Developing students' illocutionary competence, by working with speech acts in the foreign language classroom

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Resumen

Hoy en día los profesores de lengua extranjera se cuestionan sobre la mejor forma de desarrollar la competencia comunicativa de sus estudiantes, debido a la importancia de este componente en el proceso de aprendizaje de una lengua extranjera. A pesar de las teorías y metodologías sugeridas para ayudar a los estudiantes a desarrollar su competencia comunicativa, los profesores deben afrontar el reto de aplicar esta teoría en la práctica, en sus salones de clase. Esta investigación describe el proceso de implementación de algunas actividades que pueden ayudar a los estudiantes a desarrollar su competencia elocutiva, trabajando con actos de habla en el salón de lengua extranjera. Reflexiones y sugerencias sobre este aspecto también se incluyen.

Palabras Clave: Lengua extranjera, proceso de aprendizaje, competencia comunicativa, competencia elocutiva, actos de habla, situaciones de la vida real.

Abstract

Nowadays foreign language teachers are very concerned on the best way to develop their students' communicative competences, due to the importance of this component in the learning process of a foreign language. Despite of the theories and methodologies suggested in order to help students develop their communicative competence, teachers face the challenge of putting this theory into practice in their classrooms. This research paper describes the process of implementing some activities that can help students develop their illocutionary competences by working with speech acts in a foreign language classroom. Reflections and suggestions on this concern are also included. The research concludes by pointing out that real-life like situations are, apparently, a powerful tool that teachers can use when helping students to develop their illocutionary competence.

Key Words: Foreign language, Learning process, Communicative Competence, Illocutionary competence, Speech acts, Real life situations.

Introduction

INTRODUCTION

Theories about education and teaching in the field of foreign language learning talk a lot about the relevance of supporting students' language competencies development. It is not enough for teachers to have a certain level of language for acting as models for their pupils; they also need to build suitable means to help students become competent users of that language. In addition, teachers must take advantage of the tools that might be used in a classroom for encouraging students to really communicate in the foreign language classroom.

Having in mind that a language teacher is expected to build up a set of different strategies and abilities, such as helping students develop their language competences, I decided to conduct this research; I also wanted to find out how to support students to develop their illocutionary competence, by working with speech acts in the foreign language classroom.

In order to decide on the competencies I would research on, I conducted a need analysis in the school I worked: Country Bilingual School in Tunja where I taught fifth graders. I found this topic could be relevant to the EFL content because, as Bardovi and Harlig (1999) state, research about pragmatic competence has proven that English learners need to become aware of the social, cultural and discourse conventions that are adopted in different circumstances. Besides, little research has been done about how classroom-based instruction can lead to the building of students' pragmatic competence.

When I began this research, I knew about language competences; however, my knowledge was limited. Then, in order to go deeper into this field, I designed some activities for finding out about my students' strengths and weaknesses in terms of their competences. For examining my students' grammatical competence, I asked them to answer a test. The test included, basically, questions about vocabulary and grammar.

In addition to the test, some other activities were developed by students. They were asked to listen to some vocabulary words (taken from the readings we had worked in class) and classify them, according to the title of the story they belonged to. By doing this activity, I could observe my students performances in terms of their vocabulary. In order to explore my students' use and knowledge of grammar, I gave them some "clues" or "guidelines" for them to write right sentences in different tenses. Then, my students were asked to listen and to look at some sounds and to write a list of words having that sound. This activity was done for observing students' pronunciation. Students were also asked to listen to the teacher and to make drawings explaining the culture they know about (American or Colombian). This activity was done for examining students' socio-linguistic competence. Although the sociolinguistic competence

implies much more than awareness of cultural aspects, I used this aspect because I wanted my students to express something they already knew and of course, American and Colombian culture was a very familiar topic for them, because most of them have traveled or studied to the United States of America. Besides, they were given some questions to explain and/or to express something they thought or felt, in order to find out more about their illocutionary competence. Finally, my students were expected to organize a text, so I could see what was happening with their textual competence. I expected to be able to observe each of my students' competences when they were developing the exercises described above. I tried to make an exercise to explore each competence: grammatical, textual, sociolinguistic and illocutionary.

