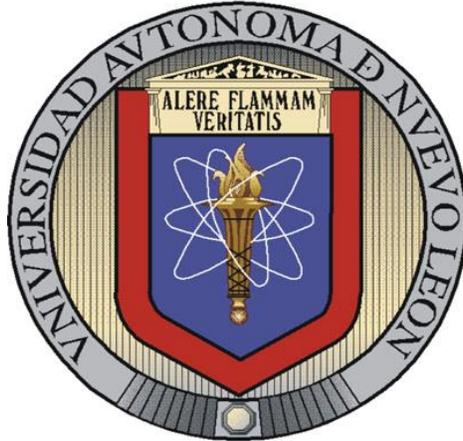


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STRATEGIES TO DEVELOP SOCIOPRAGMATIC COMPETENCE  
IN LEARNERS OF ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

POR:

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A LA ENSEÑANZA DE LENGUAS EXTRANJERAS**

ASESOR

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## CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY AND THE CONTEXT

This Chapter presents a summary of a study carried out to try to find out about the development of the sociopragmatic competence in learners of English as a foreign language (EFL) and the teaching strategies that English facilitators use to develop such competence. Also, the research questions raised to be answered at the end of the study are stated; as well as the purpose and significance of the study; and some similar studies that were reviewed to determine the state of the art in relation to this field.

In this context, Buck (1988, p. 17) states that:

“There is a natural tendency for both teachers and students to tailor their classes to the demands of the test, especially when it is important to the future of the students and pass rates are used as a measure of the teacher success.”

(Buck, 1988, p. 17)

This study aims to propose a viable solution to one of the main current problems in the language education field: the lack of teaching strategies to develop the sociopragmatic in the learners of EFL. In order to use the language to appropriately communicate ideas, the learners must be able to build sentences, but also to be aware of where they use them, to whom and how to use them.

A qualitative investigation was carried out using the action research methodological approach in the Language Center of *Facultad de Filosofía y Letras*

(UANL). It is important to mention that this study addresses issues related to the language education field with the purpose of contributing to the science in this area.

### **1.1 Thesis statement**

Currently, the education system to teach languages implies using new teaching strategies in order to contribute to the academic training of learners, so they can acquire and develop a series of communicative competences which will enable them to be accurate and proficient in the target language. Learners of EFL often focus on grammar; on creating sentences which are grammatically correct, perhaps as a consequence of language facilitators focusing too much on linguistic competence (correct language forms). Therefore they do not pay much attention to how, when or to whom they say those sentences.

In this study, it was noticed that the English learners of the fifth level in the Language Center (UANL) need to develop more their sociopragmatic competence when requesting things. This means that the learners can produce speech acts, but they do not know how to use the different sentences they create according to the context and situation. The learners are able to create grammatically correct sentences (since they use strategies to create them) when they want to request something, but they are unable to use them properly when communicating orally. This research aims to investigate and propose learning strategies to develop the sociopragmatic competence of the learners.

## **1.2 Research questions**

1. To what extent do English learners of the fifth level in the Language Center have sociopragmatic competence?
2. Do learners create and use different requests according to different situations?
3. What kind of mistakes do learners have when requesting things in different situations?
4. Do language facilitators in Language center use strategies to help learners develop their sociopragmatic competence?
5. How can the language facilitator help learners to develop their sociopragmatic competence?

## **1.3 Purpose of the study**

- To identify to what extent English learners of the fifth level in the Language Center have sociopragmatic competence
- To identify whether learners are capable of creating and using different ways of requesting things in different situations.
- To detect the most common mistakes learners make when requesting things in different situations.
- To identify the possible causes of the problem.
- To propose strategies that help learners develop their sociopragmatic competence.

#### **1.4 Significance of the study**

All the learners who were participants in this study agreed that their main objective of studying English is to be able to communicate in this language for different purposes. The relevance of this study lies in the importance of verbal communication (speech acts) that is expressed correctly and properly according to the context. The learners often focus on grammar; on creating sentences which are grammatically correct. Therefore they pay less or no attention to how, when or to whom they say those sentences. It is important to help learners develop their sociopragmatic competence, so they can communicate properly according to the context and situation. According to Kasper (1997) sociopragmatic competence in the foreign language classroom is not teachable.

Competence is a type of knowledge learners possess, develop, use or lose. The challenge for foreign language teaching is whether we can arrange learning opportunities in such a way that they benefit the development of pragmatic competence in L2.

(Kasper, Mui, Tay, & Thananart, 1997, p. 1)

Therefore, the purpose should not be to teach sociopragmatic competence, but rather to find and apply the most appropriate strategies which are the most beneficial for the development of sociopragmatic competence.

## 1.5 Similar Studies

Some researchers have found that sociopragmatic competence is slower than pragmalinguistic competence in learners of foreign languages. This is due to the lack of contact with the language outside the classroom. International studies on development of sociopragmatic competence in foreign language learners have been performed. In Amsterdam, Barron (2003), made a study whose main objective was “to record any developments –whether towards or away from the L2 norm – in the L2 pragmatic competence of the current group of learners over time spent in the target speech community.” (2003, p. 3). He collected data from multiple sources to examine the development of L2 requests, refusals and offers from 33 Irish learners of German. Barron remarks that “despite a relatively advanced level of pragmalinguistic competence, learners’ L2 sociopragmatic competence often lags somewhat behind” (2003, p. 250).

While in US, Cohen and Shively (2007), in the same vein, made a study which aimed “to assess the impact of a curricular intervention on study-abroad learners’ use of language and culture-learning strategies and on their acquisition of requests and apologies.” (p. 189). The exercise consisted of two elements: an orientation to learning speech acts; and a self-study guidebook on language and culture strategies, which included strategies for learning speech acts and electronic journaling by the learners. Learners, who spent one semester abroad in a Spanish or French speaking country, were randomly divided into two groups: an experimental group, and a control group. These researchers reported that while all learners (both groups) improved their apology performance on the speech act measure, they did not make

a distinction between apologizing to a professor and apologizing to a friend. Understanding by this that, the pragmalinguistic competence of the learners was higher than the sociopragmatic competence.

In China, a study was made by Chang (2011), she attempted to find how pragmalinguistic competence and sociopragmatic competence are related by analyzing the difference in the use of strategies, content and form in across situations involving a teaching and a classmate. The study aimed to find that pragmalinguistic competence does not precede sociopragmatic competence or vice versa, as the existing literature states. However, after studying the apology strategies used by Chinese learners of English as a foreign language, Chang concluded that the relation between pragmalinguistic competence and sociopragmatic competence is complex, and her findings show that the progress of those two competences is dynamic and shifting. After reading Chang's study, Hassall (2012) argues that sociopragmatic competence seems to develop slowly, especially in foreign language settings.

Alcon (2005) made an investigation in Spain, which attempted to examine the efficacy of instruction of a foreign language at the pragmatic level. The specific purpose of the empirical study (as she called it) was to investigate to what extent the explicit vs implicit instruction affected learners' competence to use request strategies. Alcon concludes that learners who were exposed to explicit instruction of a foreign language showed an advantage over the learners who were exposed to implicit instruction.

These studies show that sociopragmatic competence is important in the process of language learning and it is an aspect that must be taken into account by the facilitators as it is proven to be developed slower than other competences when teaching a foreign language. It is important to pay attention to the strategies used in class to balance the competences learners are developing. As learners in this study are learning English as Foreign language, it is possible that they do not get to practice English outside the classroom; that is why it is important to provide them with enough context during classes. In order to do that there is a theoretical background that should be understood first which is presented in Chapter 2.

In Chapter 2 the literature review is presented, in which all topics related to the problem are exposed from general to specifics. The parts of the communicative competence are described and the sociopragmatic competence is presented as the main issue of this study. After that, the importance of the context and situation in a class of English as a foreign language is described, and the main approaches and methods for language teaching are presented with some teaching strategies that can help learners develop their sociopragmatic competence. Finally, the backwash effect is described with some other issues in the classroom that may complicate the learners' sociopragmatic development according to different authors. All this information is presented as a theoretical basis for understanding the whole study.

In Chapter 3 the methodology used in this study is described, which is action research. The process followed in this study is described as well as the participants which are divided into two groups: learners and language facilitators. After that, the

instruments used for gathering the data are mentioned and also an explanation about why each instrument was chosen. Finally, the scope of the study is presented.

