence of clauses after main verbs and a higher percentage of

occurrence of modal verbs heading clauses of reason and in relative clauses in noun phrases which are not inside other clauses after a verb. Undoubtedly, this is further evidence of the wordy style in L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners' letter writing mentioned in *sections 5.1.2* (see example 5.2) and *5.2.1.2* (see example 5.7). Example 4.137 in *section 4.4* is another good example of a long request (40 tokens) in which two items of information are requested and the reasons why they are relevant to the writer explained. At the same time, the figures in table 5.7 explain why the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners' formal letters showed a higher percentage of occurrence of modal verbs in rheme position at sentence level than the letters written by the native teachers of EFL (see table 4.26).

Indeed, while the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners placed more emphasis on explaining why requests in the formal letters are being made, the native teachers of EFL and the letters in the B2 EFL textbooks gave more weight to the expression of gratitude if certain requests for information were fulfilled by means of *if* clauses after adjectives (see example 4.124 in *section 4.4* and example 4.16 in *section 4.2.4*). This might call for the sample of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners' analyses of the letters of request written by/in the two priming samples to observe how the use of modal verbs in them with these respects differs from those in their own letters. Comparing colligations across corpora and rephrasing those which are non standard in the sample of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners' letters using colligations employed in Standard English would certainly be an effective reconstruction activity.

5.4.2 MODAL VERBS AT SENTENCE LEVEL IN INFORMAL REQUEST LETTERS

In this section, table 5.8 shows the percentage of occurrence of modal verb colligations in theme position at sentence level in requests in informal request letters, whereas table 5.9 gives the percentage of occurrence of modal verb colligations in rheme position at sentence level in requests in the same letters.

Table 5.8
Modal verb colligations in theme position at sentence level in requests in informal request letters

Modal verb colligations	TCI	LCI	TXTCI
	%	%	%
Head of yes/no questions	40	22.1	47
Before verbs in WH questions	35	23.9	11.8
Head of affirmative statements	17	41.6	29.4
Before verbs in choice questions	5	7	5.9
<i>If</i> clause	1.5	0.9	5.9
Relative clause	1.5	0.9	
Clause of time		2.7	
Clause after a verb		0.9	
Total	100	100	100

The data presented in table 5.8 is in accordance with the information given in table 4.25. In both tables, the percentage of occurrence of questions is higher than that of affirmative statements. This may account for the inexistence of significant

differences in the percentage of occurrence of modal verbs in theme position between the informal letters in TCI, LCI and TXTCI (see table 4.27). Nonetheless, in both tables again, the percentage of occurrence of affirmative statements is higher in the letters written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners than in the ones written in/by the other two samples. The data in table 5.8 also accords with the fact that six affirmative prefabricated lexical items have reoccurred twice or more times in requests in LCI as compared to one in TCI and none in TXTCI (see *section 5.3.2*).

It is also worth mentioning that the letters written by the native teachers of EFL provide a substantial amount of priming concerning modal verbs in theme position in questions in informal requests. This priming would be useful for the sample of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners as, even though both the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners and the native teachers of EFL reported a similar number of interrogative prefabricated lexical items occurring twice or more times in requests in the informal letters, the former reported simpler patterns than the latter, different modal verb collocations and a few problems with the conveyance of meaning in the use of the modal *will* (see *section 5.3.2*). Furthermore, this significant amount of priming concerning modal verbs in theme position in questions in the informal letters written by the native teachers of EFL is also an indicator of the importance of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners' working on NS' samples of letters considering the eventual problems with word order in L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners' interrogative requests alluded to in *sections 5.4.1* and *5.3.3*.

Table 5.9
Modal verb colligations in rheme position at sentence level in requests in informal request letters

Modal verb colligations	TCI	LCI	TXTCI
	%	%	%
Clause after main verb	69.3	62.5	87.5
Relative clause in a noun phrase which is not inside another clause after a verb	20.5	26.5	
Head of a clause of time	5.1	1.6	
Head of a clause of purpose	5.1		
Tag question		1.6	12.5
Head of a clause of reason		3	
<i>If</i> clause		1.6	
Yes/no questions		1.6	
<i>If</i> clause after adjective		1.6	
Total	100	100	100

As opposed to the modal verbs in rheme position in the formal request letters, in the informal ones, the native teachers of EFL offered a wider range of primings than the B2 EFL textbooks (see table 5.9). However, as with the modal verbs in rheme position in the formal request letters, the percentage of occurrence of modals in clauses after main verbs in the informal letters written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners is lower than in the letters written by the other two samples. As in the formal letters as well, the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners made use of a higher percentage of modals in relative clauses in noun phrases which are not inside other clauses after a verb. Furthermore, while the native teachers of

EFL focused more on modal verbs heading clauses of purpose and time, the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners made use of a wider range of colligations.

Following the data collected in this section, it must be pointed out that the need to supplement request letters from B2 EFL textbooks with request letters written by NS which was suggested in *section 5.4.1* is also recommended in the present section as the latter could provide a broader variety of colligations in which modal verbs in rheme position occur than the former.

5.5 OBJECTIVE FIVE: DISCUSSION OF SENTENCES MAKING REQUESTS AND CONTAINING MODAL VERBS AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL IN REQUEST LETTERS

As explained in *chapter one*, objective five consists in comparing the position of modal verbs at paragraph level in requests in a set of formal and of informal letters of request written by a sample of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners, by a sample of native teachers of EFL and in a sample of B2 EFL textbooks.

Six research questions were established in connection with this objective. The first one was where modal verbs in requests are placed at paragraph level in the formal and in the informal letters of request written in the sample of B2 EFL textbooks. The second question asked how the position of modal verbs in requests at paragraph level in the letters written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners compared with the position of modal verbs in requests at paragraph level in the letters in the other two samples. The next question asked where sentences making requests and containing modal verbs are placed at paragraph level in the formal and in the informal letters of request written in the B2 EFL textbooks, and how this compared with the letters written by the other two samples. The last two questions aimed to reveal whether requests with modal verbs at the beginning of paragraphs (theme position) play any role in the organisation of the letters written in/by the three samples, and, if so, how this is achieved in each sample of letters.

Tables 4.28 and 4.29 demonstrate that, at paragraph level, except for the formal request letters written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners, more than half of modal verbs in requests and of sentences making requests containing modal verbs occur after the first sentence of paragraphs.

Section 5.5.1 will deal with sentences making requests and containing modal verbs at paragraph level in the formal request letters, whereas *section 5.5.2* will discuss the same issue in the informal ones.

5.5.1 DISCUSSION OF SENTENCES MAKING REQUESTS AND CONTAINING MODAL VERBS AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL IN THE FORMAL REQUEST LETTERS

Table 4.30 reveals significant differences in the position of sentences making requests and containing modal verbs at paragraph level between the formal request letters written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners, by the native teachers of EFL ($\text{Chi}^2 = 8.523$; $p < .010$) and in the B2 EFL textbooks ($\text{Chi}^2 = 19.585$; $p < .0001$). By contrast, no significant differences are reported between the formal request letters written by the native teachers of EFL and those in the B2 EFL textbooks ($\text{Chi}^2 = .816$; $p = .366$). This is because, while the letters in the B2 EFL textbooks and the letters written by the native teachers of EFL contain a similar percentage of occurrence of sentences making requests with modal verbs after the first sentence of paragraphs, the formal request letters written by the sample of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners contain more sentences making requests with modals as first sentence of paragraphs than sentences making requests with modals appearing later, which may also explain the higher percentage of occurrence of affirmative requests with modals in the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners' formal letters (see tables 4.29 and 4.24).

Focusing on the discussion of the role played by the requests containing modal verbs in the first sentence of paragraphs in connection with text organisation will not only make it possible to establish interesting cross-corpora analytical differences, but also to highlight the importance of requests with modals occurring in that position. First, comparisons between the letters written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners and the native teachers of EFL will be made. Then, the letters written by the native teachers of EFL will be compared with those in the B2 EFL textbooks.

Section 4.5 reveals that, in both the formal request letters written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners and by the native teachers of EFL, similar percentages of occurrence of sentences which make requests with modal verbs in the first sentence of paragraphs headed by an adverb/adverbial phrase, noun phrase or a conjunction that indicates addition of requests were observed (48.3 % and 44 % respectively). Both of them shared the following items: *firstly*, *first of all*, and *finally*. Apart from these, the native teachers of EFL used *first*, *additionally*, *furthermore* and *the last thing*. By contrast, the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners used *secondly*, *thirdly*, *to finish*, *in addition*, *besides* and *also*. Moreover, two further differences may be established.

Firstly, the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners made use of linking expressions that may be considered irregular in Standard English. Three of them were meant to replace *finally*: *at last*, *at least* and *finish*. Two consisted of wrong word choices: *other question* instead of *another question*, and *other important thing* instead of *another important thing*. One revealed wrong word order: *another thing important* instead of *another important thing*. This wider range of devices at the beginning of paragraphs shows the importance of linking requests with modals in this position in the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners' formal letters, and provides a possible explanation for the highest percentage of occurrence of modals verbs in theme position at paragraph level in them (see table 4.28).

Secondly, while sixteen per cent of the sentences containing modal verbs and making requests in the first sentence of paragraphs in the letters written by the native teachers of EFL reported the adverb *also* between the modal verb and the main verb, none of them in the letters written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners did. This is additional evidence of the meagre use of adverbs in modal verb collocations referred to in *sections 5.2.1.2 and 5.2.2.2*.

With reference to the rest of the first sentence of paragraphs containing modal verbs and making requests, no significant differences were observed as regards the types of requests in which they occurred. These were affirmative statements, yes/no questions and indirect requests with mitigating phrases, although the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners also used commands with *please* and choice questions.

Nevertheless, more substantial differences were observed in the first sentence of paragraphs making requests and containing modals verbs between the letters written by the native teachers of EFL and in the B2 EFL textbooks. These will be addressed in the paragraphs that follow.

To begin with, the only adverbs heading these sentences in the B2 EFL textbooks were *firstly* and *finally*. These are two of the adverbs that the native teachers of EFL and the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners shared. Nonetheless, these last two samples made use of a wider range of adverbs, adverbial phrases, noun phrases or conjunctions, as explained above.

What is more, as in the letters written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners, in the letters written in the B2 EFL textbooks, no occurrences of *also* between a modal verb and a main verb were observed, as they were in the letters written by the native teachers of EFL. These comments would indicate that the sentences at the beginning of paragraphs in the formal letters from the B2 EFL textbooks do not play an important role in linking requests with modals, which may be the reason why these letters show the lowest percentage of occurrence of modal verbs in theme position at paragraph level (see table 4.28).

This section reveals stronger priming in the formal request letters written by the native teachers of EFL than in the letters written in the B2 EFL textbooks. This is understandable considering TXTCF is composed of eleven letters and TCF of twenty-one. Nonetheless, it could be argued that the need for L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners to supplement letters written in B2 EFL textbooks with those written by NS is unjustifiable, since the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners used even a wider range of adverbs, adverbial phrases, noun phrases or conjunctions than the native teachers of EFL. Nonetheless, two elements are to be borne in mind.

To begin with, the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners wrote almost double the number of letters than the native teachers of EFL (41 as against 21), which could explain their wider use of adverbs, adverbial phrases, noun phrases or conjunctions in their first sentences of paragraphs. Then, the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners used nonstandard forms such as *at last*, *at least*, *finish*, *other question*, *other important thing* and *another thing important*. By their looking at the letters written by the native teachers of EFL, they could find out that these never employed these linking items. Using other sources following the methodology of DDL (see *section 2.6*), such as the web (see *section 2.7*), with the guidance of a teacher, the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners may formulate the rules with reference to the use of *another* and *other*, as well as contrasting the uses of *at last*, *at least* and *finally* in English. Looking for occurrences of the translations of these items into Spanish would also be a challenging task, if it may be suspected that these three items had been misused as a result of negative transfer from L1 Spanish. Finally, it may be pointed out that the items that the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners misused could be replaced with those items that the native teachers of English used instead: *first*, *additionally*, *furthermore* and *the last thing*.