I wanted to make my decision more objective, so I used some other instruments to gather data about my students' needs when learning English. I designed a survey that I asked my student to answer at the beginning of the research, about they aspects they thought they needed to work more on. In order to make a more objective decision, I also designed a survey for my students to answer at the end of the workshops; I asked them if they found easy or difficult to answer the grammar test, to express their ideas in a written form, or to draw cultural aspects of Colombia and the United States, and hence, I could find out what the competences they needed to work on were. (See Appendix No. 1: Students' survey).

I filled a journal writing down my perceptions, observations, feelings, thoughts and questions about my students' work on the pragmatic competence, about my classes trying to help my students to develop this compo-

nent and about my students' learning process. I wrote down what I noticed when my students were performing the tasks, how they did them, what expressions they used, how they felt when participating on the activities, so I could determine if the affective factor had something to do with the development of my students' communicative competence; I wrote what my students said for identifying how they were using the foreign language. I also made some reflections on the methodology, pedagogy, students' performances and on other aspects that then helped me to analyze the data I had gathered.

I analyzed what I observed when my students were developing the purposed activities, the surveys my students answered and my diary. I found out that my students did well on activities related with vocabulary, pronunciation, textual organization and cultural aspects. On the other hand, I detected that my students' had serious limitations involving mainly textual and grammatical competences, because although they had the knowledge about grammar structures, they were not able to use them properly in a context or for constructing whole, meaningful sentences; in addition, I assumed students needed to work a lot on their illocutionary competence because they did not show the ability to understand the message that they were trying to convey through the words they used.

After considering the findings of my need analysis, my students' interests and my interests as an English teacher, I decided to work on their illocutionary competence. It is true that grammar is an important factor when teaching and a learning foreign language. Nevertheless, communication is even more important, because it is by communicating that we establish relationships,

we learn, we achieve our goals, we grow and learn about life and in life, and, it is by communicating and by using the target language that we learn it.

After these reflections and considering several discussions we had in my master lessons, I understood that illocutionary competence might involve several aspects and that this competence may be achieved by working with speech acts in the classroom; hence, I decided I would work on a specific speech act. As my pupils seemed not to be much aware of how to keep courtesy conventions by means of verbal language in English, I thought it would be a suitable idea to support their learning by working

the speech act of "apologizing". However, I was not sure about the best way to work on this aspect in my classes, so I decided that it would be an interesting research inquiry and I asked myself the following question for trying to find some answers: To what extent is the Pragmatic competence teachable by using speech acts in the foreign language classroom?

For answering my question, I built a summary of relevant theory, I carried out a practical research: collecting the data and then analyzing it. And finally, I drew some conclusions and implications about my research. In the following sections, I will expand about these aspects.

1.   Pragmatic competence: revising concepts and studies

The following section presents some of the theoretical constructs that support my research. A description about the concepts of the communicative and the pragmatic competence, as well as some research studies on the topic are presented below. Similarly, some definitions of the speech acts, mainly the one of "Apologizing" are also addressed. In addition, considerations about why and how to help students to develop their illocutionary competence are also discussed.

For the purpose of this study I took into account Bachman's (1990) model of Communicative Competence because it is the most recent taxonomy and because it modified the previous models. Besides, I chose Bachman's model because he makes a more extensive definition of the concept 'competence', including, the skill to handle with knowledge-based components of language that have been isolated as theoretical areas, such as 'syntax' or 'cohesion'.

Bachman (1990) divides the Communicative Competence into two broad areas: "organizational competence," which includes both grammatical and discourse competence, and "pragmatic competence," which includes both sociolinguistic and illocutionary competence.

Going more directly to the main point of my research, I found that according to Eslami – Rasekh (2004) it is important to develop students' pragmatic awareness, because even advanced learners make mistakes when they are trying to convey intentions or when they are conveying on politeness. Besides, the author argues that it is essential to understand and create the

appropriate language to determined situations, because if students are not able to well perform in those situations, communication in the target language will not be successful.

Pragmatic competence, (in Eslami – Rasekh's words, 2004) consists of illocutionary competence, that is, knowledge of speech acts and speech functions, and sociolinguistic competence. For this study, I understand pragmatic competence as the ability a foreign speaker has in order to choose appropriately which speech acts to use in specific situations.

Eslami – Rasekh's (2004) state that there are some suggested activities that can be useful to develop students' pragmatic competence. Those activities can be classified in two kinds: Activities to raise pragmatic awareness and activities to practice communication.