In Chapter 4 the results of the instruments applications are discussed and explained in detail. As the participants of this study are two groups: learners and language facilitators, the results are divided in those two categories, so the needs of both learners and facilitators can be distinguished.

In Chapter 5, the proposal to tackle the problem stated is described in detail, which is a course for the language facilitators in which they will learn some strategies to help learners develop their sociopragmatic competence. After the course design is presented, the results of its application and evaluation is described.

In Chapter 6, the conclusions are presented, and as the course proposed can be improved or other proposals to tackle the problem can be suggested and implemented in the future, some recommendations to continue this investigation are presented.

## **CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

In this chapter, the theories and definitions that were used as basis for this study are explained from general to specifics. All topics presented in this Chapter are important theoretical contributions that helped not only to understand the problem concerning this study but also to propose the most feasible and viable way to tackle the problem.

### **2.1 Applied Linguistics**

“Language is a (finite or infinite) set of sentences, each finite in length, and constructed out of a finite set of elements” (Chomsky, 2002, p. 13). Linguistics can be defined as the scientific study of human language for communication. In this field, there are different approaches: Chomsky’s Generative Linguistics whose idealization is that the object of study of linguistics should be the demonstration of language knowledge (competence), rather than the actual use of language in everyday life (performance) (Stringer & Bruce, 1973); Sociolinguistics which focuses on finding relationships between social contexts and the different ways in which language is used (Van Herk, 2012); Systemic Functional Linguistics which is concerned with language as a vehicle for communication, its purposes and how people use it (Eggins, 2004); and finally Corpus Linguistics which is an approach that searches information about word frequencies and combinations in databanks which contain several words of actual language in use (McEnery & Wilson, 2001). Each of these approaches has different purposes which represent different

ideologies and theories whose application is comprised in a branch of Linguistics: Applied Linguistics.

Applied Linguistics investigates problems in which language is involved, both educational and social. According to Cook (2003) Applied Linguistics has three different areas: Language and education; Language, work and law; and Language, information, and effect. The area concerning this study is Language and education; this area includes: First-language education; Additional-language education (second and foreign language education); Clinical linguistics; and Language testing (Cook, 2003). This study is focused on the Additional-language education area, specifically Foreign Language education.

There are three elements in Foreign Language education, which are language form, language meaning, and language in context (Martinet, 1966). The latter is studied by Pragmatics, which is a subfield of linguistics that studies how context contributes to meaning in language. Pragmatics studies the procedure which enable people to understand each other, and its main concern is not the literal meaning of the messages, but the speaker's intentions (Cook, 2003). The purpose of language is to communicate; but it is necessary to use it properly in each different context and situation so that communication can be achieved. In order to do so the speaker must be able to create and use properly different speech acts.

### 2.1.1 Speech Acts

In order to communicate, it is necessary to use the different speech acts, which were proposed by Austin and his student Searle (1962). In contrast to grammar, which limits its work to the linguistic structures, the speech act theory also considers the communication situations. According to this, while using language, people not only produce a set of sentences, but also perform an action. In other words, through the use of language people either do something or make others do something.

Speech act theory is one of the fields of pragmatics in which consideration of context was introduced earliest. For Austin, the context is part of what philosophers of language have to clarify, and he names it “the whole speech act in the full speech situation” (Austin, 1962, p. 148).

He makes a distinction related to the speech acts as constatives and performatives. He describes the constative utterance as “the ideal of what would be right to say in all circumstances, for any purpose, to any audience, etc.” (Austin, 1962, p. 146). Constatives are used to describe a situation; they are statements and can be qualified as true or false values. However, performatives are used to perform a task and cannot be characterized as true or false.

While performing a statement three different acts can occur simultaneously (Austin, 1962):

- Locutionary act: this only describes the action of saying something; the meaning of the words that are said.
- Illocutionary act: this is to do something by saying something. It is the intention, the purpose of what is said.
- Perlocutionary act: this is related to the conclusion of something that was said. It describes the effect on the hearer after he recognized the communicative intention of the speaker.

Performatives are grouped under five categories (Austin, 1962):

- Directives: they are aimed at leading the listener to do something (ordering, requesting, prohibiting)
- Declarations: they are aimed to create a change (resigning, appointing)
- Commissive: they show that the speaker is committed to do something by expressing an intention (promising)
- Expressive: it reveals the state of mind of the speaker with respect to a situation (apologizing, celebrating)
- Assertive: it is the accuracy of what is said (claiming, swearing)

The theory of speech acts argues that linguistic utterances not only mean but also serve as a function, that is, that when a person talks, sees, performs, or gets involved either in an oral or written way expressing the intention of the speaker, the interpretation will depend on the context or communicative situation. The speech act

theory is of utmost importance because in order to communicate there are two main things needed: to acquire a language and to develop the skills to use that language properly in order to communicate correctly.

### **2.1.2 Communicative Competence**

Dell Hymes (1966) used and defined for the first time, the concept of communicative competence based on Chomsky's competence and performance model (1965). Hymes' theory of communicative competence was a definition of what a speaker needs to know in order to be communicatively competent in a speech community. With this ability that he called communicative competence, speakers know when to talk or not to talk, to whom, how, where and what to say in order to obtain what they want. This means to use the speech acts correctly and to obtain an expected perlocutionary act according to the context in which they are communicating.

Hymes (1972) divided communicative competence into four aspects:

1. Linguistic competence. It is the ability of the speaker in using the language, following all the different functioning rules of its system. It includes grammar, syntax (linguistic structure), morphology (word function and inflection), phonetics (pronunciation), and lexis (vocabulary).

2. Discourse competence. It is the ability of the speaker to master the linguistic rules concerning cohesion and coherence of different kinds of discourse in the foreign language (use of appropriate synonyms, pronouns, conjunctions)

3. Sociolinguistic competence. It is the ability of the speaker to master where, when, and whom to say things. Sociolinguistic competence deals with the production of sentences and their effect, and understanding regarding different sociolinguistic contexts.

4. Strategic competence. It is the ability of the speaker to maintain communication and to use different strategies to be understood, and to understand others. Those strategies include verbal and non-verbal communication.

The aspect concerning this study is the sociolinguistic competence, because the matter of this work is to help learners use properly the speech acts in different contexts. However, sociolinguistic competence also deals with the construction of sentences and that topic is not the focus of this study. Therefore, this investigation only deals with one part of the sociopragmatic competence.

### **2.1.3 Sociopragmatic Competence**

Based on what Hymes described as sociolinguistic competence, Leech (1983) made a difference for the very first time between pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic competence. Leech gave the term 'pragmalinguistic competence' to the competence of the speaker to build different acts of speech, this is, not only the ability to understand what is meant by what is said, but to be able to create different ways of saying things. What Leech describes as 'sociopragmatic competence' is the speaker's capacity to use those acts of speech appropriately according to the context and situation.

Pragmalinguistic competence thus refers to the process by which learners select certain forms from their native language, to transport into the target language (foreign language in this case). Sociopragmatic competence, on the other hand, can be defined as "the influence of the social perceptions underlying language users' interpretation and performance of linguistic action in L1 on their assessment of subjectively equivalent L2 contexts" (Barron, 2003, p. 37).

In this study, sociopragmatic competence is studied as the ability to use properly different speech acts. Learners are able to create different ways of saying the same thing (in this case requests); they have learned how to create different speech acts in different ways, but they have not developed the competence of using them appropriately according to different context and situations.

#### **2.1.4 Context and Situation**

At this point, there is a need to explain the difference between context and situation. Those terms are often used interchangeably, but they have been defined by different authors as different but related concepts. Context is a state which can be produced by the happening of an event and/or destroyed by the happening of another incident or event. Context then, is the environment which can be affected and/or modified by the agents within it (Gero & Smith, 2009). Thus, situation is the event that can modify the context; it is something that happens within the context that has some meaning in the speaker. For example the people's actions can be a situation within a specific context.

In addition to those two concepts, there is another which combines them: Situational Context (or Context of Situation). Malinowski and Firth (1957) studied the meaning in terms of the context in which language is used in different ways. They defined the context of situation as the relevant verbal and non-verbal actions of the participants, the relevant objects and the effect of the verbal action. Therefore, Context of Situation is all that surrounds the participants and that is relevant to them in that particular moment, such as non-verbal actions, the setting, sounds, expressions, behaviors, objects, etc.