5.5.2 DISCUSSION OF SENTENCES MAKING REQUESTS AND CONTAINING MODAL VERBS AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL IN THE INFORMAL REQUEST LETTERS

Table 4.29 shows that, as with the formal letters of request, the informal request letters written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners contain the highest percentage of occurrence of sentences making requests and containing modal verbs at the beginning of paragraphs. However, this time, significant differences were found in the three comparisons (see table 4.30): TCI and LCI ($\text{Chi}^2 = 18.233$; $p < .0001$), TCI and TXTCI ($\text{Chi}^2 = 6.165$; $p < .05$) and LCI and TXTCI ($\text{Chi}^2 = 5.941$; $p < .05$). Nonetheless, the statistical figures indicate a bigger difference between the letters written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners and by the native teachers of EFL than between the letters written by these two samples and those in the B2 EFL textbooks. This results from the fact that the percentage of occurrence of sentences making requests with modal verbs which occur at the beginning of paragraphs in the B2 EFL textbooks is higher than in the informal letters written by the native teachers of EFL, but lower than in the letters written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners (see table 4.29). Moreover, the highest percentage of modal verbs in theme position at paragraph level in the informal letters written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners (see table 4.28) reconfirms the importance of the requests that contain them in text organisation, which was referred to in the analyses of the formal letters.

Following similar comparisons to the ones drawn in the previous section, the description of the requests containing modal verbs at the beginning of paragraphs in the letters written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners will be contrasted with the description of those in the letters written by the native teachers of EFL. Afterwards, the description of the requests containing modal verbs at the beginning of paragraphs in the letters written by the native teachers of EFL will be compared with those in the B2 EFL textbooks.

Section 4.5 shows that both the informal request letters written by the native teachers of EFL and the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners contain a similar but much lower percentage of occurrence of sentences making requests and containing modal verbs at the beginning of paragraphs introduced by adverbs/adverbial phrases, conjunctions or linking noun phrases heading and adding requests than the formal request letters written by the same samples: 22.3 % and 18.5 % respectively. Both samples made use of the following three items: *firstly*, *finally* and *also*. It is worth pointing out that the first two items had also been shared by the same samples in the formal letters (see *section 5.5.1*), and that the native teachers of EFL used two items that they had not used in the formal letters but that the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners had: *also* and *another thing*. The L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners, by contrast, used *to finish*, *first of all*, *to sum up* (the last one might probably be expected to be found in genres other than informal letters such as argumentative essays, for example) and the non-standard form *and other really good question* (see items with *other* and *another* in the previous section). As for the use of *also* between a modal verb and a main verb, its frequency has been lower than in the formal letters, as far as the letters written by the native teachers of EFL are concerned, and inexistent in the letters written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners.

In connection with the rest of the sentences, the letters written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners contained a much higher percentage of occurrence of affirmative statements than the letters written by the native teachers of EFL. This is in accordance with the findings discussed in *section 5.3.2*, where the percentage of occurrence of affirmative statements in the informal request letters written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners was reported to be higher (37.5 %) than the percentage of occurrence of affirmative statements in the letters written by the native teachers of EFL (12.8 %; see table 4.25). Conversely, yes/no questions were much more numerous in the letters written by the native teachers of EFL. In relation to the other request types, indirect requests with mitigating

phrases and with modal verbs and WH questions occurred in both samples of letters, while the letters written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners also reported commands, choice questions and question tags. This wider range of colligations was also discussed in *section 5.4.2*, when modal verbs in theme and in rheme position at sentence level were looked into.

As for the letters written by the B2 EFL textbooks, more important differences were observed between this sample and the letters written by the native teachers of EFL with respect to the sentences making requests and containing modal verbs in theme position at paragraph level. Indeed, the only observed items were four yes/no questions, one WH question and one command in this position.

These data indicate that, as in the formal letters, the informal request letters written by the native teachers of EFL provided a wider range of priming than those in the B2 EFL textbooks. In the previous section this was justified by the fact that the latter sample contained fewer letters than the former (eleven as against 21). In this case, the number of letters is quite close: sixteen as compared to 21. Therefore, the smaller variety of request types and the inexistence of adverbs and adverbial phrases, noun phrases or conjunctions that indicate addition of requests in the letters in the B2 EFL textbooks are an indicator of a much lower degree of complexity and less frequent use of cohesive devices in these letters as compared to those written by the teachers. However, the discussion of objective seven will shed more light on this issue.

The difference just mentioned justifies the use of letters written by NS in combination with those written in B2 EFL textbooks if a view of the whole range of requests containing modal verbs at the beginning of paragraphs is to be given to the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners. Nonetheless, as it was claimed in *section 5.5.1*, considering the wide range of request types and cumulative devices already present in the requests written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners at the beginning of paragraphs, this combination may be considered unnecessary.

Nonetheless, analyzing request letters written by NS may awaken L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners to the more frequent use of affirmative statements at the beginning of paragraphs in the letters written by them as compared to those written by the native teachers of EFL and to the higher frequency of yes/no questions in these instead. Besides, working on the letters written by the NS will provide alternatives to inadequate or nonstandard linking devices such as *to sum up* and *and other really good question*.

5.6 OBJECTIVE SIX: DISCUSSION OF MODAL VERBS AT TEXT LEVEL IN REQUEST LETTERS

Chapter one indicated that objective six consisted in comparing the position of modal verbs at text level in requests in a set of letters written by a sample of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners, by a sample of native teachers of EFL and in a sample of B2 EFL textbooks.

In relation to the research questions corresponding to this objective, the first two were where modal verbs in requests are placed at text level in the formal and in the informal letters of request written in the sample of B2 EFL textbooks; and how the position of modal verbs in requests at text level in the letters written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners compared with the same position of modal verbs in the letters in the other two samples. The next two questions enquired into the number of formal and of informal letters containing modal verbs in requests in the first paragraph in the set of letters written by the sample of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners, by the sample of native teachers of EFL and in the sample of B2 EFL textbooks; as well as into how these figures compared. The last question looked into differences in the colligation of modal verbs in requests in the first paragraphs.

Section 5.6.1 will deal with these issues with respect to the formal letters, while *section 5.6.2* will centre on the informal ones.

5.6.1 DISCUSSION OF MODAL VERBS AT TEXT LEVEL IN THE FORMAL REQUEST LETTERS

Table 4.31 indicated that 85.7 % of the formal letters written by the native teachers of EFL contained modal verbs in requests in the first paragraph as compared to 51.2 % of the formal letters written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners and 36.4 % of the letters written in the B2 EFL textbooks. Table 4.32 revealed significant differences in the three comparisons. Table 4.33 added that the formal letters written by the native teachers of EFL contained the highest percentage of occurrence of modal verbs in theme position at text level, though the difference between TCF and LCF is very small (38.5 % and 35.7 % respectively). This shows that more letters written by the native teachers of EFL contain modal verbs in the first paragraph of letters than letters written by L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners, but that the percentage of occurrence of modal verbs in the first paragraph of letters is similar in both sets of letters. This concludes that more teachers of EFL than L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners used modals in this position.

As for the colligations of modal verbs, different types have been identified. See table 5.10.

Table 5.10
Modal verb colligations in theme position at text level in requests in formal request letters

Modal verb colligations	TCF	LCF	TXTCF
	%	%	%
Head affirmative statements	37.9	56.5	58.4
Before verbs in yes/no questions	27	6.5	
Clauses after verbs	21.6	10.8	25
Before verbs in choice questions	5.4		
Before verbs in WH questions	2.7	2.2	
Head clause of reason	2.7	8.7	
Head clause of purpose	2.7		
Relative clause in a noun phrase which is not inside another clause after a verb		8.7	
Head clause of result		2.2	
<i>If</i> clause		2.2	
<i>If</i> clause after an adjective		2.2	8.3
Head clause of time			8.3
Total	100	100	100

It may be observed that the letters written by the native teachers of EFL contain a wider range of modal verb colligations than the ones in the B2 EFL textbooks. This was also observed in the discussion of modal verbs in theme position at sentence level in the formal letters (see *section 5.4.1*) as well as of modal verbs in theme position at paragraph level (see *section 5.5.1*). This may

stem from the fact that TXTCF is comprised of eleven letters while TCF of 21 (see *section 5.5.1*).

It is also interesting to underline the higher percentage of occurrence of modals heading affirmative statements in requests in theme position at text level in the letters written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners as compared to those written by the native teachers of EFL. When modal verbs at sentence level in request letters were dealt with, it was revealed that the formal letters written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners also contained a higher percentage of occurrence of modal verbs heading affirmative statements than the formal letters written by the native teachers of EFL throughout the letters (see *section 5.4.1*).

This higher percentage of occurrence of modals heading affirmative statements in requests in theme position at text level in the letters written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners (56.5 %) matches an also high percentage of occurrence in the letters in the B2 EFL textbooks (58.4 %; see table 5.10). The same phenomenon was observed in the discussion of modal verbs in theme position at sentence level in the formal letters (see *section 5.4.1*).

All these data lead to the impression that, firstly, the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners' exposure to text written by NS as far as formal request letters are concerned will provide a wider range of primings as regards the modal verb colligations in which modal verbs occur in the first paragraph of letters. Besides, it is also worth discussing why the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners resort to modal verbs heading affirmative statements to a further extent than the native teachers of EFL. Three reasons may be put forward.

The first one is lack of primings (Hoey, 2005). Indeed, it would seem that B2 EFL textbooks do not provide a substantial amount of primings as far as complete formal letters of request are concerned. However, they do provide tools, such as lexico-grammatical features, for writing these letters (see *section 3.2*). What is more, priming of yes/no questions is supposed to be received by L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners since the very early stages of EFL learning, even though they used

them in requests with modals in the first paragraph of letters less often than the native teachers of EFL (27 % and 6.5 % respectively). Nonetheless, if primings are genre-specific (Hoey, 2005, see *section 1.1.1*), writing effective request letters in a native-like way does not depend on knowing how to build a certain list of prefabricated lexical items to be used in requests, but on where and how to do it at paragraph and text level (see *Introduction, section 2.14* and *section 2.15*). These primings might be missing.

The second reason is the fact that L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners might still feel safer using the collocations *I + would*, *I + need* and *I + want* (see *sections 5.3.2* and *5.2.2.2*) than employing the inverted order of interrogations in English. This may result from the fact that word order in questions in English differs from word order in questions in Spanish. Indeed, in Spanish, word order in yes/no questions does not differ from word order in affirmative statements. Furthermore, WH questions in Spanish do not require any auxiliary verbs such as *do*, *does* or *did*. Indeed, the findings of this thesis have revealed that L1 Spanish EFL learners may still find problems constructing questions using standard word order at B2 level (see *sections 5.2.1.2, 5.2.2.2, 5.3.3, and 5.4.1*).

The third reason derives from cultural differences. In *section 2.10*, it was explained that because L1 English speakers place emphasis on negative face when making requests (Díaz Pérez, 2002), i.e. they regard requests as threatening demands that require politeness strategies to minimise them (Blum-Kulka, 1996), they “[...] prefer more elaborate interrogative sentences which involve the use of modal verbs” (Díaz Pérez, 2002: 271). By contrast, the fact that L1 Spanish speakers emphasise positive face, i.e. the desire that other speakers also ask for the same request and/or that they carry it out, they are more direct (Díaz Pérez, 2002). This might make them focus on the *I + would + like*, *I + need + to + know* or *I want + to + know* request collocations rather than on questions or on indirect requests with mitigating phrases and with modal verbs (see tables 5.10 and 4.22 and *section 5.3.3*). Indeed, table 5.10 shows a higher percentage of

occurrence of clauses after verbs in the letters written by the native teachers of EFL (21.6 %) than in the letters written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners (10.8 %): half of them occur in indirect requests with mitigating phrases and with modal verbs in the letters written by the former sample, but none of them do in the latter.