Some appropriate activities to raise students' pragmatic awareness are those in which the teacher presents and discuss some techniques to relay information drawn from research on pragmatic issues to students, those in which students are invited to observe and record speech acts occurring in real life, and those in which translation is involved.

Activities that help students practicing communication are those in which they are in structures to complete dialogues and to analyze problematic situations.

In addition to the kind of activities that may help to develop students' pragmatic competence, they also suggest to combine this

actions with the use of frequent speech acts such as apologizing and requesting, because they may provide a good focus when introducing pragmatic issues to learners for the first time.

It is important to bear in mind that in order to build up students´ pragmatic competence it is essential to follow a "first step": to develop students' pragmatic awareness, because even advanced learners make mistakes when they are trying to convey intentions or when they are conveying on politeness. Besides, it is also meaningful to understand and master appropriate language for using it accurately in given situations; if students are not able to perform coherently in those situations, communication in the target language will not be successful.

Edward and Csizer (2004) found that some advanced students were not aware of social, cultural and discourse convention that have to be followed in determined situations. That's why they conducted a research that aimed at developing students' pragmatic competence by focusing on the speech acts of openings and closings.

In order to support their research work, they quote Kasper's (1981) opinions about the teachability of pragmatic competence. He states that students must be provided with the opportunities to develop their pragmatic competence, by challenging them to use the target language in different communicative situations.

During their research, Edward and Csizer (2004) implemented some activities in order to develop their students' pragmatic competences. Some of those activities included asking students to translate, to discuss and analyze a dialogue; and other activities asked students to create and complete dialogues using different speech acts.

According to their findings, from students pre- and post- tests, Edward and Csizer (2004) stated that, students who are taught being involved in the types of activities described above, are able to use more elaborated openings and closings; which would suggest, that when students participate in those kinds of activities they begin developing their pragmatic competence. I considered this study important for my research because it explained different activities students carried out in order to work on their illocutionary competence, which is something very similar to what I wanted to do in my study.

Because my research focused more on the development of my students' illocutionary competence working with speech acts, I consider relevant to present some general definitions and constructs on this issue.

2.   Speech acts – Apologyzing

I understand speech acts as a set of language tools a speaker may use in order to well perform in specific situation at specific times and places. Searle (1969) states that for understanding language people must understand the speaker's intention and that because language is an intentional behavior, it must be understood as a form

of action. Hence, Searle understands statements as speech acts. For him, the speech act is the basic unit of language used to express meaning and intention. He explains that when one person speaks, s/he one performs an act. For Searle, the speaker's intention must be understood in order to capture the meaning because it is impossi-

ble to understand the words as a speech act without knowing the speaker's intention.

In English people typically use apologies for a variety of reasons such as:

1. To say that they are sorry
2. To explain why the offense happened
3. To make a repair for the offense and maintain a good relationship with the addressee.

According to Cohen & Olshtain (1981) "Complex speech acts like apologies actually consist of a set of routinized patterns or strategies typically used by native speakers of the language". They also suggest five possible strategies for making an apology:

A. An expression of an apology. The speaker uses a word, expression, or sentence containing a verb such as "sorry," "excuse," "forgive," or "apologize." Languages have certain words that are used to express an oral apology more than others. For example, in American English, "I apologize..." is found more in writing than it is in oral language. An expression of an apology can be intensified whenever the apologizer feels the need to do so. Such intensification is usually accomplished by adding intensifiers such as "really" or "very" -- e.g., "I'm really sorry."

B. Acknowledgement of responsibility. The offender recognizes his/her fault in causing the infraction. The degree of such recognition on the part of the apologizer can be placed on a scale. The highest level of intensity is an acceptance of the blame: "It's my fault." At a somewhat lower level would be an expression of self-deficiency: "I was confused/I didn't see/You are right." At a still lower level

would be the expression of lack of intent: "I didn't mean to." Lower still would be an implicit expression of responsibility: "I was sure I had given you the right directions." Finally, the apologizer may not accept the blame at all, in which case there may be a denial of responsibility: "It wasn't my fault," or even blaming of the hearer: "It's your own fault."