Just as interactions take place in different situational contexts, language education also has different contexts in which it is taught. It is known that additional languages can be taught as foreign or second languages, this implies that learners

have different contexts outside the classroom, which could affect their sociopragmatic competence development.

## **2.2 English as a Foreign Language (EFL)**

It is important to mention the difference between second and foreign language. In second language teaching, language plays a social role in the community; it functions as a recognized means of communication among members who speak some other language as their native tongue. In foreign language teaching, language is primarily taught in the classroom. The distinction between second and foreign language learning is what is learned and how they are learned.

Second language acquisition focuses on how learners create a new language system with limited exposure to a second language. Learners acquire a second language by making use of existing knowledge of their native language, general learning strategies, or universal properties of language to internalize knowledge of the second language. These processes serve as a means by which the learner constructs an interlanguage, which can be described as a transitional system reflecting the learner's current L2 knowledge (Ellis, 1994).

On the other hand, a foreign language is usually learned by a person who wants to use it for a specific reason, such as traveling (Silva, 2013). A foreign language is the one that the learner learns in a context in which such language is not spoken. The role played by the foreign language facilitators is of utmost importance because the classroom could be all the contact learners have with the

language. In the specific case of EFL the strategies that language facilitators use are very important because English is used as an international communication tool. Therefore, English facilitators should equip their learners with the communicative competence needed in the different linguistic contexts and interactions that learners may face (Mansfield & Poppi, 2012). In order to do so, language facilitators must know the most appropriate methodology to overcome the limitations or to take advantage of the resources available in each case (ESL or EFL) considering the learners' needs.

### **2.3 Main approaches and methods for language teaching**

When teaching a language, every facilitator must have an idea of what the learners need to learn. Untrained facilitators often attempt to re-create the activities used when they were taught the language, unlike most trained language facilitators who will have a more theoretical idea of what learners need to learn. In both cases, those preconceptions, assumptions or ideas of the learners' needs are called approach (Brown, 1995). An approach is the set of ideas and beliefs about what language is and what language teaching is. On the other hand, the method concept in language teaching is defined as “the notion of a systematic set of teaching practices based on a particular theory of language and language learning” (Richards & Rodgers, 2014, p. 3).

In the field of foreign language teaching, there are some approaches and methods which have been applied, rejected, corrected and/or accepted. The first

approach known was used 500 years ago and is called Classical Approach in which learners needed to read classic literature in order to learn the language, which in this case was Latin (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Learners were taught to analyze the grammar rules of the foreign language while reading. The purpose of this approach was to learn how to read in the foreign language in order to learn about a specific discipline.

In 1840, as part of the Classical Approach the Grammar-Translation Method (GTM) emerged. The GTM dominated European and foreign language teaching from the 1840s to the 1940s (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). In that time, the main purpose of learning a language was to understand the literature. Therefore, the main characteristics of the GTM was to learn the grammar rules of the foreign language, compare them to the mother language, and then applied the theory learnt by translating (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Obviously, neither speaking nor listening were considered in this approach because its goal was to translate in order to transmit the knowledge contained in the books. And one of the most important aspects in this method was that the native language was used as the medium of instruction, it was used to explain the grammar rules.

As the needs of the population progressed, so did the teaching methods. That is why as a reaction to the GTM, the Direct Method (DM) was developed in the late nineteenth century. Its approaches were based on assumptions of naturalistic language learning, in the belief that the process of learning a foreign language is similar to the process of the first language acquisition. Hence, language facilitators of that time came to the conclusion that if there is a direct exposure to the target

language, the learning will occur naturally. The Direct Method differs from the GTM since the former focuses on vocabulary and oral communication, and the latter emphasizes the importance of grammar and the writing skill. The main characteristic of DM was that learners need to learn communication so they should use only the second (or foreign) language in class (Brown, 1995); therefore, translation was not allowed. As opposed to the previous methods in which the goal was to acquire knowledge of specific disciplines, in this Method only everyday vocabulary and sentence were taught, and grammar was taught inductively.

Toward the end of the 1950's in the United States more attention was given to the foreign language teaching, resulting in the creation of the Audiolingual Method. This method claimed to have transformed language teaching from art into a science (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). In this method learners need conditioning and behavioral modification to learn a language. The approach behind Audiolingual method was that "Language is speech, not writing...A language is a set of habits... Teach the language, not about the language... A language is what its native speakers say, not what someone thinks they ought to say... Languages are different" (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 55). Audiolingual Method holds that language can be formally organized to be taught efficiently.

In the 1970's some language facilitators noted that being able to communicate required more than just the knowledge of linguistic structures. Learners also should be able to actually use the language accurately according to the context and situation. That is why communicative competence became the goal of language teaching using the Communicative Approach (Larsen-Freeman, 2010). In this

approach, learners are expected not just to know, but to use all speech acts in well-structured sentences. Language facilitators should encourage and motivate learners to use the target language, and for that, facilitators must truly understand communicative competence, which entails the knowledge of three main elements, which are language form, language meaning, and language in context (Martinet, 1966). Learners must be able to communicate expressing their intentions.

Currently, a new approach is being applied in Europe since the beginning of the 1990's, which is called Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) (Marsh, 2008). CLIL is based on the Content-Based Instruction (in which language teaching does not focus on the language itself) and on the Communicative Approach.

### **2.3.1 Communicative Approach and CLIL**

All persons are exposed to social interaction which is the main focus of the communicative approach. This approach help learners use the target language in different contexts and with different functions. Unlike the aforementioned methods, the main objective of the communicative approach is to help learners not only to create sentences but to use them transmitting their own ideas and opinions in any situational context. The communicative approach is characterized by a series of general principles; and David Nunan (1996) made a list of the five main characteristics of this approach:

1. Emphasizes communication in the target language through interaction.

2. Uses authentic texts in the learning situation.
3. Offers opportunities to think in the learning process and not just in the language.
4. Gives importance to the personal experiences of the learners, such as elements that contribute to the learning process in the classroom.
5. Relates the target language with the activities performed outside the classroom.

These five characteristics are those which show that the communicative approach is being used in the classroom. Most of the activities performed during a language class using the communicative approach are in groups or pairs, since the social interaction is its main focus. There are different activities that can be carried out in the classroom that promotes learners interaction, such as dialogues, role-plays, debates, oral presentations, etc. (Garza, 2010).

During the last 45 years, the foreign language teaching and learning development has been influenced by the communicative approach, as it was previously mentioned. However, three main important issues have remained (Marsh, 2008). The first issue that Marsh (2008) describes is the learner's individual motivation. The second one is the difference between language acquisition and language learning; and the third one is the time of language learning within the curriculum.

The CLIL approach was developed in Europe through the 1990's. However, the term was not introduced until 1996, and it was described as a "dual-focused educational approach in which an additional language is used for the learning and teaching of both content and language" (Marsh, 2008, p. 234). This means that the

language course will be integrated with content in order to immerse the learner in a language context; and in the same way, content courses will include foreign language aspects to develop the language skills the learners need. In our context, specifically in UANL, some bilingual high schools have these bilingual programs in which learners have content subjects in the foreign language. What happens over time is that facilitators tend to focus more on content, rather than trying to balance them.

Even though CLIL was developed for teaching content in a foreign language, there is one particular aspect of this approach that is of utmost importance in this study because CLIL is inspired by “important methodological principles established by research on foreign language teaching, such as the need for learners to be exposed to a situation calling for genuine communication” (Eurydice, 2005, p. 8). As it will be mentioned further, promoting genuine communication among foreign language learners is one of the main teaching strategies to use in order to help learners develop their sociopragmatic competence.

It is considered that the combination of the communicative approach and the abovementioned aspect of CLIL can be very useful for the learners’ sociopragmatic competence development. In the classroom different techniques and teaching strategies can be applied using authentic material about the content already selected considering the learners’ age, interests, occupations, etc. Using the appropriate teaching strategies in the classroom language facilitators can promote authentic and genuine interaction in the classroom and therefore the learners’ sociopragmatic competence will be developed.