5.6.2 DISCUSSION OF MODAL VERBS AT TEXT LEVEL IN THE INFORMAL REQUEST LETTERS

Table 4.31 indicated that the percentage of informal letters containing modal verbs in requests in the first paragraph in the set of letters written by the native teachers of EFL and by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners was very similar (57.1 % and 53.6 % respectively). Nonetheless, the B2 EFL textbooks contained a much lower percentage (18.8 %). Table 4.32 confirmed, as expected, significant differences in the TXTCI/TCI and TXTCI/LCI comparisons, but not in the TCI/LCI one. This reveals that more formal letters written by the native teachers of EFL and in the B2 EFL textbooks contain modal verbs in the first paragraph of letters than informal letters, whereas a similar number of formal and of informal letters written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners do so. Table 4.33 added that the letters written by the native teachers of EFL contain a higher percentage of modal verbs in theme position at text level (44.4 %) than the letters written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners (33.9 %) and the B2 EFL textbooks (28 %).

Table 5.11 reveals the modal verb colligations in requests in the first paragraph of the informal letters.

Table 5.11
Modal verb colligations in theme position at text level in requests in informal request letters

Modal verb colligations	TCI	LCI	TXTCI
	%	%	%
Before verbs in WH questions	27.3	18.2	14
Before verbs in yes/no questions	18.1	15	29
Clauses after verbs	22.7	22.6	29
Head affirmative statements	20.4	23.2	14
Before verbs in choice questions	6.9	3.2	
Head clause of result	2.3	3.2	
Head clause of purpose	2.3		
Relative clause in a noun phrase which is not inside another clause after a verb		8.2	
Head clause of time		1.6	
Head clause of reason		1.6	
<i>If</i> clause		1.6	14
After an adjective in an <i>if</i> clause		1.6	
Total	100	100	100

Adding up modal verbs before verbs in WH questions, in yes/no questions and in choice questions, table 5.11 shows that the native teachers of EFL used a higher percentage of modal verbs in interrogative requests (52.3 %) than the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners (36.4 %) and the B2 EFL textbooks (43 %), as occurred

in the formal letters. Nonetheless, as opposed to what happened in the formal letters, similar percentages of modals heading affirmative statements and in clauses after verbs have been observed in the letters written by the native teachers of EFL and by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners. In the case of modals in clauses after verbs, as in the formal letters, they occurred more often in indirect requests with mitigating phrases and with modal verbs in the letters written by the former than in the letters written by the latter (30 % as compared to 9 % respectively).

As in the formal letters as well, the L1 Spanish EFL learners used a variety of modal verb colligations which the native teachers of EFL never did: modals in relative clauses in a noun phrase which is not inside another clause after a verb, heading a clause of time, a clause of reason, in an *if* clause and in an *if* clause after an adjective. It is worth remembering that modals in relative clauses in a noun phrase which is not inside another clause after a verb, in an *if* clause, in an *if* clause after an adjective had also been observed in the formal letters written by the sample of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners, but not in the ones written by the native teachers of EFL (see table 5.10). In *section 5.4.1*, higher frequencies of these modal verb colligations in rheme position at sentence level were observed in the formal request letters written by L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners, and it was suggested that this was further evidence of wordy style in the requests written by the L1 Spanish EFL learners.

Table 5.11 also shows a few more modal verb colligations in the letters written by the teachers than in the letters written in the B2 EFL textbooks: they contain modal verbs before verbs in choice questions and heading a clause of result and of purpose. Nonetheless, it must be pointed out that the real difference in modal verb colligational priming lies in the lower frequency of modal verbs in requests in theme position at text level between the two samples (TCI = 44; TXTCI = 7, see table 4.33). This brings back the idea of exploiting NS' writing in class to increase EFL learners' exposure to modal verb colligations in the first

paragraph of request letters, which is so important as to the first impressions requests may have on the reader.

Finally, it would be interesting to remark that the percentage of occurrence of modal verbs heading affirmative statements in requests in theme position at text level in the formal letters written by/in the three samples has been much higher than in the informal letters (see tables 5.10 and 5.11), which may indicate a noticeable difference between the formal request letters and the informal ones in that the latter bear a more interrogative style while the former a more affirmative or categorical one as far as the strength of the requests are concerned. Indeed, the same finding may be observed in tables 5.6 and 5.8, where modal verbs in theme position at sentence level in the formal request letters head affirmative statements much more frequently than in the informal ones throughout the letters.

5.7 OBJECTIVE SEVEN: DISCUSSION OF COHESIVE CHAINS CONTAINING MODAL VERBS AND USED IN REQUESTS IN REQUEST LETTERS

Chapter one explained that objective seven consisted in comparing the frequencies of cohesive chains containing modal verbs and used in requests in a set of formal and of informal letters of request written by a sample of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners with the frequencies of cohesive chains containing modal verbs and used in requests in a set of formal and of informal letters of request written by a sample of native teachers of EFL and in a sample of B2 EFL textbooks.

As for the research questions, the first one was to find out if there were cohesive devices, more specifically cohesive chains, containing modal verbs and used in requests in the formal and in the informal letters of request written by the native teachers of EFL and in the ones in the sample of B2 EFL textbooks. The second question asked if this was so in the formal and in the informal letters

written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners. The last question enquired into which they were and into how their frequencies of occurrence compared.

Section 5.7.1 will deal with the formal request letters while *section 5.7.2* will do so with the informal ones.

5.7.1 COHESIVE CHAINS CONTAINING MODAL VERBS AND USED IN REQUESTS IN THE FORMAL REQUEST LETTERS

Almost 67 % of the formal letters written by the native teachers of EFL were found to contain chains that consist of the repetition of modal verb patterns to make requests. In the formal letters written in the B2 EFL textbooks, this happened in almost 64 % of the letters whereas, in the letters written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners, it did in about 46 % of them. This difference may partly be explained by the fact that the letters written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners contained, on average, fewer modal verbs than the letters written by the other two samples (see tables 4.10 and 4.11.a) or by L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners' incomplete awareness of the importance of modal verbs in requests to add cohesion.

Table 5.12 shows the percentage of occurrence of the chains that consist of the repetition of modal verb patterns to make requests in the three samples of formal letters.

Table 5.12
Percentage of occurrence of chains that consist of the repetition of modal verb patterns to make requests in the formal request letters

Cohesive Chains	TCF	LCF	TXTCF
	%	%	%
<i>I + would + verb</i>	42	84.2	37.5
<i>I + 'd + verb</i>	10.5	10.5	
<i>Can + you (please) + verb</i>	10.5		
<i>could + you (also/please) + verb</i>	16		
<i>will</i> in a succession of WH questions	5.25	5.3	
<i>would</i> heading questions	5.25		
<i>I + would + be</i> adjective	5.25		12.5
<i>(if) + you + could</i>	5.25		37.5
<i>Would</i> in a nominal clause as direct object of the verb <i>know</i>			12.5
Total	100	100	100

Table 5.12 adds further data to corroborate the main trends established by the findings that have been discussed so far.

To begin with, the wider range of options provided by the letters written by the native teachers of EFL (see *sections 5.4.1* and *5.6.1*). In this case, they provide five more alternatives for the creation of cohesive chains containing modals in requests than the letters in the B2 EFL textbooks. These alternatives are *I + 'd + verb*, *can + you (please) + verb*, *could + you (also/please) + verb*, *will* in a succession of WH questions and *would* heading questions.

As for *can + you (please)*, *section 5.2.2.1* indicated that this collocation had never occurred in the letters written in the B2 EFL textbooks or in the letters written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners. In relation to *could + you (also/please) + verb*, the same section discussed its smaller frequency in the letters written in the B2 EFL textbooks and by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners than in those written by the native teachers of EFL. As regards the absence of chains consisting in the repetition of the pattern *I + 'd + verb* in the letters written in the B2 EFL textbooks, this is explained by the fact that *'d* never occurred in the formal letters written in them.

Secondly, it is worth highlighting the weight that *I + would + verb* has in the conveyance of requests in the formal letters written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners. This is further evidence of the sample of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners' big reliance on affirmative statements in requests for information discussed in the frequencies of prefabricated lexical items containing modal verbs and used in requests in the formal request letters in *section 5.3.2*, in the frequencies of lexical items without modal verbs in the formal request letters in *section 5.3.3* and in the discussion of modal verbs in theme position at sentence level (see *section 5.4.1*) and at text level (see *section 5.6.1*) in the formal request letters as well.

L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners' working on the cohesive devices containing modal verbs in the formal letters written by the native teachers of EFL is of crucial interest owing to the different possibilities they offer to create cohesion by means of chains of repeated patterns containing modal verbs. These chains of repeated patterns would counteract the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners' dependence on affirmative statements to make requests that was already referred to in the discussion of the frequencies of the verb collocates of modal verbs (see *section 5.2.2.2*) and of the frequencies of the prefabricated lexical items containing modal verbs and used in requests (see *section 5.3.2*).

5.7.2 COHESIVE CHAINS CONTAINING MODAL VERBS AND USED IN REQUESTS IN THE INFORMAL REQUEST LETTERS

About 62 % of the informal letters written by the native teachers of EFL contained modal verbs in cohesive devices in requests. In the sample of informal letters written in the B2 EFL textbooks, this occurred in almost 19 % of all the letters. As for the letters written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners, around 56 % of them comprised modal verbs in cohesive devices in requests. This differs from the formal letters, where the percentage of the letters written by the native teachers of EFL which contained chains that consisted of the repetition of modal verb patterns to make requests was much higher than that of the letters written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners.

Table 5.13 shows the percentage of occurrence of the chains that consist of the repetition of modal verb patterns to make requests in the three samples of informal letters.

Table 5.13
Percentage of occurrence of chains that consist of the repetition of modal verb patterns to make requests in the informal request letters

Cohesive Chains	TCI	LCI	TXTCI
	%	%	%
<i>(WH word) + (noun phrase) + do you think</i>	31		
<i>+ clause containing a modal verb</i>			
<i>let me know + clause containing a modal verb</i>	7.5		
<i>can + you + verb</i>	23		
<i>should + I + verb</i>	31	3.6	
<i>WH word + would + be...</i>	7.5		
<i>I + would + verb (not the verb to be)</i>		25	33.4
<i>I + 'd + verb</i>			33.4
<i>will + clause</i>			33.2
<i>could + you + verb</i>		21	
<i>you+ could + verb</i>		3.6	
<i>could + I + verb</i>		3.6	
<i>I + could + verb</i>		3.6	
<i>must + I + verb with I + must + verb</i>		3.6	
<i>I + should + verb</i>		7.2	
<i>can + I + verb</i>		10.8	
<i>I + can + verb</i>		7.2	
<i>we + can + verb</i>		3.6	
<i>will + I + verb</i>		3.6	
<i>will + we + verb</i>		3.6	
Total	100	100	100

As in the formal letters, the informal letters written by the native teachers of EFL provide alternative options to the ones given by the B2 EFL textbooks as far as chains of repeated patterns containing modal verbs are concerned. These are *(WH word) + (noun phrase) + do you think + clause containing a modal verb, let me know + clause containing a modal verb, can + you + verb, should + I + verb* and *WH word + would + be*.

As for the first two chains, in the discussion of the verb collocates of modal verbs in the informal request letters in *section 5.2.1.2*, the necessity to combine NS' letters with those in B2 EFL textbooks to add to L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners' "ready-made lists of collocations" was discussed. At that point, the use of *should + verb* in nominal clauses after *let me know* or *do you think* was mentioned. Besides, when the frequencies of prefabricated lexical items containing modal verbs and used in requests in the informal letters was dealt with in *section 5.3.2*, the repetition of the pattern *(WH word) + (noun phrase) + do you think + clause containing I should* was given to illustrate the higher degree of complexity of the questions occurring more than twice and containing modal verbs in the letters written by the NS than in those written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners. What is more, in *section 5.3.1*, *what clothes do you think I should...* and *where do you think I should...* were cited as two of the ten interrogative prefabricated lexical items that occurred twice or more times in requests in the informal letters written by the native teachers of EFL as opposed to none in the letters written in the B2 EFL textbooks. In the same section, it was observed that *let me know + clause containing a modal verb* occurred twice in both the letters written by the native teachers of EFL and in the B2 EFL textbooks, but only in the former did it appear in a chain. It may be observed that the repetition of prefabricated lexical items in request letters does not happen per se, but owing to the writers' intentions to liaise requests. Similar observations may be made in the discussion of the chains that follow.