C. An explanation or account. The speaker describes the situation which caused him/her to commit the offense and which is used by this speaker as an indirect way of apologizing. The explanation is intended to set things right. In some cultures this may be a more acceptable way of apologizing than in others. Thus, in cultures where public transportation is unreliable, coming late to a meeting and giving an explanation like, "The bus was late," might be perfectly acceptable.

D. An offer of repair. The apologizer makes a bid to carry out an action or provide payment for some kind of damage resulting from his/her infraction.

If someone is late for an appointment with a friend s/he might say something like, "How can I make it up to you- why don't I buy you lunch on Friday? Or someone who fails to make it to an appointment might say, "Would you be willing to reschedule the meeting?"

E. A promise of non-recurrence. The apologizer commits him/herself to not having the offense happen again, which is again situation-specific and less frequent than the other strategies.

Cohen & Olshtain (1981) state that there are five major patterns or strategies that

make up the apology speech act available to speakers across languages, yet preference for any one of them or for a combination of them will depend on the specific situation within the given language and culture group. Perhaps equally as important as knowing which strategies to use when, is knowing how to modify these strategies in a given situation. Factors that may affect how people would deliver an apology in their native language (and ideally in the target language as well) include:

- Familiarity with the person being apologized to (intimate to very formal)
- Intensity of the act (its gravity, seriousness, or importance)
- The relative authority that each one has
- Relative ages
- Sex of the person
- Place where the exchange takes place.

3.   Context of the study

Population and setting

This research was carried out at Country Bilingual School in Tunja, with ten fifth graders. Most of them are about 11 or 12 years old. They have been studying at a bilingual school for 5 years. They are creative, they like to learn English and they have reasons to study it. Some of the reasons why my students want to learn English are that they constantly travel to the United States of America, their parents tell them that they can study abroad if they know English, most of them say that in order to be better professionals and to be able to communicate with people from over the world they need to study English, and they also say their parents want them to study at a bilingual school to be best prepared to cope with the different demands of a globalized world. Students are in a happy mood most of the times and are friendly, they also like to play

It is important for speakers of foreign languages to be able to choose when, where and how to use each or more than one speech act in order to achieve successful communication. In addition, foreign language speakers must be good at modifying these strategies, so they perform right in the foreign situations and cultures. Factors, such as the familiarity with the person being apologized to (intimate to very formal), the authority and the ages may play an important role when foreign language speakers are trying to communicate.

In addition to described the main theoretical constructs I took into account to develop my research, I consider important to briefly describe how was it carried out, the type of study, the setting, the participants, the instruments and the process we followed to gather and analyze data. Such description is shown below.

and to make sketches. Most of them have a high social status and are only children. So, they tend to be their family center of attention. When they are willing to work, they present high quality works, they show good use of learning strategies, so they usually learn fast.

Data collected from seven students out of twenty one was taken into account to answer the research question. The students selected were chosen at random.

Country Bilingual School was created about seven years ago with the objective of educating bilingual students. Thus, high school students study English more than eight hours a week, and students in elementary school receive Science and Math subjects in English.

4. Pedagogical strategy

In order to help students to develop their illocutionary competence, by working with speech acts in the foreign language classroom, some workshops were designed to study and practice in the classroom. This strategy was carried out in a period of a month; I did four workshops because I had time limitations: the Principal of the school authorized me to use just this time in my research and because I considered, based on a similar research on Pragmatic competence (Edwards and Csizér, 2004) four workshops were enough to see how the use of a speech act in a foreign class could contribute to the development of my students' illocutionary competence. Each workshop was developed during a week, specifically, two classes were used to develop each of the workshops.

Different materials were used in the workshops: pictures, realia, magazines, flashcards and worksheets. I had different roles as a teacher – researcher. First, I tried to guide students through their learning process and the development of their illocutionary competence; second, I gave them the tools for choosing the right expressions for the different communicative situations they could face; and finally, I carefully observed my students' performances to collect the data I could use to answer my research question and to analyze it.

In the following lines, I will describe the final workshop I applied, to explain in depth how this process was developed. I designed the workshops having in mind a structure that included their names and objectives, an explanation of the topic we would work, a set of activities for students to develop their competence, and an assessment of the activities. All the activities were designed taking into account the task – Based approach, that, according to Frost (2006) focuses on the use of authentic language and on asking students to do meaningful tasks using the target language. (The workshops are included as appendixes. See appendixes 2, 3 and 4).