### **2.3.2 Teaching Strategies for EFL**

Teaching strategies, in the field of language teaching, are a set of principles and techniques used for language instruction. Some authors define teaching strategies as procedures which help the learning process, and they are generally consciously planned and applied by the facilitators. (García, Pérez, Martínez, & Alfonso, 1998). Teaching strategies help learners develop a critical thinking and have to maintain classroom interaction, keep learners engaged in the class and enable learners to actually learn the content in the course. The application of the strategies is flexible and it depends on the context and characteristics in each learning-teaching situations. This means, that it is important not only to know or plan the strategies, but actually know how to apply them considering the learners' needs.

The strategies used for language teaching must help learners develop the four communication skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. In this field, Bialystok (1981) proposed four main categories of strategies: inferencing, monitoring, formal practicing and functional practicing (Bialystok, 1981). For these categories the strategies are considered to be “optimal means for exploiting available information to improve competence in a second language” (Bialystock, 1978, p. 71). This means that those categories of strategies are useful for developing competences in all language areas, such as language forms, functions, appropriate usage, etc. Therefore, in a language classroom all four categories of strategies must be balanced in order to develop all competences at the same level.

Krashen (1983) explains that language learned in formal contexts (such as classrooms) does not provide the learner with enough competences to produce the

language in different situations. Most foreign language instruction is taught in classrooms with little or no exposure to the target language community. Therefore, language facilitators should search for the best strategies that can be used to provide learners with opportunities to use the language in different situational contexts which simulate actual interactions that will help them develop their sociopragmatic competence (Eisenclas, 2011). That is why strategies which promotes authentic and real interaction among learners using authentic material are necessary when teaching a foreign language, because it could be the case that the classroom is the only place where learners have the opportunity to be in touch with the language. Some authors agree that the most recommended strategies for teaching a language are the use of conversations, reading of authentic material, and all kind of genuine interaction among learners (Naiman, Fohlich, Stern, & Todesco, 1978). Through those strategies learners become more independent in the production of the language in non-formal contexts (outside the classroom) (Lee, 1995).

When teaching English as a foreign language there are many strategies that can be used depending on the method and approach of the program. Each method and approach has its own set of strategies considering its aims and objectives. In this study, the integrated language teaching strategies are considered to be important. The main principle behind this set of strategies is that language skills are better developed when language is taught through its use when teaching another subject (Enright & McCloskey, 1988). This means that the subject should not be the language itself (its grammar rules, or structure), but other topics; and the topics should be selected according to the learners' interests and also. Therefore, language is learnt by its use, when learners are using it to express their real and authentic

intentions. If learners produce the language when having an authentic conversation and trying to understand and communicate what they really want to say; or when trying to solve problems or completing tasks, they will develop the four skills better than if the skills are being developed in isolated unreal activities and exercises (Enright & McCloskey, 1988).

As it was already mentioned all strategies have different purposes and objectives depending on the approach and methodology used. This study aims to create a comprehensive set of strategies to help learners develop their sociopragmatic competence using the main principles of the communicative approach and CLIL.

### **2.3.3 Teaching Strategies to develop learners' sociopragmatic competence**

Different authors (Ohta, 2005; Bot, Lowie, & Verspoor, 2005; Minegishi Cook, 2001; Eisenclas, 2011) agree in four main and essential strategies needed to help learners develop their sociopragmatic competence:

1. To promote learners' interaction with authentic (similar to real-life) situations. Activities such as interpreting contextual messages and practicing pragmatic routines help learners know practice the use the language effectively in different situational contexts (Minegishi Cook, 2001; Ohta, 2005)
2. To promote learners' genuine classroom interaction. This will help learners develop the skills necessary to manage communication in

different social interactions where they can use the language effectively to communicate their own ideas and intentions in a way that is accepted and appropriate for the interactional needs of a group of participants (Eisenclas, 2011).

3. To use communicative tasks in which learners play different roles in real, authentic social contexts. This strategy allows learners to interpret different messages and to identify and produce the appropriate participant and active role in interpersonal exchanges that can be conducted in real, authentic social contexts. (Bot, Lowie, & Verspoor, 2005; Eisenclas, 2011)
4. To provide different examples with different contexts. The activities used in class and textbooks often show the language use in one specific context (Ohta, 2005; Eisenclas, 2011). Providing the learners with different examples in different contexts can overcome this limitation that is often faced in the classroom.

Learners need to explore language as both linguistic and social actions within specific contexts (Liddicoat, 1997). Language learners need to be exposed to activities, materials and/or learning situations which go beyond demonstrations of language isolated use in formal contexts which rarely occur. However, it is not all about the strategies included in the classroom when teaching a foreign language; there are other issues that in a way or another affect the language learning process and make the strategies lose effectiveness. One of them is that often textbooks fall short in language actual use, they generally provide little information about language use in different situations (Vellenga, 2004). There are other issues that affect the

learners' sociopragmatic development, such as evaluation tests focusing too much on grammar, limited exposure to the language, and negative backwash effect to name a few.

#### **2.4. Issues in the classroom that complicate learners' sociopragmatic development**

According to the literature review there are some issues that may complicate sociopragmatic development in foreign language learners. Some of them do not depend of the facilitator, but others do. The often limiting and inauthentic communicative pattern of classroom interaction is one big important common issue that complicates sociopragmatic development (Ohta, 2005). Sometimes, language facilitators do not promote an authentic interaction among learners; therefore, they practice unreal and previously prepared conversations, instead of practicing with a real, authentic, improvised conversation. Communicative tasks that allow the learners to interpret the social meaning of the activity and to identify and adopt the appropriate participant roles are limited because most exercises are prompted by an assignment rather than emerge from learners' needs for genuine interpersonal exchanges we wish to conduct in real, authentic social contexts (Bot, Lowie, & Verspoor, 2005).

Skills such as interpreting contextual cues or practicing pragmatic routines are not readily available to help learners systematically learn how to use them effectively and reliably, rendering sociopragmatic instruction less effective (Minegishi Cook, 2001). Language facilitators often do not provide learners with different

pragmatic settings that may help learners interpret different context, which is learn how to change the way things are said according to the situational context.

In addition to a sociopragmatically limited classroom environment, textbooks also rarely cover pragmatic issues (Eisenclas, 2011). Instead, they equate speech acts with individual grammatical forms (e.g., the imperative is used to give directions), but "fall short of accurately describing how and why speech acts are realized, and do not discuss the social strategies that underlie speakers' choices" (Eisenclas, 2011, p. 55). When learners are told the correct answers of the exercises, the explanations about why is the correct answer are often focused on grammar, and the context can be underestimated even though it is a very important fact which can modify the correct answer.

Learners are often given written discourse completion tasks, and this may be problematic because they remove much of the interactive nature of communication, thus limiting the sociopragmatic factors that drive interaction (Jeon & Kaya, 2006). In this case, written exercises are not a problem; however, if the other skills (specially speaking) are removed to practice writing, the communicative purpose of learning English is also pushed away. Especially because when learners are answering written exercises, they do not have an immediate feedback to practice their response and trying to say what they want to say in that moment, that is what Jeon and Kaya meant when they talked about the interactive nature of communication, which is often lost with written exercises.

Another issue that complicates and deeply affects learners' sociopragmatic competence is the negative backwash effect learners often receive. This issue is very important for this study since it is believed to be the origin of the problem in this particular case.

#### **2.4.1 The negative backwash effect of testing**

The backwash effect can be defined as the consequences that the evaluation has on the processes and products of learning and teaching (Tejada & Castillo, 2010). Depending on the effects that testing has on teaching and learning, the backwash effect can be positive or negative (Messick, 1996; Heaton, 1990; Hughes, 1989). The implementation and use of evaluation explanation in the classroom lead the language facilitators and learners to perform activities which promote a negative backwash effect and/or even inhibit learning (Tejada & Castillo, 2010).

It has been studied that it is possible to promote a positive impact on the language teaching-learning process by the use of tests which evaluate the competences to be developed in the program (Chapman & Synder, 2000). However, not only the evaluation tests can promote a positive or negative backwash effect; often, the activities from textbooks emphasize on reading and writing skills not only setting aside speaking and listening, but also focusing only on language form rather than language meaning (Bedford, 2003). Therefore, the consequences become an unconscious process affecting the learning process and the learners' perceptions about what is more important to learn about the language.

According to Prodromou (1995) one way of transforming the negative backwash effect into a positive one is to focus on the language process rather than “preoccupation with the end-product” (Prodromou, 1995, p. 21). This message can be promoted by the facilitator since the beginning of the program. The key is to keep the strategies ongoing during in all sessions and to focus on developing the four aspects of the communicative competence trying to balance them with each activity performed in the classroom.