Regarding *can + you + verb*, in *section 5.2.1.1* it was pointed out that this modal verb collocation occurred much more often in TCI (f = 10; 34.5 % of all the collocates of *can*, see table 4.15.a) than in TXTCI (f = 2; 10 % of all the collocates of *can*) or in LCI (f = 4; 10 % of all the collocates of *can*). The present section shows this is due to its being used repeatedly in chains made up of the repetition of patterns containing modal verbs in requests for information in the letters written by the native teachers of EFL. In *section 5.3.2*, it was also shown that *can + you* occurred in prefabricated lexical items happening more than twice in the letters written by the native of EFL, while it never did in the letters written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners. Furthermore, this ties up with the beginning of this research, the frequencies of modal verbs. *Section 5.1.3* highlighted the fact that the native teachers of EFL and the B2 EFL textbooks preferred *can* to *could* (2.4:1 and 3.5:1 respectively), whereas it was the other way around for the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners: these preferred *could* to *can* at a ratio of 1.18:1. It is also interesting to remark that *can + you (please) + verb* was also used in chains in the formal request letters (see table 5.12). These analyses show that starting with the study of lexico-grammatical features, as in this case the frequencies of modal verbs and of their collocates, and finishing with that of cohesion lead to the conclusion that it is the latter that determines the choice of the former. They also add to the importance of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners' working on whole pieces of writing when learning to write request letters, as observed in *sections 5.1.1* and *5.4.1*. More illustrations of these statements will follow.

The use of *should + I + verb* in the letters written by the native teachers of EFL is also a very interesting case with respect to how the existence of collocations may be explained by the role they play in the cohesion of text. In the discussion of the frequencies of modal verb forms in *section 5.1.3*, it was explained that *should* had occurred 2.47 times more often in the letters written by the native teachers of EFL than in the ones written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners, and 3.88 times more often than in the letters written in the B2 EFL

textbooks. Moreover, in the frequencies of the collocates of modal verbs in section 5.2.1.1, *should + I* was reported to be more frequent than *should + verb* in the letters written by the native teachers of EFL (f = 18; 55 % of all the collocates of *should* and f = 13; 39 % of all the collocates of *should* respectively), whereas it was the other way around in the letters written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners (*should + verb*: f = 15; 60 % of all the collocates of *should*; *should + I*: f = 9; 36 % of all the collocates of *should*) and in the letters written in the B2 EFL textbooks, where *should + verb* occurred four times (58 % of all the collocates of *should*) and *should + I* never did. Indeed, the high frequency of occurrence of *should + I* in TCI and *should + verb* in LCI may be explained by the high percentage of occurrence of these patterns in chains in requests (see table 5.13).

The explanation of *WH word + would + be* connects with the fact brought to light in the discussion of the collocates of modal verbs in section 5.2.1.1. This section explained that *would + like*, *would + verb* and *would + be* had occurred in the letters written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners and in the B2 EFL textbooks, whereas only *would + be* had occurred in the letters written by the native teachers of EFL. Section 5.2.1.2 added that the frequencies of *would + be* were almost equivalent in the letters written by the native teachers of EFL and in the B2 EFL textbooks, whereas they were lower than expected in the letters written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners (see table 4.18.b). Therefore, the following suggestion may be put forward. If words and/or collocations are often repeated in a sample of text of the same genre written by the same writer/group of writers, but they are not or they are but to a much lesser extent in another sample of text of the same genre written by another writer/group of writers, a possible explanation of this gap should start at the analyses of cohesion in both samples.

The occurrence of modal verbs in chains of repeated patterns containing modal verbs in requests in the letters written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners also deserves interesting comments. The most frequent chain contained *I + would + verb (not the verb to be)*. The weight of the verb *would* in the informal letters

written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners was discussed in *section 5.1.3*, where it was observed that the frequency of this modal in the EFL learners' informal letters was higher than in the informal letters written by the native teachers of EFL and in the B2 EFL textbooks ($f = 8,224$; $f = 3,521$ and $f = 2,991$ respectively). When the collocates were added to the discussion in *section 5.2.1.1*, it was remarked that the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners made a more frequent use of *would + like* as compared to the native teachers of EFL and in the B2 EFL textbooks ($f = 21$, 49 % of all the collocates of *would*; $f = 0$; and $f = 1$, 12.5 % of all the collocates of *would* respectively). In *section 5.3.2*, the high frequency of *I + would + like* in the informal letters written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners was explained by the use of prefabricated lexical items containing this modal verb twice or more times on eleven occasions as compared to none in the other two samples. This may also be linked to the high frequency of occurrence of modal verbs in affirmative statements in theme position at sentence level (see table 5.8). Indeed, as explained in *section 3.1*, methodological triangulation makes it possible to give broad descriptive accounts and see the same phenomenon from different angles. It would seem that word frequencies, collocations, colligations and cohesion are all illustrative facets of writers' primings in a specific genre, which, at the same time, emerge from L1 primings, L2 primings and culturally-dependent ideological ones. These can be defined as the writer's belief in writing what is the right thing in a specific communicative situation. Therefore, based on this premise, it is assumed that second languages should not be taught without taking the learner's L1 primings and culturally-dependent ideological ones into account. Indeed, based on the findings of the present study, it would be interesting for L2 Spanish B2 EFL learners not only to know why NS write requests in a certain way, but also to reflect upon how this differs cross-linguistically and cross-culturally from L1 Spanish.

In table 5.13, it was shown that the chains containing the verb *could* occur only in the letters written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners (*could + you + verb*, *you + could + verb*, *could + I + verb* and *I + could + verb*). The high frequency of *could* in the letters written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners (f = 7,832) as compared to that in the letters written by the native teachers of EFL (f = 3,521) and in the B2 EFL textbooks (f = 1,994) was observed in *section 5.1.3*. As for *could + you* and *could + I* in particular, in *section 5.2.1.1* it was shown that the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners used the former more often than the latter (f = 16; 40 % of all the collocates of *could* and f = 4; 10 % of all the collocates of *could*), whereas only *could + you* occurred in the other two samples, but much less frequently (f = 2; 20 % of all the collocates of *could* in TCI; and f = 1; 25 % of all the collocates of *could* in TXTCI). It is worth remarking that, in spite of the low frequencies of *could + I* in the letters written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners, it is still part of a chain (see table 5.13). Table 5.5 indicates in which interrogative prefabricated lexical items *could + you* occurs.

The use of *will + I + verb* and *will + we + verb* in cohesive chains was dealt with in the analyses of table 5.5 in *section 5.3.2*. There, it was explained that the repetition of these collocations is due to the high frequency of *will* in the informal request letters written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners. Indeed, *section 5.1.3* revealed that they used *will* 2.38 times more often than the native teachers of EFL and 3.69 times more often than the B2 EFL textbooks. *Section 5.3.2* added the fact that the use of *will* in requests for information was mixed up with that in predictions (see examples 4.290 and 4.291). Emphasis should be placed, therefore, in differentiating *will*, *shall* and *to be going to* when L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners learn to write requests.

As for the occurrence of *I + should + verb*, as explained above in this section, the high percentage of occurrence of *should + verb* in all the occurrences of *should* in the letters written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners (60 %) may be due to an attempt to achieve cohesion in the organisation of requests.

The also high percentage of occurrence of *can + I* in chains in the letters written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners could have been anticipated in the discussion of the frequencies of the collocates of modal verbs in the informal letters (see *section 5.2.1.1*), as, at that point, it was pointed out that the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners used the collocation *can + I* (f = 10; 25 % of all the collocates of *can*) more frequently than the B2 EFL textbooks (0 % of all the collocates of *can*) and the native teachers of EFL (f = 3; 10.5 % of all the collocates of *can*). Besides, in the discussion of the frequencies of prefabricated lexical items containing modal verbs and used in requests in the informal letters (see *section 5.3.2*), the following were proved to occur two times in the corpus of informal letters written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners: *which places can I visit?*, *can I stay at your place?* and *how can I get there?*. The argument that collocations may be explained partly by the role they play in cohesion may account for the preference of the native teachers of EFL for *can + you* over *can + I* as opposed to the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners, as observed in *section 5.2.1.1*. Indeed, this section demonstrates that they both play an important role in the organisation of requests in both samples of letters. However, if collocations are also explained by culturally-dependent ideological priming as suggested above, it could also be argued that if the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners overused *could* in the informal letters as compared to the other two samples since they see it more tentative than *can* (see *section 5.1.3*), then it may have happened they felt more comfortable using *can* when referring to themselves (*can + I*) than when talking about the addressee's accomplishment of a request, in which case *could* was used to convey more distance (*could + you*). By contrast, the native teachers of EFL had no problem using *can + you* in informal requests (see table 5.13).

As for the remaining patterns, in the letters written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners, *I + can + verb* and *we + can + verb* in cohesive chains explain partly the high frequency of the collocation *can + verb* in the letters written by them (see table 4.15.a in *chapter four*). It is also evidence of non standard word order

in the questions written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learner, which was referred to in *sections 5.2.1.2 and 5.2.2.2*. However, no matter the wrong word order, it may be that *can* is still being used in request with the first person (*I* and *we*) for the reasons alluded to in the previous paragraph.

Finally, *section 4.7* spotted a series of movements that, through encapsulation and prospection, explain requests. These consisted of two: affirmative statements that explain a request which contains one or more modal verbs and affirmative statements containing one or more modal verbs that explain a request which does not comprise any modal verbs. Table 5.14 shows the percentage of letters in which either of them occurs in the six corpora.

Table 5.14
Percentages of letters in which movements occur

	TCF	LCF	TXTCF	TCI	LCI	TXTCI
1.	14.3	14.6	72.7	57.1	48.8	62.5
2.	4.8	4.9	0	14.3	17.1	31.3

1. Affirmative statements that explain a request which contains one or more modal verbs. 2. Affirmative statements containing one or more modal verbs that explain a request which does not comprise any modal verbs.

Table 5.14 shows that, in all the corpora, there are more letters containing affirmative statements that explain a request which contains one or more modal verbs than letters having affirmative statements containing one or more modal verbs that explain a request which does not comprise any modal verbs. Table 5.14 also reveals that, except for the formal letters in the B2 EFL textbooks, both types of movements are more frequent in the informal letters than in the formal ones. This may be due to the fact that informal letters have a more personal tone and consist of more familiar information than formal letters, which makes it possible to justify the writers' requests.

Concerning the high percentage of formal request letters in the B2 EFL textbooks carrying affirmative statements that explain a request which contains one or more modal verbs, it could be argued that this could simply be explained by the fact that the native teachers of EFL and the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners were allowed to write a definite number of requests in a limited number of sentences, while the textbook writers were given no restrictions as far as length is concerned. Nonetheless, the native teachers of EFL and the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners were also given a sentence limit to write a definite number of requests in the informal letters. Besides, they were required to write a similar number of requests in either register. *Section 5.1.1* explained the longer request letters in TXTCF by a combination of three factors: more requests per letters than in TXTCI, more indirect requests with mitigating phrases with or without modal verbs than in LCF, TCI, LCI and TXTCI, and the fact that the textbook writers may have been free to incorporate as much background information in their formal request letters as they felt it was necessary, even more than in the informal letters. Another reason may be added at this point. The letters in the B2 EFL textbooks justify requests containing modal verbs more often than the other samples.