The last workshop is based on Edwards (2003) and was entitled "Learning How to Apologize". The objective I wanted to achieve with that workshop was "To develop students' pragmatic awareness by translating daily life conversations about apologies." I decided to use translation because, even if the dialogue did not contain difficult grammar or vocabulary, it was made up of pragmatic elements that would force my students to thinking deeper on how to translate them or how they would say that in the foreign language; hence, my students would begin to become aware of the pragmatic differences between the two languages in real-life like situations.

As a warming up, I asked student to look at some pictures, to guess the situation the pictures represented and to describe them. The pictures I showed my students were about people having a conversation at a school restaurant, at a classroom and in a neighborhood. After the warming up, I used the previous situations to broadly explain my students what speech acts are and the different types of speech acts. I wanted to explain my students what speech acts are in order for them to make their grammar implicit knowledge explicit and hence, improving the learning process. Huitt, W., & Hummel, J. (2003) describe the Piaget's Theory of Cognitive Development, explaining that at 10 years old, children are in the Concrete operational stage and that

at this stage intelligence is demonstrated through logical and systematic manipulation of symbols related to concrete objects and that operational thinking begins to develop, which made me think my students would be able to understand grammar concepts such as the ones worked in my research.

Then, I explained my students, how to apologize and I taught them some expressions for doing so. I used a memory game for my students to keep in mind some of the expressions we use when apologizing and using them properly. After that, I asked students to work in pairs to develop a Venn diagram in which they had to compare and constrast the different expressions used for giving an excuse, for making an offer, for admitting a mistake and for making a promise. Once I have made the explanation, students were invited to pretend they were translators, by translating a conversation between two of their classmates and a teacher; I gave them the conversations they had to translate in a separate sheet of paper; they were asked to translate the conversation from Spanish to English.

Once my students had translated the conversation, I checked it, as the first part of the assessment; because, some of my students made literal translations; I also had to explain

to them how to deal with this kind of situations when translating and say to them the right expressions they should use in some specific cases. For example, Students had to translate into English the following expressions: "Ay, qué pena, Felipe, lo siento mucho, por favor, perdóneme, no sabía que la carne estaba dura."; one of them, made the translation, using the dictionary and what he already knew in this way: Oh! That grief! Felipe, don't know that the meat was hard". After translating the conversations given students performed them. Once they have made the performances, I asked them some questions about the situation presented: What happened in the conversation? Who apologized? Why? Do you think the apology worked? Why? in order to complete the assessment of the activity.

Finally, students were asked to write some of the weaknesses, strengths and suggestions about the workshop. (See Appendix No. 5. Learning how to apologize).

In the following section I will explain the data collection procedures and the instruments I used in order to find an answer to my research question. I first mention the type of study I did and then, I focused on the identification and analysis of the categories that emerged from the study.

5. Data collection instruments and procedures

According to the objectives and the main purpose of the present research, I decided to carry out a descriptive case study. According to Wallace "case studies concentrate on what is unique (i.e. which individual units: an individual student; an individual event; a particular group; a particular class; a particular school, etc.)" (Wallace, 1998, p.161). My study fitted in Wallace' definition because it was focused on a specific

group of students, at a specific level within specific classes at a particular school. These characteristics make the context I worked with specific, particular, unique.

Wallace (1998) also argues that the case studies findings are not "statistically generalisable" but that they can be used as an evidence to support a theory. In this sense, my study can be seen as an evidence of how

the theory of developing and "teaching" pragmatic competence works in a specific context. Also, I could show how theory about pragmatic competence works in the specific context I choose to do the research. This is what Wallace (1998:164) explains as "Applying theories to practice You might want to see if a theory advance by some writer applies in your particular case... So theories, hypotheses, sample suggestions can be tried out and results monitored." In short, I used the case study approach to analyze to what extent is the Pragmatic competence teachable by using speech acts in the foreign language classroom.