## **CHAPTER 3. METHODOLOGY**

This is a qualitative study carried out in the educational field, the procedures of action research were used. In this chapter, each step of the action research approach followed in this study is described. As this work was performed in two stages: observation of the problem and observation after solution implementation, the participants are divided in two groups representing two stages of the action research process. The instruments used for data collection are mentioned with an explanation about their selection. Finally the scope and limitations of the study are described.

### **3.1 Methodological Approach of this study**

The methodological approach of this research is a qualitative approach, which involves understanding the research context from the inside rather than from an outside perspective (Watson-Gegeo, 1988). The aim of studies with a qualitative approach is to offer descriptions and interpretations of social issues, but does not attempt to make claims about generalizing the findings of the research to large populations. Even though this is a research with a qualitative approach, there are some data that can be quantified, without converting this into a quantitative approach. Strauss (2002) mentions that in some cases when using a qualitative approach, the quantification of data is necessary to identify and/or find relations among data, and then to organize them in a theoretical scheme which will complement the qualitative investigation.

Burns (1999, p. 23) lists the main characteristics that describe a qualitative research:

- Encompasses socially subjective and relative interpretations of phenomena.
- Draws on data to develop and refine hypotheses.
- Interprets human behavior from participants' perspectives.
- Explores naturalistic cultural settings without controlling variables.
- Gathers 'rich' data and interprets them through 'thick' description and analysis.
- Ensures validity through multiple data sources.
- Does not seek to generalize beyond the research context.
- Focuses on the processes as well as the outcomes of the research.

This investigation has a qualitative approach because it aims to find data from a specific situational context in a specific period of time, and it does not aim to generalize its findings. After data analysis, this research seeks to make an intervention in the problem, and contribute by trying to solve the issue through the application of a plan previously designed.

### 3.1.1 Action Research: Definition and Process

In the field of foreign language teaching, a distinction has been made between academic research and classroom practice. According to Hopkins (1993) academic research has been divided into theory, research and practice. Burns (1999) stated that action research initiates and enhances language facilitators' research skills as a natural extension of their teaching practice.

Action research has been given different definitions according to several authors. A definition proposed by Carr & Kemmis (1986) states that:

Action research is simply a form of self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own practices, their understanding of these practices and the situations in which the practices are carried out.

(Carr & Kemmis, 1986, p. 162)

Burns (1994) defined action research as the “application of fact finding to practical problem solving in a social situation with a view to improving the quality of action within it...” (p. 293). Through action research, investigations of practical issues or concerns which arise within a particular social context are made using a systematic process. Action research, then, takes practice into theory instead of theory into practice (Burns, 1994).

Burns (1999) proposed a series of steps or phases which together represent the cyclic process of action research. Before describing each phase, it is important to

mention that this process is not a model, it is not necessary to follow it as a procedure. According to Burns, action research can be done following the general pointers, not exactly in the same order:

*Phase 1: Exploring.* This phase involves identifying a starting point of the issue or problem to undertake some initial action, such as observing and doing some reading to take some ideas for the research. In this particular study, the main issue found was that learners apparently showed well-structured sentences, but they were using them inappropriately. This phase was carried out with some reading of recent articles about similar problems, and of some books that could explain theories or topics related to this apparent problem.

*Phase 2: Identifying the problem.* In this phase the problem is specifically identified, enabling the researches to clarify their ideas about the general issue and make the problem more specific. The identification of the problem concerning this study was stated after the literature review made on phase 1. The problem was identified as a lack or slow development of sociopragmatic competence in learners of advanced levels of English as a foreign language.

*Phase 3: Planning.* At this stage, a viable plan of action must be develop in order to collect data. The main purpose of this plan is to apply an action that is thought to solve the problem and to collect data on the outcomes of this action. The plan for this study is shown in Table 1 with a Gantt diagram comprising all the phases.

*Phase 4: Collecting Data.* During this phase, researchers go more deeply into the specific problem being researched. Different techniques can be used in this

phase: observational techniques, such as observation, notes, audio and video recording, photographs, group discussion; or non-observational techniques, such as interviews, surveys and questionnaires, documents, etc. For this study, learners' performance of sociopragmatic competence was observed during three weeks (three sessions per week). They were audio recorded and notes were taken during this period. After those three weeks of observing the learners, they were asked to answer a written exercise with open ended-items and then interviewed in groups. To complement the data collected from the observation of learners, language facilitators were also observed in an attempt to discover the origin of the problem.

*Phase 5: Analyzing/Reflecting.* In this phase the data which was already collected in the previous stage are analyzed and interpreted. This stage is where the researcher makes a pause in all the research activities to think and reflect the results and all the data collected since the first phase. The interpretation of the data must be supported by all the literature review made in phase 1. The insight of this study according to the collected data is that some learners focus too much on language form rather than language meaning.

*Phase 6: Hypothesizing/Speculating.* At this point, after the researcher has analyzed and reflected all the information collected, speculations and predictions can be made. The researcher has now sufficient information to say what is likely to occur next, or to hypothesize and speculate the reasons why the problem is happening. The origin of the problem seems to be a negative backwash effect learners are receiving in the classroom and that the strategies suggested by authors to help learners develop their sociopragmatic competence are not being implemented in class.

*Phase 7: Intervening.* After the researcher has a hypothesis supported by the literature and the data collected, s/he is able to design and propose a solution based on his/her hypothesis about why the problem is happening. The researcher now is able to try out the possible solution to change the circumstances around the identified problem. The proposal for this study is a course for language facilitators to remind them the main and essential teaching strategies that are suggested in the literature to help the learners develop their sociopragmatic competence.

*Phase 8: Observing.* This phase involves, as its name states, observing the results of the solution application. This means that the researcher must collect the data again in order to observe whether the problem was solved or not. If the problem was corrected, the researcher may come to a conclusion and confirm that the hypothesis was correct. If the problem was not solved, then the researcher can propose another hypothesis and start the cycle again from phase 6. After the course application, the facilitators were observed again to observe the actual outcomes of the intervention.

*Phase 9: Reporting.* This is a phase which implies relating all the information collected since Phase 1 discussing and analyzing the results obtained from all the process. The results from this study showed the origin of the problem and that the course for language facilitators is a feasible solution that can be implemented to solve the issue.

*Phase 10. Writing.* This phase involves writing all the progress made in the study, including the results of the whole process. This can be written in a report,

article, thesis, book, etc. For this study, this phase was carried out since the beginning of the process because it was a project planned to be develop during two years.

*Phase 11. Presenting.* The objective of this final phase is to show the study to a wider audience in order to contribute to other researches and discussions. Even though the advances of this study were presented each semester, this phase is considered to be the dissertation and further publications of scientific articles.

Table 1. Stages of this study.

Phase/ Date	Aug-Dec 2013	Jan-Jun 2014	Aug-Dec 2014	Jan-Jun 2015
1. Exploring				
2. Identifying				
3. Planning				
4. Collecting Data				
5. Analyzing				
6. Hypothesizing				
7. Intervening				
8. Observing				
9. Reporting				
10. Writing				
11. Presenting				

### **3.2 Participants of this study**

This study has two objects of study: a group of 19 English learners; and a group of 6 language facilitators. The participants in the first group are 19 learners of English as a foreign language studying at the Language Center of *Facultad de Filosofía y Letras*. They are between 16 and 21 years old. This study began when they were in the 5<sup>th</sup> level (out of 7). It is important to mention that 10 of the 19 participants did not start the program since the first level; they were incorporated during semesters two and three via a diagnostic exam. The class was taught on weekdays from 1 pm to 2:30 pm. in an air-conditioned classroom that has a computer with internet access, projector, and an electronic board. This group was chosen because it was considered that they were in an advanced level, and therefore their sociopragmatic competence could be measured.

The participants in the second group are six language facilitators of advanced levels in the Language Center: 1 facilitator of 4<sup>th</sup> level; 4 facilitators of 5<sup>th</sup> level; and 1 facilitator of 6<sup>th</sup> level. This sample represents the 10% of the English language facilitators teaching in the Language Center.

### **3.3 Techniques used in this study**

In this research two different techniques were used to collect data: observational and non-observational techniques. The observational techniques used were observation, notes and audio recording. The non-observational techniques used were interview and survey.