Based on the information discussed in this section, which has revisited discussions of other sections, it may be concluded that, first, the letters written by the native teachers of EFL come in handy at the time of presenting alternative chains that, through repetition of modal verb patterns, add cohesion to the organization of requests, as concluded with respect to the formal letters in *section 5.7.1*. Second, that these alternative chains are really useful because, also as discussed in the previous section, L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners' reliance on chains containing *I + would + verb* has been reconfirmed. Additional chains to create cohesion by means of repeated patterns containing modal verbs would give L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners more tools to add variety to their letters. Nonetheless, this variety may be considered unnecessary considering that, as shown in table

5.13, the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners provided the widest one. Nonetheless, if the confusion of the use of *will* in predictions and in requests in *will + we + verb* and in *will + I + verb*, the non standard word order in questions containing *I + can + verb*, the overuse of *could* and *would* and the total absence of chains used by the native teachers of EFL ((*WH word*) + (*noun phrase*) + *do you think + clause containing a modal verb*, *can + you + verb* and *should + I + verb*) in the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners' informal letters were taken into account, then it would be considered that the following two recommendations might be useful. Firstly, that the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners analyse and account for the incorporation of additional chains that, through repetition of patterns containing modal verbs, may add variety to the cohesive structure of their letters. Secondly, that the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners analyse their chains which have shown deviations with a view to explaining why these deviations have occurred.

5.8 CORPORA AND CORPUS LINGUISTICS METHODOLOGY IN EFL RESEARCH: CONCLUSIVE FINDINGS AND THEORY

When presenting the corpus linguistics methodology adopted in this study in *chapter two (section 2.1)*, it was explained that the corpus-based approach to language analysis had been selected since the research objectives of this study stemmed from general assumptions based on previous research findings. These were:

1. EFL textbooks provide shortcuts for priming EFL learners that may simplify the language taught and, consequently, give a partial description of NS' primings.
2. Modality is a difficult learning area for EFL learners.
3. EFL learners use English modal verbs differently from L1 English speakers.

Further findings in these areas have been obtained in this study and were discussed in the previous sections. These findings are based on data gathered using genre-specific corpora (letters of request). The comparisons of genre-specific learner corpora, textbook corpora and NS' corpora made it possible to deal with the three problems stated above. Indeed, the analyses of *lexis* (the frequencies and collocations of modal verbs in the three samples of letters of request), of *text* (the role of modal verbs in the text-pattern and the structural interpretation of the same letters) and of *register* (*lexis* and *text* in the samples of formal letters of request and *lexis* and *text* in the samples of informal letters of request) using Bhatia's model have been very data-productive.

In addition, the relatively small size of these corpora also allowed the combination of quantitative analyses, such as those of the frequencies of modal verbs and of modal verb collocations, with qualitative ones, such as those that established links between the modal verb colligations used by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners and the cultural factors involved in the conveyance of requests in Spanish. As cited in *section 1.7* in *chapter one*, "It is not the size of a study which necessarily determines its relevance or importance for language teaching. Even a small study can reveal aspects of language use which could be the basis for whole new directions in research and language teaching" (Kennedy, 1992: 356). This study has not built whole new directions in research or in language teaching, but it is, indeed, relevant to language teaching. It may be stated, then, that corpus linguistics methodology made it possible to depart from the three premises recited above to arrive at very practical and hands-on pedagogical implications.

The sections discussed so far have given clear evidence of what aspects of requests in letters of request L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners would have to work on if problems in their letters similar to the ones that have been identified so far arose. As cited in *section 2.4*, "Corpus linguistics has held potential relevance for the teaching of languages because responsible language teaching involves selecting what it is worth giving attention to" (Kennedy, 1992: 335). Indeed, even

though the *Introduction* advanced that the main objective of this research was to compare modal verb primings in a set of formal and of informal letters of request written by a sample of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners, a sample of native teachers of EFL, and in a sample of B2 EFL textbooks, i.e. whether the sample of B2 EFL textbooks provides a significant number of modal verb primings in letters of request, whether these modal verb primings differ from those that appear in the NS' letters and whether the sample of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners are sufficiently primed to sound native-like when using modals in their letters, *chapter one* clarified that the most important part of these analyses is their pedagogical implications, and that this study would aim at answering two key questions relevant to using modal verbs in formal and in informal letters of request: what to teach and why. However, before dealing with these two questions, a few remarks need to be made in section 5.9.

5.9 LIMITATIONS AND ASSUMPTIONS OF THE STUDY: CONCLUSIVE FINDINGS AND THEORY

Based on the limitations and the assumptions established in *chapter one*, the following remarks will be made.

First, in the *Limitations of the study* in *section 1.7*, it was presumed that findings would be obtained from small samples of letters written in the B2 EFL textbooks and from a sample of slightly larger sample of letters written by L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners and natives teacher of EFL. In actual fact, this is what happened. The comparisons of these corpora revealed that, due to the small size of the textbook samples of letters and to the larger size of the ones written by the native teachers of EFL, the latter offered a wide variety of options for EFL learners to employ as regards modal verb collocations, modal verb colligations at sentence and text level, and cohesion at paragraph level and throughout the entire letters. At the same time, owing to inaccuracies in L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners'

requests stemming, in part, from wrong word order in interrogative requests and wordy colligations, it has been proposed that they study the use of prefabricated lexical items with modal verbs in requests at sentence, paragraph and text level in letters written not only in textbooks, but also by NS using DDL methodology. However, as explained in *section 2.6*, L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners are not supposed to get absorbed in complex analyses such as the ones presented in this research, but consider some of the points raised in it.

Second, also in the *Limitations of the study* in *section 1.7*, it was said that the fact that the teachers that composed the sample of native teachers of EFL were of different nationalities would affect the choice of modal verbs and patterns they would use in their letters. At the same time, it was also explained that this variety would also have occurred if teachers of the same nationality had been chosen, as regional differences within countries exist. It is actually impossible to say to what extent these varieties have had an influence on the findings. No matter what this influence was, interesting trends have been observed in the letters written by the native teachers of EFL. Moreover, differences between the range of primings offered by the letters in the B2 EFL textbooks and the letters written by the native teachers of EFL, as well as clear gaps in the usage of modal verbs between the letters written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners and by the native teachers of EFL have been identified.

Third, as opposed to what was assumed in *section 1.6, Assumptions of the study*, the native teachers of EFL did not seem to be primed by the letters written in the B2 EFL textbooks. Much to the contrary, as it was also assumed in the same section, the primings of the letters written by the native teachers of EFL were more complex than the ones of the letters written in the B2 EFL textbooks. In *section 1.6*, this was explained as a result of the fact that the authors of B2 EFL textbooks wrote letters to be read by NNS, whereas the native teachers of EFL addressed their letters to other NS, and, thus, were not required to simplify the linguistic devices employed as both sender and addressee were meant to have a

similar command of the language. Therefore, the triangular letter comparisons have confirmed that EFL textbooks provide shortcuts for priming EFL learners that may simplify the language taught and, consequently, give a partial description of NS' primings.

Finally, in *section 1.7* it was also argued that the content of the letters written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners and by the native teachers of EFL was expected to be similar, as it was based on the information given by the same set of instructions, whereas that of the letters written in the B2 EFL textbooks would be thought to differ as a result of their being set in other contexts and situations and presented with pedagogical intentions. Furthermore, it was also suggested that differences in the text-pattern, the structural interpretation and the use of collocations and of prefabricated lexical items in requests were meant to exist between the formal and the informal request letters written in the B2 EFL textbooks and by the native teachers of EFL and by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners, the confirmation of which was an important goal of this study. In effect, cross corpora differences were observed in the discussion of each objective presented so far. Their pedagogical implications will be discussed further below.

5.10 MODAL VERBS AND MODAL VERB USE: CONCLUSIVE FINDINGS AND THEORY

As re-stated above, one of the problems that gave origin to this thesis was that EFL learners use English modal verbs differently from L1 English speakers.

In the *Theoretical Background*, it was explained that, in Mason's (2007) and Lambert's (1995) studies, the targeted EFL learners employed fewer modals than the targeted NS. In Camiciottoli's (2004) research on modals in lectures, it was revealed that *can* and *will* were the most frequent modal verbs in the lectures given by an Italian speaker, a German speaker, a Spanish speaker and two British speakers, while the frequencies of *may* and *would* were higher in the lectures

given by the two British speakers. In Dafouz et al's (2007) research on lecturing by L1 Spanish speakers in English, *we + will* and *we + can* were the most frequent modal verb clusters. With respect to modal verb frequencies in essays in Neff et al's (2003) research, the frequencies of *can* in essays written by L1 Spanish EFL learners were 1.5 times higher than in essays written by L1 English American students, whereas the frequencies of *could*, *may* and *might* were 1.35 times, 2.6 times and three times higher in the essays written by the latter group. In discussion forums, Montero et al (2007) demonstrated that the most frequent modals in the messages written by the Spanish users in English were *can* and *will*.

As for requests in particular, in *section 2.8*, it was suggested that comparing modal verb primings in the formal and in the informal letters of request written by the sample of native teachers of EFL, of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners and in B2 EFL textbooks would provide useful conclusions for EFL teaching with respect to how modality is expressed in each register in each sample. Indeed, it was observed that the use of past modals creates “[...] a larger psychological distance between the speaker and hearer, and is therefore less direct and more polite” (Debbie, 2009: 36). Furthermore, Perkins's (1983) scales of present and past modal verbs were cited. In them, past modals convey more indirectness, politeness, formality, tentativeness and unreality than present modals.

In response to the question of what to teach in connection with modal verb use, the following suggestions will be put forward. Each suggestion will be accompanied by the reasons why it could serve as the basis of the content of classroom activities and materials.

1. The identification of the modal verbs used in formal and in informal register in requests. Why? The L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners, for example, used high frequencies of some past modals in the informal letters, the frequencies of which were much lower in the informal letters written by the native teachers of EFL and in the B2 EFL textbooks. What is more, in

the informal letters, they used the full form *will* instead of *'ll* (4.70:1) and *would* as opposed to *'d* (14:1) as the native teachers of EFL and the B2 EFL textbook writers did in the formal letters.

2. The avoidance of the overuse and the underuse of certain modals by establishing comparisons between the modal verbs that EFL learners employ in requests with the modal verbs used by NS and in EFL textbooks. Why? In the formal letters, for example, the native teachers of English used *can* and *could* more often than the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners (1.89:1 and 3.37:1 respectively), and the B2 EFL textbooks did so as well (1.63:1 and 2.93:1 respectively). As for the informal letters written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners, for instance, an anomalous high frequency of *will* was observed.
3. The comparison of the requests with or without modals written by EFL learners with those written by NS and in EFL textbooks. Also, the incorporation of modal verbs in EFL learners' requests without modals when necessary to write requests as NS do. Why? The formal letters written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners contained significantly lower frequencies of secondary modal verbs per letter than the formal letters written by the native teachers of EFL and in the B2 EFL textbooks.

5.11 MODAL VERB COLLOCATIONS IN PREFABRICATED LEXICAL ITEMS USED IN REQUESTS: CONCLUSIVE FINDINGS AND THEORY

One of the troublesome areas in L2 learning is the expression of modality, as was established by one of the problems behind the existence of this research. In *section 2.8*, it was argued that modality may be expressed by a wide range of linguistic items. This thesis has centred on modal verbs in requests.

As for modal verb collocations in requests, this study has observed that they could be explained by the existence of prefabricated lexical items employed in requests that occurred twice or more times. In *section 2.12*, it was stated that the targeted prefabricated lexical items would be composed of two or more words, would produce requests, would be highly structured and fixed and predictable (Lewis, 1996) and that, as result, they would be expected to consist in *institutionalized expressions* owing to their being word sequences that would indicate very quickly what the writers would be doing by writing them (Lewis, 1996). In *section 2.11*, it was also argued that prefabricated lexical items with modal verbs and with verbs carrying the same semantic associations would be expected to occur in more than one of the targeted letters, as their collocations are genre-specific: they appear in requests.