In order to find out what happens in the foreign language classroom when students are involved in a series of activities in which they must learn how to use the speech acts, and how this process improves their illocutionary competence, I used three instruments:

a. Observation: The workshops were observed and video recorded during the 45 minutes they took to be developed. These observations were made in order to analyze how students behaved and performed each of the activities suggested during the development of the workshops planned, in relation to the ques-

tions, doubts, weaknesses and strengths students showed when participating in the activities suggested, to the language they used, to their participation, and to the way they were communicating.

b. Journal: A journal was filled after each of the four workshops. It contained the impressions, feelings, ideas, thoughts, questions and suggestions of the teacher, in regards to the expressions used by students, to the understanding of the topic the students showed, to the way in which students applied what they have previously learnt and the way they were becoming aware of the use of speech acts in their communication processes, and hence, in their development of the illocutionary competence.

c. Students' artifacts: Students' artifacts such as the worksheets they developed, their drawings and their notebooks were used to explore their work when developing the activities purposed in the workshops, specifically, how students used speech acts when writing and translating. These artifacts were collected for a period of a month, asking students to give me back their works when finished and taking copies from their notebooks.

6. Data analysis and findings

In order to analyze the data I gathered while doing my research Project, I decided to use Grounded theory stated by Glaser and Strauss (1980), to interpret the information I collected. I chose this approach because it gives me the chance to analyze the data in a qualitative way, because I can do this by finding out some categories, because I can link each of those categories and because

I can clearly see what are the connection among the categories and then, to answer my research question.

The first thing I did was to collect my instruments. I read my journal and my observation formats, I watched the videos over and over again and I carefully explored my students' artifacts. Then, I began underlining key as-

pects or information that called my attention. While I was underlining those aspects, I gave them a key word, so I could better know what they were about. Next, I wrote all those key words in a separate sheet of paper and grouped them according to their similarities and differences. By doing this, some categories emerged from the data and I tried to use them

to answer my research question. I wanted to find out actions, language patterns used by students, classroom events and other similar aspects, such as communication situations that I could use to determine how they would make the pragmatic competence teachable by using speech acts in the foreign language classroom.

After making the process I described above, the following categories emerged:

Speech acts
Apologizing
Real-life like situations
Communication

Students' responses
Target language
Expressions always used
Learning

Once I had the categories established, I began making and writing connections between all of them. I decided to take one category

apart: "Pragmatic competence", because it was the general topic of my research. The relations I made are described below.

All the categories are combined to develop pragmatic competence.
We use **speech acts** in our **real lives.**
Apologizing is a **speech act.**
We **apologize** in **real life situations.**
Communication occurs in **real life.**
Students' responses help **communication** keep going.
Students use the **target language** to **communicate.**
When **students' responses** are positive, they make **learning** easier and more fruitful.
Expression always used show students' **learning** processes
Expression always used show students' knowledge of the target language.

The category Speech acts emerged because I found many examples of real life that "forced" students to use the Speech acts and because I found that would help my students to learn meaningfully and hence, to follow a successful learning process to acquire their pragmatic competence. This category is closely related with my research question because it ta-

lks about how speech acts act as a tool for "teaching" students to develop their pragmatic competence, by working with speech acts in the foreign language classroom.

The chart below shows some of the information I got from my three instruments that helped me support this category.

JOURNAL	OBSERVATION FORMAT	STUDENTS' ARTIFACTS
"By using the song, students could see how does the speech act of apologizing is used in real life." "By developing the activities, students were practicing and "living" a speech act: apologizing."	The observation format No. 1 (Appendix 7) shows that students used about 3 times expressions for apologizing.	Blue Car driver: /you damage my car you= oh I'm sorry but my beautiful red car are too damaged

Another category that emerged from the data was **Apologizing**, because it was the speech act selected to work with and hence, it was widely used by students when they were developing the suggested workshops. Besides, while students were developing the activities purposed in the workshops, they were learning how, when and why to apologize. I consider this category has a lot to do with my research question because when students were using Apologizing expressions they were learning how to use them in the appropriate situations and in the right form, which made me think it is possible to teach students the pragmatic competence.

Some of the findings that support the creation of this category were:

JOURNAL	OBSERVATION FORMAT	STUDENTS' ARTIFACTS
"The patient was apologizing and saying to the doctor she was sorry because she made the doctor waste her time." "My students learnt how to apologize. Ex. I'm sorry, your music is ugly."	There are more than 5 tiles in the observation formats showing that students really used apologizing expressions when developing the assign work.	Waitress= oh I'm sorry pls forgive me, I don't know about the meat orchard, if you like I give you two desserts, but you don't talk about this whit Gonzalo.