- The techniques used for observing the 19 English learners were:
  - Observation, notes and audio recording
  - Group interview (see Appendix 1)
  - An exercise to test the learner's ability to create requests in different situations was also used as a complementary material.
- The techniques used for observing the group of 6 English facilitators were:
  - Observation, notes and audio recording.
  - Lesson Transcripts

The observations were carried out in the English classroom, sixty minutes observed per facilitator. The observation of facilitators was based on a check list containing the four main teaching strategies proposed in the literature to help learners develop their sociopragmatic competence (see Appendix 2).

### **3.3.1 Observational techniques**

According to Burns (1999) observation enables researchers to document interactions and events, as they actually occur in the classroom. Burns also differentiate two kinds of observation: participant and non-participant. Participant observation involves observing oneself as well as other inside the context. The observer becomes a member of the situational context. On the other hand, in non-participant observation, the observer remains distant without involvement in the context. In this study, non-participant observation was used when observing the English learners. They were not aware that they were being observed; they were

told that the observer was a student learning how to teach English, this to avoid a change in their performance. The learners were observed during three weeks, three sessions per week. The observation was focused on their sociopragmatic competence to request things.

The technique used for observing the English facilitators was also non-participant, but unlike the learners, the facilitators were aware that they were being observed. However, they did not know which particular aspects of their class were being observed. The observations of the facilitators were focused on their use of strategies to help the learners develop their sociopragmatic competence; in the backwash effect they were promoting; and in the classroom issues that may complicate learners' sociopragmatic development.

During the observations (of both learners and English facilitators) notes were taken. This observational technique was used as a way of documenting and analyzing issues that were being observed at the moment. A disadvantage of this technique is that it consumes time. To overcome this problem, only brief descriptions and accounts of events were written in the notes, including non-verbal information that were happening in the situational context. To gather all the verbal information, the classes were audio recorded and transcribed. This technique allows the researcher to capture in detail naturalistic interactions, and also to collect patterns that may not be obvious in the moment.

### **3.3.2. Non-observational techniques**

One of the most popular and widely used technique for collecting qualitative data is the interview (Burns, 1999). According to Burns (1999) the data collected from a group is far richer than that collected from individuals, as the members of a group can complement the information of each other and give additional and more productive responses.

There are three kinds of interview: structured, semi-structured and unstructured. Structured interview was not used, because they consist of a list of preplanned questions which have specific and short possible answers, thus, it is limited to pursue unpredicted responses or probe more deeply into the student's perception (Burns A. , 1999). Even though semi-structured interviews have open-ended answers and provide much greater flexibility than structured interviews, semi-structured interview was not used because this study needs a free-flowing conversational process, and as Balcázar (2005) states, the interviewer must create an environment in which the student feels comfortable and free to express their opinion. He also states that the questions should not be very direct or concrete, since they can alter the learners' natural way of answer. Thus, unstructured interview was used because they are informal, but yet they give complete data because they allow learners to express and communicate everything they can, giving enough data to find what this study is looking for.

After learners were observed, they were interviewed. The interviews were in groups of three, as proposed by Burns (1999), and they were conducted in a dialogue between the researcher and the learner. In order to gather information

about the learner's needs, they were asked why they were studying English. After being interviewed, the learners were asked to answer an exercise which was used as evidence of their lack of sociopragmatic competence to request different things in different situations. In this study, such exercise was designed with open-ended items in order to obtain answers completely created by the learner. Open-ended items are characterized by not providing a constructed answer or reference point to the learners' answer. So the learners' answer is original and is not modified.

### **3.4 Scope of this study**

This investigation started in August, 2013 by learning more about the problem through a literature review about the topic. The observations of learners were carried out from March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2014 to March 21<sup>st</sup>, 2014; and they were interviewed during the following week, after the observation. They also answered a written exercise that was sent to them via e-mail and they returned it during the last week of March. The group of language facilitators was observed the last week of February, 2015 one hour per facilitator.

## **CHAPTER 4. RESULTS**

This Chapter comprises the results obtained from the instruments application which are explained and discussed. The following information is organized in two main groups: a) results from the observation of learners, and b) results from the observations of language facilitators. This way, the data is presented as it was collected.

### **4.1 Results from the observations of learners**

The results from the observations of learners are divided into three sections:

1. The role-play activity. This was a very interesting and useful activity for this study in which the learners had to play different roles in groups of three, according to a specific situation given by their language facilitator.
2. The writing exercise. Learners were asked to write requests for different things in different situations (see Appendix 3).
3. Interview. The main purpose of the interview was to ask learners why they were studying English, this as a way of documenting the learners' needs and to know whether their motivations help their sociopragmatic performance when speaking English or not (see Appendix 1).

#### **4.1.1 The role-play activity**

In class there was a role-play activity in which learners were told a specific situation and they had to say and request some specific things. Learners had from 5 to 8 minutes to prepare and think their speech. Only 17/19 learners did this activity. The situation was the following:

Some of them were supposed to be exchange students who just arrived to the family in USA that was going to host them. The rest of the learners were the parents that were waiting for their exchange student to arrive. It is important to mention that they changed roles three times until all of them had played the parent and exchange student roles.

After analyzing the data collected from this activity, learners' performance was categorized in four groups (Figure 1):

1. Learners who memorized their speech which was appropriate to the context.
2. Learners who memorized their speech which was not appropriate to context.
3. Learners whose speech had some grammatical mistakes and it was appropriate to the context.
4. Learners whose speech had grammatical mistakes and it was not appropriate to the context.

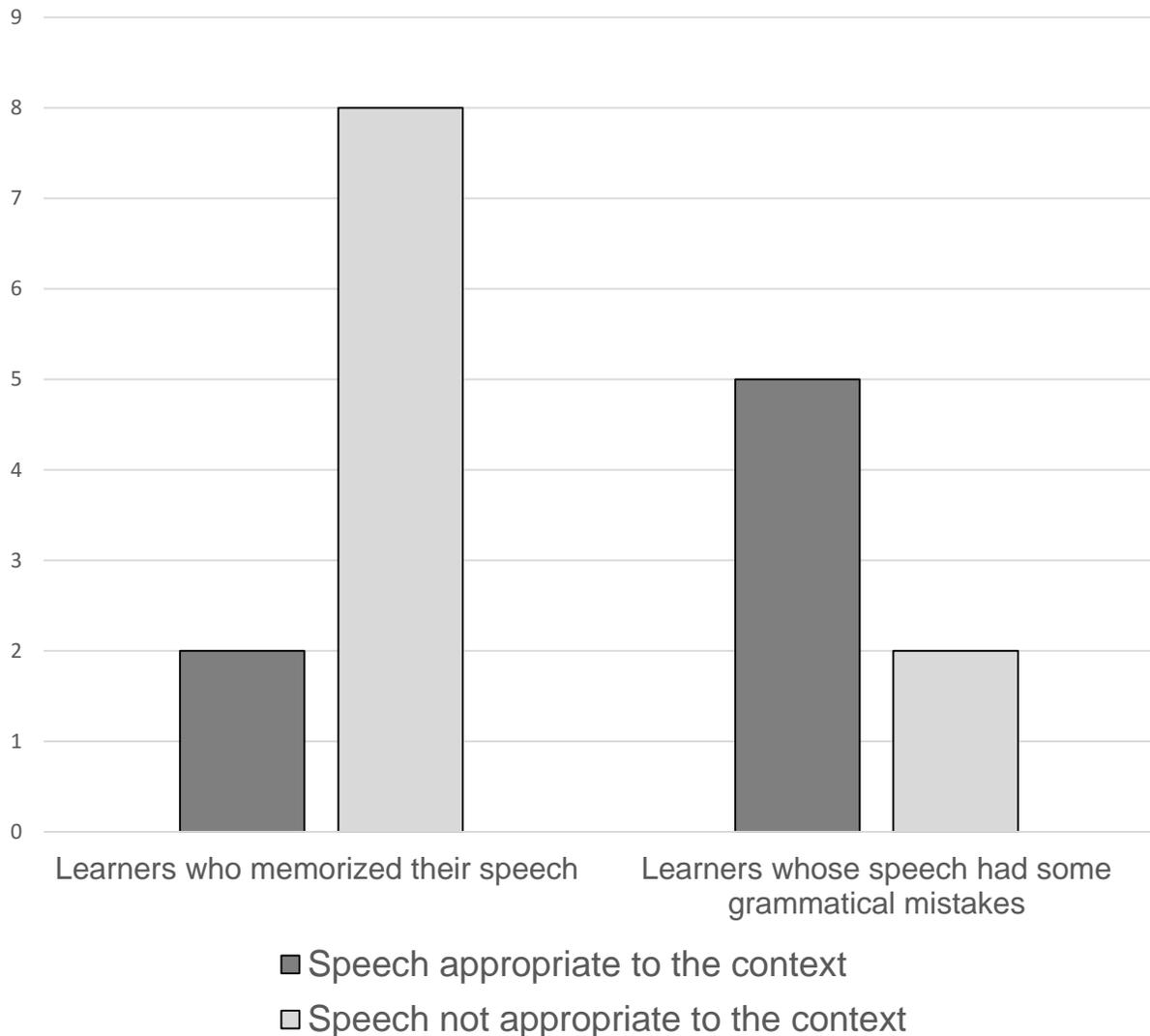


Figure 1. Categorized results from the role-play activity.