As for the objective of studying prefabricated lexical items used in requests, in *section 2.10*, it was also claimed that, through the analyses of the prefabricated lexical items in the three samples, this study was meant to add further insight into differences and similarities in the formulation of requests by L1 Spanish EFL speakers and by L1 English speakers, and that a highly relevant issue was whether L1 Spanish speakers' reported tendency to be direct in requests formulated in Spanish would also be manifested in the formal and/or in the informal letters of request written in English by the sample of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners. *Section 5.8* added that this study aims to find out what to teach and why to do so in the specific genre of letters of request. The following recommendations will be given:

1. The identification of L1 English collocations in the lexical items in which they occur in requests. The search for other examples of these items to see if they are prefabricated ones in the specific genre of letters of request would reinforce the strength of collocational primings. Why? When the prefabricated lexical items used in requests in the informal letters were analysed, it was observed that *can + you* and *should + I* appeared in six of

the ten interrogative prefabricated lexical items that occurred twice or more times in the letters written by the native teachers of EFL. *Should + verb* appeared in relative clauses in phrases introduced by preparatory subjects starting with *there* or in nominal clauses after *do you think* in three of the remaining four prefabricated lexical items. This shows that the repetition of modal verb collocations in letters of request may be due to their co-occurrence in the same prefabricated lexical items in this specific genre. What is more, it is worth mentioning that EFL learners' exposure to text-types to have a view of the whole of the language has also been recommended by Lewis (2001d, see *section 2.13*). Granger and Meunier's (2008) suggestion that phraseology should have a key role in L2 learning as it has also been argued that EFL learners should employ the phrases that NS use to demonstrate 'native-like fluency', or 'native-like usage of words' (Handl, 2008) was also brought up in *section 2.13*.

2. The identification of the prefabricated lexical items that NS use to produce requests and their incorporation into EFL learners' writing. Why? In the informal letters, the native teachers of EFL used collocations the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners never employed: *if you could give me* after *I was wondering* and *I was hoping*, *should + verb* in relative clauses in phrases introduced by preparatory subjects starting with *there*, or in nominal clauses after *let me know* or *do you think*. In the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners' letters, wordy requests and non standard word order were reported.

As for the formal letters, the native teachers of EFL also employed collocations that the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners never did: *if you could let me know* after *I would (also) be grateful* and *I would also appreciate*. Furthermore, *would + be* was accompanied by adjectives that express gratitude, interest, possibility and appreciation in the letters written by the native teachers of EFL and in the B2 EFL textbooks, whereas gratitude

and appreciation in adjectives after *would + be* were expressed in only one sentence each in the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners' letters. What is more, examples of wordy and non-standard (with respect to word order) requests were also observed in the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners' formal letters.

3. The use of the right dose of each request type in EFL learners' requests. Why? When prefabricated lexical items used in requests were collected, four types were identified: direct requests, direct requests with modal verbs, indirect requests with mitigating phrases and indirect requests with mitigating phrases and with modal verbs. In *section 5.10*, it was observed that the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners had used, on average, fewer secondary modal verbs per formal letter than the other two samples. This finding agrees with the fact that both the formal letters in the B2 EFL textbooks and the formal letters written by the native teachers of EFL contained a higher proportion of indirect requests with mitigating phrases and with modal verbs than the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners' formal letters. What is more, the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners employed a lower percentage of direct requests with modals than the native teachers of EFL and the B2 EFL textbooks (see table 4.22).
4. The identification and comparison of prefabricated lexical items occurring in genre-specific texts from different sources. Why? When looking into the prefabricated lexical items used in requests in the formal letters, it was noticed that seven interrogative prefabricated lexical items containing modals were repeated twice or more times in the letters written by the native teachers of EFL. In the formal letters from the B2 EFL textbooks, only one interrogative prefabricated lexical item was repeated two or more times, which encourages the combination of NS' materials with textbook ones.

In the informal letters, ten interrogative prefabricated lexical items containing modals that occurred twice or more times in requests were detected in the letters written by the native teachers of EFL. In the informal letters in the B2 EFL textbooks, no interrogative prefabricated lexical items repeated twice or more times were detected, which also suggested the need to supplement textbook material with material written by NS.

5. The description of the cultural components of requests in L1 English and, consequently, the awareness that the prefabricated lexical items employed in them may affect the directness/indirectness of requests. Why? As explained in the *Theoretical Background*, if EFL learners are not primed to “[...] make tentative and tactful statements [...]” (Stubbs, 1996: 227) as NS do, then they “[...] can sound rude, brusque or tactless if they make mistakes in this area. Often mistakes are not recognised as linguistic, but as social ineptitude” (Stubbs, 1996: 227). This study confirms that L1 Spanish speakers may tend to be more direct when making requests in formal register, as suggested by other studies. The L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners’ tendency to express requests in affirmative statements starting with *I + would + like + to + know*, *I + would + need + to + know*, etc makes requests stronger and more direct than interrogatives requests with modals and indirect requests with mitigating phrases and with modal verbs, more prevalent in the letters written by the native teachers of EFL. The same feature was observed in the direct requests without modals. In the case of the formal letters written by the native teachers of EFL, they were mostly interrogative requests, whereas in the formal letters written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners, the percentage of occurrence of affirmative statements was much higher than in the letters written by the native teachers of EFL. Some of them were headed but *I (also) need to know* and *I (also) want to know*. These never occurred in the formal letters

written by the native teachers of EFL, while *I need to know* occurred in one formal letter from the sample of B2 EFL textbooks.

6. The incorporation of the adverbs and adjectives that NS use in modal verb collocations to express nuances in requests. Why? The presence of adverbs in *modal verb + adverb + verb* collocations has been very low in the letters written by the native teachers of EFL and in the B2 EFL textbooks. However, L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners' use of these collocations may increase the range of tools available to them at the time of conveying nuances in requests.

5.12 MODAL VERB COLLIGATIONS: CONCLUSIVE FINDINGS AND THEORY

In *section 2.14*, Hoey's definition of *colligation* was introduced: "Every word is primed to occur in (or avoid) certain grammatical positions, and to occur in (or avoid) certain grammatical functions, these are its colligations" (Hoey, 2005: 13). However, it was also said that colligations are about "The collocation of a word with a particular grammatical class of words [...]" (Aston & Burnard, 1998: 14) and that "[...] colligation is the way one word regularly co-occurs with a particular (grammar) pattern [...]" (Lewis, 2001b: 137). The study of modal verb colligations at sentence and text level gave rise to a series of important findings concerning two of the premises of this study: that which said that EFL learners use English modal verbs differently from L1 English speakers, and that which argued that EFL textbooks provide shortcuts for priming EFL learners that may simplify the language taught and, consequently, give a partial description of NS' primings. These will be expressed in the answers to the questions about what to teach that follow.

1. The identification of the modal verb colligations that NS use in different parts of texts in requests. Why? This thesis has found that in theme position at sentence level and at text level in the formal letters, i.e. before main verbs and in the first paragraphs of formal letters, the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners made more use of modals heading affirmative statements than the native teachers of EFL, who used a higher proportion of modals in yes/no questions instead. This is linked to the fact that the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners used the collocation *I + would + verb* very often in prefabricated lexical items employed in requests. It was observed that this concentration on affirmative requests with modals heading them may have been due to three reasons: the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners are not primed to use modals in theme position in yes/no questions at sentence level in formal requests and in first paragraphs of formal letters. Moreover, they feel safer using affirmative statements owing to the complexity of word order in questions. Finally, by using affirmative statements they strongly ask for a request to be carried out instead of using tentative strategies such as yes/no questions. Indeed, as their label defines them, the answer to a yes/no question in a request could be affirmative or negative. The speaker lets the interlocutor decide on the answer given. By contrast, an affirmative statement of the sort *I would like something to happen/to be done* does not give the interlocutor much choice but to agree to carry out the request or to kindly refuse to do it, perhaps using a well-thought out reason or excuse under a possibly certain amount of pressure.
2. Consequently, the analyses of modal verb colligations in as far a range of texts as possible. Why? The formal letters in the B2 EFL textbooks, as those written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners, provided a considerable number of modal verbs as heads of affirmative statements at sentence level and in theme position at text level. What is more, they supplied no more than four alternative modal verb colligations in theme position at

sentence level and at text level as compared to the seven provided by the native teachers of EFL in both cases. This shows that, indeed, the B2 EFL textbooks have simplified the language taught in their letters.

3. The comparison of the length and complexity of EFL learners' requests with those of the requests written by NS. Why? In connection with modal verbs in rheme position at sentence level, i.e. after main verbs, in the formal letters, no big differences could be observed in modal verb colligations between the letters written by the native teachers of EFL and in the B2 EFL textbooks. Nevertheless, the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners used more modal verb colligations than the other two samples. This, it was argued, was evidence of wordy requests written by this sample. Furthermore, they reported the highest percentage of occurrence of modals in clauses of reason to explain why requests were being made as well as in relative clauses to further describe the object of the request being formulated.

It is also worth mentioning that modal verbs in rheme position at sentence level in the informal letters written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners occurred in a wider range of colligations than in the other two samples too. This, as in the formal letters, reveals a wordy style due to the addition of more clauses than in the letters written in the B2 EFL textbooks and by the native teachers of EFL. Indeed, as it was argued in *section 2.14*, cracks and drifts in modal verb primings in EFL have been reported even at advanced levels and, therefore, modal verb colligations were expected to deviate from those in the letters written by the NS, whereas the sample of NS was believed to have consolidated theirs and, consequently, no deviations were expected to be found in their letters.

4. The identification of the colligations of requests in formal and in informal register. Why? The L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners' informal letters contained a considerably higher percentage of modals in theme position at

sentence level heading affirmative statements than the letters written by/in the other two samples, where the percentage of occurrence of interrogative colligations was more numerous. However, the percentage of occurrence of modals heading affirmative statements in requests was much higher in the formal letters than in the informal ones in the three samples, which assumes a more interrogative style in informal letters and a more categorical one in the formal ones.

5.13 MODAL VERB TEXTUAL COLLIGATIONS: CONCLUSIVE FINDINGS AND THEORY

“Words (or nested combinations) may be primed to occur (or to avoid occurring) at the beginning or end of independently recognised discourse units, e.g. the sentence, the paragraph, the speech turn (textual colligation)” (Hoey, 2005: 115), as cited in *section 2.14*. The following teaching goals will be suggested.

1. The recognition of the place where requests with modals occur at text level in request letters written by a wide range of sources. Why? At text level, it was observed that most modal verbs in requests occur after the first paragraph. However, the B2 EFL textbooks are the sample that contains the lowest percentage of occurrence of modals in requests in the first paragraph of request letters.
2. The comparison of the place where requests with modals occur in paragraphs in request letters written by EFL learners and by NS. Why? As regards paragraph level, modal verbs in requests mostly occur after the first sentence of paragraphs. The only exception has been the formal letters of request written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners. These used more modal verbs in requests in the first sentence of paragraphs, and this

could have been so as a result of the more direct style in requests written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners, who started paragraphs with the collocation *I + would + verb*. Indeed, these writers used *I would like to know* in the first sentence of paragraphs in thirteen formal letters.

5.14 MODAL VERB TEXTUAL COLLOCATIONS: CONCLUSIVE FINDINGS AND THEORY

In *section 2.15*, Hoey's definition of textual collocation was cited: "Every word is primed to participate in, or avoid, particular types of cohesive relation in a discourse; these are its textual collocations." In the same section, it was established that the targeted cohesive devices would be the repetition of prefabricated lexical items containing modal verbs within the semantic relation of requests. However, the observation of modal verbs in requests in theme position at paragraph level also led to the analysis of adverb/adverbial phrases, noun phrases or conjunctions that added requests. The following suggestions came up.

1. The identification of cohesive chains composed of the repetition of patterns containing the same modal verbs in requests from different sources. Why? Cohesive chains composed of the repetition of patterns containing the same modal verbs in requests in the formal letters occurred in a similar percentage of letters written by the native teachers of EFL and in the B2 EFL textbooks. Conversely, a lower percentage of formal letters written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners contained examples of these. As for the modal verb collocations contained in chains, the formal letters written by the native teachers of EFL provided a wider range than the B2 EFL textbooks. With respect to cohesive devices containing modal verb collocations in the informal letters, this time they were present in more

letters written by the native teachers of EFL than in the B2 EFL textbooks. This is another indicator of simplification in textbook English.