Real - life like situations was another category I found in the data collected. Real – life like situations were frequently found in the classroom when students were working on their pragmatic competence, because they were continuously analyzing what happens in real life when apologizing; moreover, they created and translated conversations having in mind real-life like situations and because they had the opportunity to practice apologizing in real life situations. I found this category very related to my research inquiry because if students understand, analyze, and use real – life like situations to develop their pragmatic competence that would mean that a teacher may use this kind of settings in order to "teach" this competence.

The following are some of the findings that help me support this category:

JOURNAL	OBSERVATION FORMAT	STUDENTS' ARTIFACTS
"They used real life situations to develop the activities: Ex. The friends were fighting because two of them said something about the other two." "Real life situation make my students' learning more meaningful."	Students used situations they could live in real life to make offers, as it is shown in the observation format No. 1	*you want I give 2 dessert but Dont lik to gossip*

The next category that arose from the data I gathered during this research project was Communication. I found the words related with "communication" lots of times in the instruments. I think it is another important category because the purpose of my research was find out to what extend is it possible to teach the pragmatic competence and I identified that students develop their illocutionary competence and thus, their communicative competence. In addition, students were constantly communicating while they developed the workshops.

The following findings, taken from the instruments, help me to support and explain this category.

JOURNAL	OBSERVATION FORMAT	STUDENTS' ARTIFACTS
"My students developed their pragmatic competence by analyzing, completing, creating and translating dialogues." "When learners were participating in some activities (Guessing roles) they were communicating each other, they were participating in a communicative activity."	There are many tiles in the observations formats (about 20) that show how students established communication among themselves and with the teacher.	

Students' responses was another category that emerged from the analysis of the information I collected during my research project, because the way my students responded to my assignments and questions was very useful to carry out my research project. I think they responded in a positive way, so both, they and I learnt a lot from this research. In addition, this category was very important for me because the way students respond to a suggested activity is very important in the teaching and learning process, specially (for the objectives of my research) in order to find out if they really learnt how to Apologize and hence, how to use speech acts. The information below helped me explain this category.

JOURNAL	OBSERVATION FORMAT	STUDENTS' ARTIFACTS
"They all wanted to be the ones with the role stuck on their backs, and they all wanted to say something apologizing." "Some students were proposing activities we could do; some others were trying to apologize, they were taking risks, and some others were sharing information among them."	The amount of "callings" and "answers" in the observation formats show how much students participated in the activities.	

Target language was another category that emerged for analyzing the data I collected and for trying to answer my research question, because it was exactly what I was researching on and because one of the reasons to make my research project was to assess my students' English level and to help them to improve it. Some other reasons are explained by the information found in the instruments:

JOURNAL	OBSERVATION FORMAT	STUDENTS' ARTIFACTS
"Students and I analyze what kind of language we use depending on the situation in which we apologize and on the person we are addressing to." "My students already know that certain language is used in specific situations."	The number of times (12) the code 8 (Pupil talk response) is used in the observation formats reveals to what extend the students used the target language.	you: I'm sorry there are many streets light is red your friend: Dont worried you: thank you your friend ok

The next category I found was: **Expressions always used,** because I found my students were using the same expressions when they wanted to apologize. I wanted them to use new expressions, such as "I apologize", "I didn't mean to" or "How can I make it up to you?", but they were using expressions such as "I'm sorry" or "Excuse me". Noticing my students were using the same expressions over and over again, made me think, for a while, that they haven't learnt the different reasons and ways we can use to apologize and that probably, it is not quite possible to "teach" the pragmatic competence. The following are some of the findings I got from my instruments, regarding this category:

JOURNAL	OBSERVATION FORMAT	STUDENTS' ARTIFACTS
"I could notice my students were using the same expressions they already knew, such as "I'm sorry" or "excuse me". "Although they were using the same expressions to give an excuse; they began promising, making offers, and asking for a second chance."		Blue Girl driver: you damage my girl. You: oh I'm sorry but my beautiful red Girl are too damaged. have My list: escex me, *repeated expressions* woman: ok but don't.