During the observations it was noticed that most of the learners (8) memorized their speech using grammatically correct sentences, but they were not appropriate in the context given by the facilitator. Therefore, they were not demonstrating their sociopragmatic competence according to the different situations that were given to them. E.g. “Hello, my name is S1 I want to live in your house during one week. I can

sleep in the floor because I have to go to the school in the morning. Can you wake me up at 7 am?"

Another group of learners (5) did not memorize their speech, and they used sentences appropriate to the situation given. But, their speech showed some grammatical mistakes. E.g. "Hello, I'm the student in the exchange program. They send me to live a week in your house. I will go to the school tomorrow very early. Could you wake me up at 7 am please?"

The rest of the learners (2) used grammatically incorrect sentences, and it was difficult to understand what they were trying to say. E.g. "Hello I'm the student and will live in your house by one week. I will go to the school early. Can you wake me at 7 am?"

These results show that learners have a tendency to focus more on language form than on language meaning or use. Learners pay much more attention on how their sentences are structured rather than what they are saying and to whom they are saying it. This activity is presented as evidence that their sociopragmatic competence is being develop slower than their pragmalinguistic competence, since most of them are able to create grammatically correct sentences, but they are not aware of how they use them. This importance to the language form appeared to be encouraged by the language facilitator; however, the facilitator was not the main focus of the observations at that moment, so at this point, this cannot be considered as an actual statement or conclusion.

#### 4.1.2 Results from the writing exercise

Another way of assessing the learners' sociopragmatic competence was with a written exercise in which the production of request was tested. Different assessment instruments to test the production of speech acts in a foreign or second language have been studied over time (Timpe, 2012). For the construction of this exercise, the concept that Oller (1978) developed to test pragmatic competence, which he called "expectancy grammar", was considered. He argues that the language that learners produce in the test must consist of meaningful sentences that resemble authentic communication in a real-life context. Based on that concept, Hudson, Detmer and Brown (1995) created a complete test that focused on the speech acts of requests, apologies, and refusals. Such test consisted of six components, one of them being a written task in which the learners were asked to write down what they would say in different contexts.

In this study, a similar exercise was applied to the learners, in this case, learners were asked to write requests for different things in different situational contexts (Appendix 3). There were five different specific situations in which they were free to write the request. In order to obtain a completely original answer, no clue was provided to create the response (a request) in the exercise. This exercise was given to them as an extra material for class. Learners were asked to send their answers via e-mail. Only 18/19 learners completed the writing exercise.

Learners' answers were categorized in four groups (Figure 2). The following sentences are examples of each category:

1. Appropriate to the situation with no or one grammatical mistake.
  1. E.g. Mom I'm starving. What's for lunch?
2. Appropriate to the situation with two or more grammatical mistakes.
  1. E.g. Hello. Did you do homework? you could the homework because I didn't do it because yesterday I had a lot of homework.
3. Not appropriate to the situation with no or one grammatical mistake.
  1. E.g. Hey! Did you do the homework? Let me see! I wouldn't fail the grade!
4. Not appropriate to the situation with two or more grammatical mistakes.
  1. E.g. Sorry, the hamburger without onions and you add double cheese? And I would like fries and a diet coke.

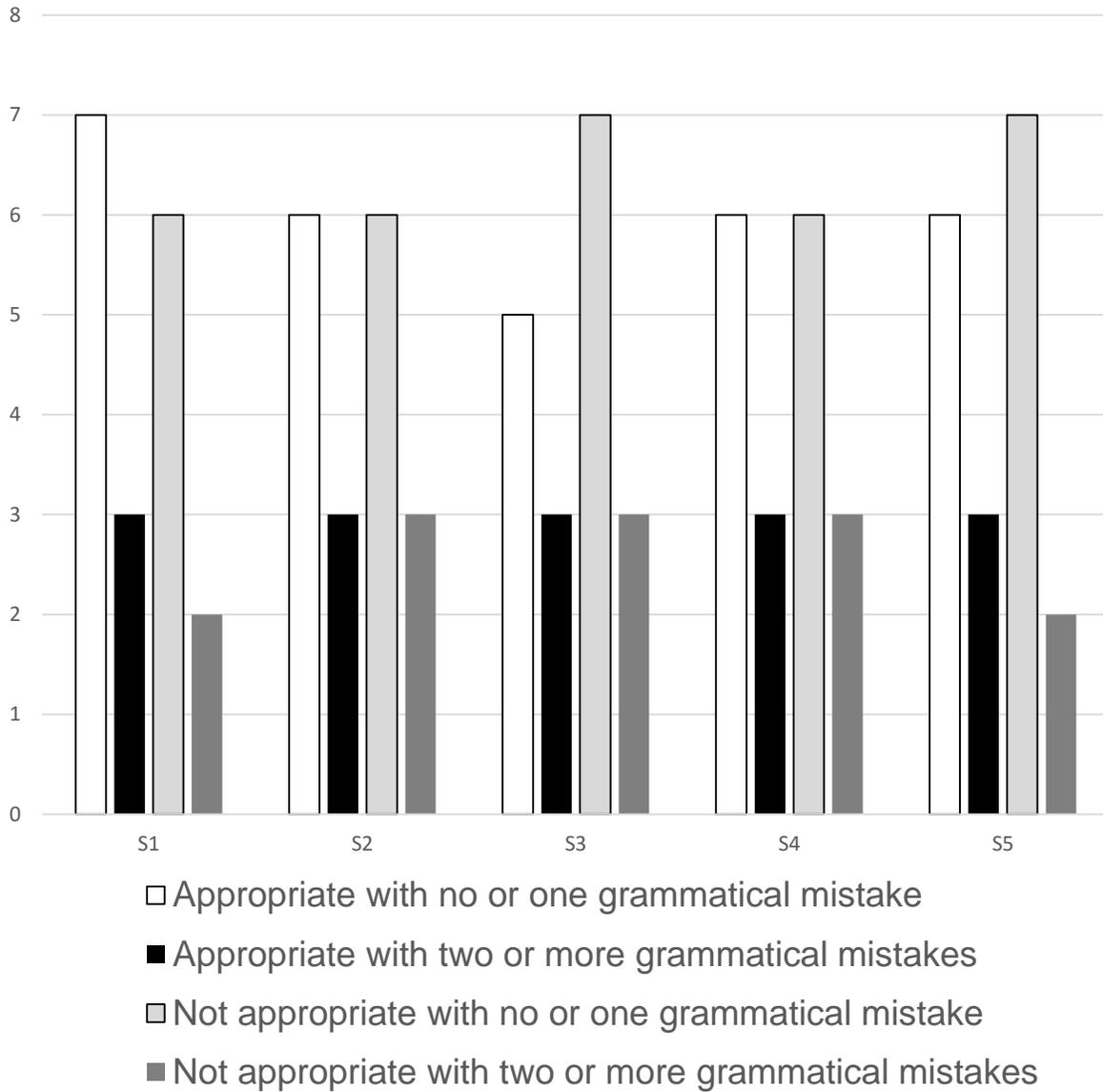


Figure 2. Categorized results from the writing exercise.