2. The identification of cohesive chains composed of the repetition of patterns containing the same modal verbs in requests written by NS. Why? In the formal letters written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners, 94.7 % of the chains contained either of the following collocations: *I + would + verb* or *I + 'd + verb*. At that point, it was revealed that one of the reasons for the existence of the most frequent modal verb collocations had been their participation in prefabricated lexical items which were used repeatedly to create cohesion in text. A picture of the whole could then be obtained.

With respect to cohesive chains made up of the repetition of modal verb collocations in the informal letters, again, *I + would + verb* was the most frequent collocation in the chains in the EFL learners' letters, and a link between the most frequent modal verb collocations, the prefabricated lexical items that occurred more than twice and that contained them and the existence of chains that included these lexical items could also be spotted.

The lower use of cohesive chains containing modal verbs in the formal letters written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners may also be a reason why, on average, the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners used fewer modals per letter than the other two samples. As quoted in *chapter two*, "We have clear and concrete evidence of why much student writing is unsatisfactory. Technically, it lacks cohesion – the employment of precisely those grammatical devices that ensure that we perceive a whole text as more than a sequence of sentences" (Lewis, 1996: 140).

3. The identification of adverb/adverbial phrases, noun phrases or conjunctions that add requests with modals in different samples of NS' requests and their incorporation in EFL learners' requests. Why? In the formal letters, it was observed that 48.3 % and 44 % of the sentences

which make requests with modal verbs in the first sentence of paragraphs were headed by one of these devices in the letters written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners and by the native teachers of EFL respectively. Nonetheless, a few differences between both samples were spotted. Not only did the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners never use the adverb *also* between a modal verb and the main verb, as sixteen per cent of the requests in theme position at paragraph level in the letters written by the native teachers of EFL did, but they also used inaccurate cohesive devices such as *finish*. The B2 EFL textbooks simplified the options offering only two adverbs in this position as compared to the seven used by the native teachers of EFL.

As for the informal letters, the native teachers of EFL and the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners also used an adverb/adverbial phrase, noun phrase or a conjunction that added requests in a similar percentage of requests with modal verbs in theme position at paragraph level: 22.3 % and 18.5 % respectively. In the case of *also* between a modal verb and a main verb, it has been used less frequently by the native teachers of EFL than in their formal letters, but it has been inexistent in the letters written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners. Therefore, fewer of these devices were used in both samples. What is more, no adverbs/adverbial phrases, conjunctions or linking phrases to add requests with modals in theme position at paragraph level were reported in the B2 EFL textbooks.

All these suggestions comprised the announced pedagogical implications based on the empirical data analysed in this thesis. Undoubtedly, these may serve as ideas in tailor-made courses or courses for specific purposes depending on EFL learners' needs and goals. The next chapter will present the final conclusions of the items discussed so far, and further research possibilities for future studies will be suggested.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS

PEDAGOGICAL AND THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

This chapter is divided similarly to *chapter three, Methodology, chapter four, Findings* and *chapter five, Discussions*. Each of the sections that follow presents the conclusions related to the findings of one of the objectives discussed in *chapter five*. After the conclusions of each of the research objectives have been presented, general conclusions are drawn and possible further research possibilities are put forward.

6.1 OBJECTIVE ONE: MODAL VERB FREQUENCIES

In the discussion of the findings related to this objective, it was observed that B2 EFL textbooks do not provide big numbers of letters of request. In *Limitations of the study* in *chapter one*, it was explained that this is so owing to the fact that B2 EFL textbook writers have to provide samples of a wide range of genres to respond to B2 EFL learners' wide variety of needs. Therefore, it was strongly recommended that EFL learners supplement formal and also informal letters of request appearing in EFL textbook material both with formal and with informal letters of request written by NS when learning to write this genre to receive further priming. Indeed, lack of priming in requests may result in any of the following problems in L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners' request letter writing.

Firstly, the sample of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners used FW more often than the native teachers of EFL and the B2 EFL textbook writers. This led to evidence that would probably explain that this could be so due to a more wordy style in the letters written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners. As a result, it was suggested that, with a view to getting rid of unnaturally wordy patterns and to acquiring native-like ones, L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners not only analyse the complexity of the sentences that NS use in request letters, but also that they use the collocations that NS employ in the same genre.

Secondly, the sample of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners was also reported to transfer primings from formal to informal register. This was reflected in the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners' considerable use of modal verb forms in their informal request letters that had majorly been used in the formal request letters written by/in the other two samples. In addition, it was also revealed that, while the sample of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners underused certain modal verb forms, as it was the case of *could* and *can* in their formal letters of request as compared to the formal letters written by/in the other two samples, they overused others, as it was the case of *will* in both registers. Then, L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners' analyses of request letters written by NS and in B2 EFL textbooks may encourage them to question their own request letters as far as the modal verb forms used are concerned and, as a result, to look for alternative ones. What is more, comparing the modal verb forms used in requests written by NS and in textbook English may awaken L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners to the fluctuations of language variation and, as a result, to the relative truth of all-time well-established language rules. This alludes specifically to the reported difference in the frequencies of contracted and full modal verb forms in the formal and in the informal request letters written by the native teachers of English and in those in the B2 EFL textbooks.

Finally, it was also observed that the frequencies of secondary modal verbs were lower in the sample of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners' formal letters than in the formal letters written by the native teachers of English and in the B2 EFL

textbooks. These lower frequencies of secondary modals in the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners' formal letters is an indicator of more direct language in them. Nonetheless, it is not enough that L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners know that, in a sample of textbook English and in one of NS' English, secondary modal verbs are more frequent than primary modal verbs in formal request letters, whereas the frequencies of primary and secondary modal verbs are similar in informal request letters. It was put forward that it would be useful for L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners to identify their requests without modals and see how modal verbs could be incorporated into them as NS do when writing requests.

6.2 OBJECTIVE TWO: THE COLLOCATES OF MODAL VERBS

With reference to the collocates of modal verbs, it was observed that the native teachers of EFL used modal verb collocations whose frequencies were lower or inexistent in the letters written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners and/or in the B2 EFL textbooks. Examples of these were *can + you* and *should + I* in the informal request letters, and *can + you* and *could + you* in the formal ones.

At the same time, the sample of L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners made use of modal verb collocations whose frequencies were lower or inexistent in the letters written by the sample of native teachers of EFL and/or in the B2 EFL textbooks. These were *can + I*, *could + you*, *could + I*, *would + like*, *would + verb*, *will + verb* and *will + be* in the informal letters, and *would + like* and *'d + like* in the formal ones.

It is also worth mentioning that, when analysing the verbs that collocate with modal verbs more than twice, prefabricated lexical items in the letters written by the native teachers of EFL were reported. These were *give* in *if you could give me* after *I was wondering* and *I was hoping* in requests for information in the informal letters, whereas *let* in *if you could let me know* after *I would (also) be grateful* and *I would also appreciate it*, and *provide* in *can + provide* in relative clauses in

requests for information occurred in the formal ones. Moreover, while some *modal + adverb + verb* collocations were observed in the formal and in the informal letters written by the native teachers of EFL and in the B2 EFL textbooks, in the letters written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners these were fewer. Besides, *would + be + adverb + adjective* occurred mostly in the formal letters written by the native teachers of EFL: very few occurred in the formal letters written in the B2 EFL textbooks and none in the formal letters written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners.

Finally, the existence of wordy patterns advanced in the conclusions of objective one above was confirmed in the findings of objective two with further evidence. Indeed, it is interesting to remark that the high frequency of *can + verb* and of *should + verb* in the letters written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners was partly due to the existence of wordy and/or indirect requests whose word order differed from that of the standard requests written by the sample of native teachers of EFL.

These conclusions lead to the following assumptions: L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners' identifying and using the modal verb collocations that both NS and B2 EFL textbooks employ in letters of request could be a fruitful task. For one thing, because widening the range of modal verb collocations available to L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners at the time of making requests would eventually reduce the number of wordy and non-standard requests they may produce. For another, because the increase in the number of modal verb collocations used by NS which are available to L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners would reduce L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners' eventual dependence on a limited range of modal verb collocations that NS and B2 EFL textbooks might use less often or might never do. Finally, observing and using *modal verb + adverb + verb* collocations would provide further means for L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners to convey modality in requests.

6.3 OBJECTIVE THREE: PREFABRICATED LEXICAL ITEMS USED IN REQUESTS

Four types of requests were identified: direct requests, indirect requests with mitigating phrases, direct requests with modal verbs and indirect requests with mitigating phrases and with modal verbs.

L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners' analysing both letters written in B2 EFL textbooks and those written by NS may be justified by the following reasons.

First, it was revealed that the informal letters written by the native teachers of EFL offered a wider range of interrogative prefabricated lexical items containing modal verbs that occur twice or more times in requests and of indirect requests with mitigating phrases and with modal verbs than the B2 EFL textbooks. The same happened in the formal letters with respect to the affirmative and interrogative prefabricated lexical items containing modal verbs that occur twice or more times in requests and in the indirect requests with mitigating phrases and with modal verbs.

Second, in the formal letters, the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners used a narrower range of interrogative prefabricated lexical items containing modal verbs that occur twice or more times in requests than the sample of native teachers of EFL. This did not happen in the informal letters, where the figures in both samples were very close. However, when looking into the questions in the informal letters, it was found that the native teachers of EFL used more complex and different modal verb collocations than the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners. These used mostly simple collocations, and confused the use of *will* in predictions with that in requests.

Also, in the formal and in the informal letters, the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners used considerably more affirmative prefabricated lexical items containing modal verbs that occur twice or more times in requests than the native teachers of EFL and the B2 EFL textbooks. Many of these items started with *I would*. This

partly explains a much higher percentage of occurrence of affirmative statements in requests in the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners' letters than in the other two samples.

What is more, the construction of some of the indirect requests with mitigating phrases and with modal verbs written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners deviated from that in Standard English. Problems with the conditional, the subjunctive and the pleonastic *it* were observed.

Finally, in the direct requests without modals, the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners also reported the highest percentage of occurrence of affirmative statements, which led to their overuse of the items *I (also) need to know* and *I (also) want to know*, if compared to the letters written by the other two samples. As for the questions, differences in word order from that in Standard English were observed. Differences from Standard English were also reported in the indirect requests with mitigating phrases without modal verbs written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners.

All these differences establish clear gaps between L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners' English and textbook and NS' English in the letters of request under scrutiny. If the target L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners intend to write in a more native-like way, the findings indicate that they should counterbalance the high frequencies of requests consisting of affirmative statements starting with *I would*, *I (also) need to know* and *I (also) want to know* with alternative request strategies used by the native teachers of EFL and in the letters written in the B2 EFL textbooks.

Furthermore, it would be interesting for the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners to compare their requests with those written by the other two samples in order to analyse in what ways their word order differs and how it could be rephrased to achieve native-like standards as regards complexity, accuracy and fluency (Lewis, 2001).

6.4 OBJECTIVE FOUR: MODAL VERBS AT SENTENCE LEVEL IN REQUEST LETTERS

The findings concerning the position of modal verbs at sentence level in requests have also justified supplementing the letters obtained from the B2 EFL textbooks with those written by the native teachers of EFL. This is due to the following reasons.

First, the formal and the informal request letters written by the native teachers of EFL provided a higher percentage of occurrence of modal verbs before main verbs in questions than the B2 EFL textbooks. It was observed that these strong primings in the letters written by the native teachers of EFL are very useful as the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners' word order in interrogative requests with or without modal verbs had sometimes been reported to be different from word order in interrogative requests in Standard English. Moreover, the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners had also been reported to use simple modal verb collocations in interrogative requests in the informal letters as compared to the native teachers of EFL. Conversely, it had been observed that the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners had made more frequent use of affirmative statements in requests instead.

Second, the letters written by the native teachers of EFL provided a wider range of primings with respect to the variety of modal verb colligations in theme position in the formal letters and in rheme position in the informal ones than the B2 EFL textbooks. It is highly recommended that the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners be familiar with the types of modal verb colligations in theme and in rheme position in the letters written by the native teachers of EFL and that they compare them with those in the letters written in the B2 EFL textbooks. The goal of this comparison is for the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners to incorporate these modal verb colligations into their own writing. Indeed, it was revealed that the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners employed the widest range of modal verb colligations in

relation to the position of modal verbs at sentence level, and explained that this could be another indicator of a more wordy style in the letters written by them.