The last category I found to explore the collected data was Learning, because the aim of my project was to help students improve their English level by developing their pragmatic competences, that means, in others words, I wanted to find out how possible it is to help my students to learn more about a specific field, in these case, the speech act of apologizing. Moreover, I was trying to asses my students' learning process during the development of the workshops and the research project. Information that shows that this category was found in the research is displayed in the following chart:

JOURNAL	OBSERVATION FORMAT	STUDENTS' ARTIFACTS
"As my students were responding properly to the exercises, I thought they had learnt most of the expression and they knew when and why to use them." "Students used translation as a tool to verify that what they were thinking was right."		*repeated expressions* *learnt expressions* Hairstylist: oh I'm sorry I affect there women: I'm almost with out hair Hairstylist: don't worry *learnt expressions* womens: Why I'm ugly. you want I give 2 dessert but if Don't like to gonzalo *learnt reasons/expressions*

7. Conclusions

Analyzing the data, by means of the categories, led me to conclude that apparently, when students are raising their pragmatic awareness and developing their pragmatic competence language learning is widely involved, because students used their previous knowledge and made connections to similar knowledge they already knew in order to complete or create dialogues (as can be seen in some of the students' artifacts); in addition, aspects relating to students' responses and attitudes also had an influence on the development of the illocutionary competence, in this research, students participated actively, as is evident in the observation format, maybe because of the influence and the use of real life situations in the process of teaching and learning.

Because students are closely involved with daily situations and can realize how language and communication really occur, real-life like situations seem to be meaningful in the process of developing the illocutionary competence. Real-life like situations are, apparently, a powerful tool that teachers can use when helping students to develop their illocutionary competence. Students are closed to those situations, they can analyze them, create conversations and use the target language based on situations they can perceive or live in their real lives.

Apparently, when students are involved in a learning process, they will use some of the expressions and language tools they already know. Then, little by little (while they really learn the speech acts, in this case) they will begin to use new expressions and to perform using the new tools they are just given.

It seems that translation is widely used in the process of teaching and learning a foreign language; sometimes, in an excessive and non-sense way, can be harmful for students. However, as it is presented in this research, translation can help students to develop their pragmatic awareness; to help them to clarify what they understand, because students were constantly asking in Spanish what a word or sentences meant in order to check their comprehension, as can be seen in the observation format; possibly, students use translation as a tool to communicate with their teacher; and, teachers use it as a mean to develop students' pragmatic competence.

8. PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

If it may not be completely true that it is possible to develop students' illocutionary competences by a set of workshops aiming to achieve this objective, it is more appropriate to suggest that by taking speech acts to a classroom a teacher may get students to come closer to this important aspect when developing the communicative competence. Students may take advantage of classes focused on speech acts because they can learn some expressions to be used in certain situations, thus, they will be able to use that language properly, or at least, they will be aware of the difference of using come expressions in different contexts, improving their target language management.

It may be possible to help students to develop their illocutionary competence, by working with speech acts in the foreign language classroom. The teacher can diagnose for his/her students' needs; the teacher may create a set of workshops focused on using different speech acts, or working with each speech act one at a time. Although, the whole process (working with all the speech acts) can take a long time, it can help students improve their illocutionary competence, or at least, to get students to have a closer contact with it because they will be aware of the pragmatic competence, they will develop it and hence, they will be able to communicate effectively.

Teachers might be successful when teaching or helping their students to develop any competence, in this case, pragmatic competence, by focusing on different aspects by working them in a number of lessons and creating activities focused on the development of different speech acts. When students participate in those activities, they begin applying what they already know and what they are just learning to use the language in a more complex way, this is evident in students´ oral and written production when they include expressions they just learnt or when they ask for new words and use them in their speeches; students communicate in the classroom asking themselves for words, borrowing things and also establish a communication with the teacher by asking and answering her/him different questions; students compare their mother tongue with the target language, for example, by translation; and students seem to use new expressions and vocabulary that make teachers think they are learning to use the target language to communicate.

It would be very helpful for teachers if they have in mind that students' attitudes and responses may play an important role when helping them to develop their illocutionary competence, because they are the ones who are learning, they develop the activities, they are the ones who allow the teacher to continue or to modify their plans, according to their needs, interests and suggestions. Besides, when students respond in a positive way to the implementation of a teaching strategy the teaching-students ratio seems to be more comfortable and, hence, students and teacher interact in a more active and cooperative way, leading to the possibility for learning to occur easily. Moreover, it is important for a teacher to consider her/his students' characteristic, likes, dislikes and interest when planning the activities, so he can suggest appealing activities for students and they will be motivated to participate in her/his classes.

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