Consequently, turning the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners' attention to the differences in the construction of modal verb colligations in theme and in rheme positions at sentence level in their letters as compared to those in the other two samples may be an error correction activity worth doing owing to its immediate result on the self-assessment and reformulation of their own requests.

6.5 OBJECTIVE FIVE: MODAL VERBS AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL IN REQUEST LETTERS

Both the formal and the informal letters showed very similar trends as regards the description of sentences making requests and containing modal verbs occurring at the beginning of paragraphs.

In both cases, the native teachers of EFL and the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners shared a few linking devices that add requests such as *firstly* and *finally*. At the same time, both samples used different cumulative devices. Some of the ones employed by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners revealed important differences from Standard English, such as *finish* in the formal letters and *and other really good question* in the informal ones. The B2 EFL textbooks, by contrast, reported only *firstly* and *finally* in requests with modals at the beginning of paragraphs in the formal letters, while no linking expressions in the informal ones. Additionally, the native teachers of EFL made more use of the adverb *also* between a modal verb and a main verb than the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners, which adds to the fact that the letters written by the latter reported lower frequencies of adverbs in modal verb collocations (see *section 6.2*). As for the B2 EFL textbooks, no examples of *also* between a modal verb and a verb were observed.

Owing to the diversity of adverbs, adverbial phrases, noun phrases or conjunctions that add requests in the first sentence of paragraphs containing modal verbs in the letters written by the native teachers of EFL, to the almost inexistent ones in the B2 EFL textbooks and to the observation of nonstandard versions of some of these items in the letters written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners, it is crucial that these work on request letters written by NS if they are to receive further priming considering the important role that these devices play at the beginning of paragraphs with regard to their effect in text cohesion. More information related to text cohesion will be given in the conclusions of objective seven.

6.6 OBJECTIVE SIX: MODAL VERBS AT TEXT LEVEL IN REQUEST LETTERS

This study concludes that the letters written in the B2 EFL textbooks provide a narrower range of modal verb colligations in requests in theme position at text level than the letters written by the native teachers of EFL. This finding may result from the fact that the B2 EFL textbooks provide a lower number of letters than the sample of letters written by the native teachers of EFL. This adds to the reasons mentioned above for combining textbook materials with plenty of NS' writing.

This study also revealed that, in the three samples, the formal letters contained more modals heading affirmative statements in requests for information in the first paragraph than the informal ones. This was particularly evident in the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners' formal letters, where they used a much higher percentage of modals heading affirmative statements in requests than the native teachers of EFL, which had already been reflected in their frequent use of prefabricated items with or without modal verbs such as *I would like*, *I need to know* or *I want to know*.

When the reasons why the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners used a higher percentage of modals heading affirmative statements in requests than the native teachers of EFL were discussed, three explanations were put forward. First, L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners are not sufficiently primed to use questions in the first paragraph of request letters as a result of the presumably few occasions on which they are exposed to complete request letters in both registers. Second, L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners feel safer when they use affirmative statements due to the complexity of word order of questions in English as compared to Spanish. Finally, requests in Spanish are not seen as threatening demands that require minimising politeness strategies (Blum-Kulka, 1996), but as a desire for the addressee to carry them out (Díaz Pérez, 2002). Thus, the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners conveyed their requests addressing them directly in affirmative statements, as explained in the paragraph above.

Finally, it was observed that the native teachers of EFL used modal verbs in requests in the first paragraphs in a higher percentage of formal letters than the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners. What is more, in the informal ones, they used a higher percentage of modal verbs in that position. L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners' observing NS' requests in theme position at text level and comparing them with their own may be a useful task when focusing on how to start a formal or an informal letter of request.

6.7 OBJECTIVE SEVEN: COHESIVE CHAINS CONTAINING MODAL VERBS AND USED IN REQUESTS IN REQUEST LETTERS

The analyses of the chains that add cohesion to text organisation by means of the repetition of patterns containing modal verbs in requests in both the formal and the informal request letters arrived at the following conclusions.

First, supplementing letters from B2 EFL textbooks with those written by NS might give L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners access to alternative chains to create cohesion. Indeed, in both the informal and the formal letters, the chains used by the native teachers of EFL differed, in general, from those written in the B2 EFL textbooks. In addition, L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners' employing NS' chains would reduce their dependence on the use of the collocation *I + would + verb* in chains in both registers. It would also provide alternatives to L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners' deviant chains with respect to word order, as in interrogative chains, to meaning, as in the confusing use of *will* in requests with that in predictions, and to register, as in the overuse of *would* and *could* in the informal request letters as compared to the informal letters written by the native teachers of EFL and in the B2 EFL textbooks.

Second, cohesion may partly explain the collocations, colligations and word frequencies in a given text genre. In this study, it has been revealed that those modal verbs and collocations that occurred most often in the letters written by the native teachers of EFL and by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners belong to cohesive chains made up of repeated patterns containing modal verbs. It has also been suggested that the combination of the analyses of word frequencies, colligations, collocations and cohesion in genre-specific texts written in a given L2 may not only explain the writers' L2 primings, but also L1 primings and culturally-dependent ideological ones, which consist of the reasons why the writers think that what they write is suitable for a certain context. This is why it has also been recommended that L2 Spanish B2 EFL learners know why NS write requests in a certain way, but also that they analyse how this differs cross-linguistically and cross-culturally from L1 Spanish.

As regards the frequency of affirmative statements that explain a request which contains one or more modal verbs, it has been higher than the frequency of affirmative statements containing one or more modal verbs that explain a request which does not comprise any modal verbs in both registers. However, the formal

letters in the B2 EFL textbooks contained many more affirmative statements that explain a request which contains one or more modal verbs, which may explain their length.

6.8 GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

This thesis has added further evidence to the three premises that inspired it.

First, the samples of letters from the B2 EFL textbooks provided shortcuts for priming EFL learners that simplified the language as compared to the letters written by the native teachers of EFL and, consequently, gave a partial description of NS' primings. This has been reflected in the range of prefabricated lexical items containing modal verbs and occurring two or more times in requests. These simplifications have also been identified in modal verb colligations, in the use of cohesive devices such as cohesive chains of repeated modal verb patterns employed in requests and in the frequencies of adverbs/adverbial phrases, noun phrases or conjunctions that added requests with modals in theme position at paragraph level.

Second, the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners used English modal verbs differently from the native teachers of EFL. This was observed in the frequencies of modal verbs, of modal verb collocations, in the range of prefabricated lexical items containing modal verbs and occurring two or more times in requests, in modal verb colligations and in the range of cohesive chains composed of repeated modal verb patterns used in requests.

Third, modality proved to be a difficult learning area for the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners. This was attested in modal verb frequencies. The frequencies of past modals in the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners' informal letters were much higher than in the informal letters written in/by the other two samples. As for modal verb collocations and prefabricated lexical items containing modal verbs and used in requests, it was observed that the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners made

use of wordy requests as well as of non-standard word order. This was also observed in the modal verb colligations at sentence and text level. Furthermore, while the native teachers of EFL managed to express nuances in their requests by resorting to diverse modal verb colligations, the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners centred on the *I would like something to happen or to be done* request model, which emerged not only in modal verb collocations and colligations, but also in cohesive chains containing modal in repeated patterns and used in requests. This was also understood as further evidence of directness in L1 Spanish requests. Finally, the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners used fewer adverbs and adjectives in modal verb collocations in requests than the other two samples.

6.9 FURTHER RESEARCH POSSIBILITIES

The methodology followed in this research opens different avenues as far as further research possibilities are concerned. Some of them will be presented in the lines that follow.

To begin with, the triangular comparison of textbook English, NS' English and EFL could be applied to look into any of the areas that EFL learners of any L1 may find problematic. With respect to L1 Spanish speakers, further research could inquire into other aspects of modality, such as the use of adjectives and adverbs in different genres, as this study has shown that both the textbooks and the NS made use of a few but of a wider range of *modal + adverb + verb* collocations than the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners. The possibility of applying these comparisons in the learning of other second languages should not be ruled out.

This research has also pointed out how word order in EFL English may differ from that in L1 English in requests. Studying word order in other genres, such as argumentative essays written in EFL, would also be a challenging task. Indeed, looking into circumlocutions and wordy or even more complex patterns, as for

example inversions, at advanced levels and comparing them with those at intermediate ones would prove profitable for the field of EFL acquisition.

As for the comparisons carried out in this study, letters of request written by other samples of writers could also be analysed. To begin with, letters written by other samples of native teachers of EFL and L1 Spanish B2 EFL speakers could be collected and analysed in order to compare modal verb primings with those in this study. Collecting request letters written by L1 English speakers who are not teachers of EFL and establishing cross comparisons would certainly be an eye-opener as regards priming differences between speakers who have been trained to prime other speakers and those who have not. What is more, letters of request written by L1 Spanish EFL teachers could also be analysed with the aim of identifying any possible differences and similarities in modal verb primings between these letters and those written by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners and the native teachers of EFL.

Contrasting NS' and L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners' same requests in conversational situations, e.g. face-to-face or on the phone, with the ones they have written in order to compare the prefabricated lexical items and the degree of directness used in both media of communication, written and spoken, would also be worth doing.

Furthermore, in order to learn more about other languages, this method could also be used in comparative linguistics. This idea is based on the fact that the same letters could also be written by speakers of other languages to look into how modal verb primings in requests differ cross-linguistically. Comparing the letters written in English by the L1 Spanish B2 EFL learners with letters written in Spanish by a comparable sample would also be worth carrying out.

To sum up, as in Jorge Luis Borges' circularity, it is not surprising that, after suggesting all these research possibilities, one may always end up going back to square one: Corpus Linguistics and EFL Teaching: A Fruitful Partnership (see *Introduction*).

APPENDIX A:

HANDOUT GIVEN TO THE SAMPLE OF NATIVE TEACHERS OF EFL TO WRITE A FORMAL LETTER OF REQUEST

Task. Write a letter of request.

You've found the following ad in your local newspaper offering the following course in the UK.

The Bristol School of English.
Learn to design your own WEBPAGE.
It`s fast and cheap!!!!
Contact us at 918 855 632

You would like to obtain more information about

- The length of the course: its starting and finishing dates.
- Fees (the price of the course).
- What knowledge of computers is required to attend the course.
- What type of accommodation the school provides: Apartments, Bed and Breakfasts, hotels, home stays, etc.

Write a letter to the Director of Studies in the box below. Please, write between 10 and 15 lines. Thanks.

APPENDIX B:

HANDOUT GIVEN TO THE SAMPLES OF NATIVE TEACHERS OF EFL AND OF L1 SPANISH B2 EFL LEARNERS TO WRITE AN INFORMAL LETTER OF REQUEST

Task. Write a letter of request.

You are planning to visit the city where your best friend lives next August.
Write a letter to him/her **asking** him/her for **advice** on

- Which Places to visit.
- What Clothes to wear.
- What food to eat.
- How to get there.
- Where to stay.

Write the letter in the box below. Please, write between 10 and 15 lines.
Thanks.

APPENDIX C:

HANDOUT GIVEN TO THE SAMPLE OF L1 SPANISH B2 EFL LEARNERS TO WRITE A FORMAL LETTER OF REQUEST

Task. Write a letter of request.

You've found the following ad in your local newspaper offering the following course in the UK.

<p>The Bristol School of English.</p> <p>Learn to design your own WEBPAGE.</p> <p>It`s fast and cheap!!!!</p> <p>Contact us at 918 855 632</p>
--

You would like to obtain more information about

- The length of the course: its starting and finishing dates.
- Fees (the price of the course).
- What level of English you need to have to attend the course.
- What type of accommodation the school provides: Apartments, Bed and Breakfasts, hotels, home stays, etc.

Write a letter to the Director of Studies in the box below. Please, write between 10 and 15 lines. Thanks.

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