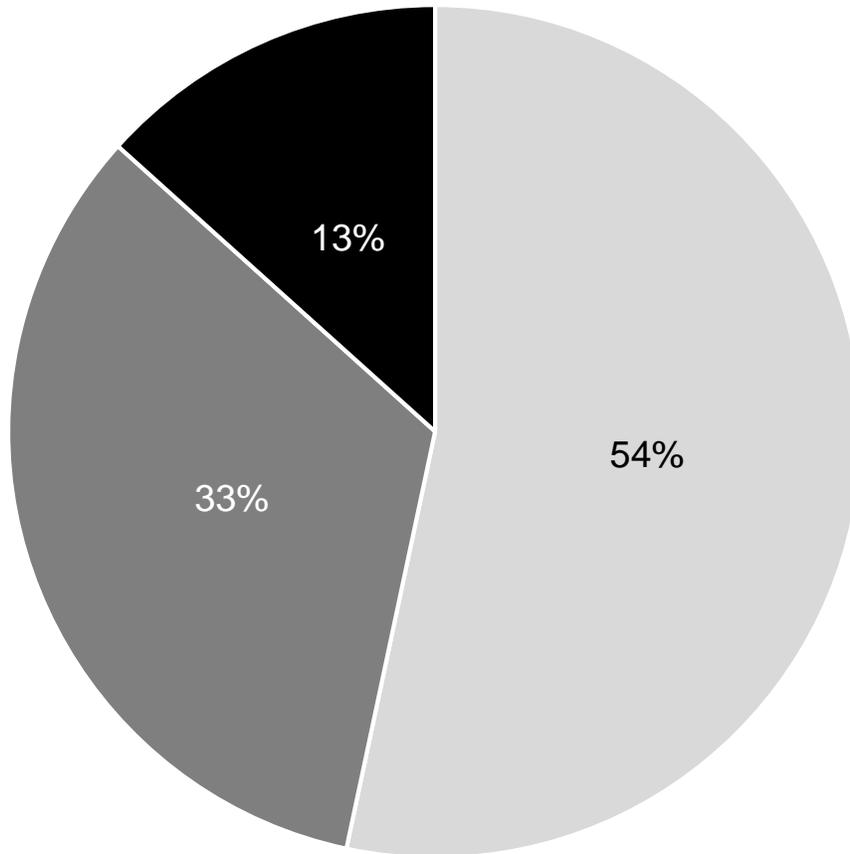
In Figure 2, the letter S stands for each situation given in the exercise. It can be clearly observed that there are more learners whose responses have one or no grammatical mistakes than learners whose responses are appropriate. According to this data, it is distinguished that learners focus more on not showing grammatical mistakes. Even though in this exercise more learners showed appropriate

responses, it is very interesting to note that those learners whose answers were not appropriate with no or one grammatical mistakes are part of the 8 learners that in the role-play activity memorized their speech which was not appropriate to the context.

This information confirms that learners pay much more attention to language form than to language meaning and use. In this exercise it can be analyzed that learners considered more important not having grammatical mistakes than considering the situational context provided to create their responses. Perhaps this is a consequence of a negative backwash effect, because it seems that they are used to an assessment focused on grammar mistakes. However, at this point such affirmation cannot be done, since that aspect was not observed at the moment.

#### **4.1.3 Results from the group interview**

After the observations, 15 of the 19 learners were interviewed in groups of three. This instrument was designed to gather information about their purpose of studying English. This study aims to help learners to communicate properly according to different situational context. So, they were asked why they were studying English, to know whether their motivations help their performance when speaking English or not. Also, the data collected from this instrument was used as a very important part of the needs analysis for the proposal. The results are shown in Figure 3.



- Want to travel/study abroad
- Need English to graduate
- Parents want them to know English

Figure 3. Results from the group interview.

The results from the group interview seem to show a correlation between learners who plan to travel abroad and their high sociopragmatic competence; and another correlation between learners who just want to pass the EXCI exam and their high interest to memorize grammatical structures and patterns. The correlation seems to show that the more travel they want to do, the better sociopragmatic

competence they have. This affirmation is based on the relation of the three instruments used for observing the learners.

It was observed that the same learners who showed interest in traveling are those who seem to pay more attention to the context than their classmates in the previous results. Also, learners whose motivation is to pass the EXCI exam in order to graduate and learners who just study English because their parent want them to learn the language, show more interest in learning grammar and structure than in communicating. This may be produced due to a negative backwash effect. However as it was already mentioned, this is not yet an actual statement, because that aspect was not observed. In order to prove this hypothesis, 10% of the language facilitators were observed.

#### **4.2 Results from the observations of language facilitators**

Six language facilitators teaching advanced levels were observed, such sample represents the 10% of the facilitators teaching in the Language Center. The results showed that most of the language facilitators observed do not use any of the four main strategies suggested in the literature to help learners develop their sociopragmatic competence (Table 2).

Table 2. Categorized results from observations to facilitators focused on their strategies to help learners develop their sociopragmatic competence.

Strategies facilitators use to help learners develop their sociopragmatic competence.	English facilitators					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
S/he promotes learners' interaction with authentic (similar to real-life) situations.	x	x	x	✓	x	x
S/he promotes learners' genuine classroom interaction.	x	x	x	✓	x	✓
S/he uses communicative tasks in which learners play different roles in real authentic social contexts.	x	x	x	✓	x	x
S/he provides different examples with different contexts.	x	x	x	✓	x	✓

This information shows that only 1 of the 6 facilitators observed uses all the four main strategies to help learners develop their sociopragmatic competence in the classroom; and that only one facilitator uses half the strategies suggested in the literature. Learners in these classrooms were observed to be more participative as a results of the application of the strategies. Learners were more focused on transmitting their intentions, and when they showed more interest in interacting in English. Even when they did not understand something they tried to negotiate the meaning with the facilitator or their classmates.

On the other hand, half of the facilitators observed did not use any of the strategies, and they did not promote an authentic and genuine interaction among learners at any time; they promote memorization of structures instead. In these

classrooms, even though a few learners sometimes showed interest in starting a genuine conversation with the facilitators, they do not allow such interaction by emphasizing the grammar they were studying in that particular class, and paying less attention to the learners' intentions. Learners were much less participative and when they did not understand something, most of them tried to ask for the meaning in Spanish (their native language) and when they were asked to say the questions again in English they preferred asking a classmate or not asking at all. Some of the issues that may complicate learners' sociopragmatic development according to the literature were found in the classrooms. Table 3 shows the results of these aspects.

Table 3. Categorized results from facilitators observations focused on the issues observed in their classroom that may complicate learners' sociopragmatic development.

<b>Issues in the classroom that may complicate learners' sociopragmatic development.</b>	<b>English facilitators</b>					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Language facilitator focuses more on structure and not in what is being communicated.						
Language facilitator uses mainly written discourse completion tasks (complete the sentence/ use the correct structure, etc.)						
Language facilitator promotes memorization of structures/grammar.						

It is clearly observed that there are issues present in the classroom which according to the literature complicate learners' sociopragmatic development; and they could be easily avoided if most of the four strategies presented in Table 2 were applied. During the observations it was noted that the most notable evidence of a negative backwash effect is in classes close to an exam, English facilitators tend to make some repetitive comments that result in a negative backwash effect. Table 4 shows some specific examples of negative backwash effect found in classes close to an English exam.

Table 4. Examples of negative backwash effect for learners' sociopragmatic development observed in the classrooms.

Facilitator	Examples of negative backwash effect
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitator used written discourse completion tasks “because the exam is coming”.</li> </ul>
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitator only used tasks and activities from the book, which were only discourse completion tasks.</li> </ul>
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitator showed the correct answers of a written exercise that learners answered as homework, but s/he did not discuss the explanation that underlie the correct answers.</li> <li>• Facilitator said “try to focus on this part because the exam is coming” when teaching the structure of past, participle and past continuous.</li> <li>• Facilitator reminded learners the grammar structure seen in each unit “because the exam is coming”.</li> </ul>
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When a learner tried to start a genuine communicative interaction with the facilitator, s/he clapped because the structure of the learner's sentence was correct.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitator promoted memorization of patterns by writing them all on the board and asked learners to copy them.</li> <li>• Facilitator asked learners to create examples of each pattern without providing any.</li> </ul>
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitator promoted memorization of patterns.</li> <li>• Facilitator reminded learners the grammar structure seen in each unit “because the exam is coming”.</li> </ul>

During the observations made to facilitator 4, any example of a negative backwash effect concerning this study was identified. The fact that most of the English facilitators are not using the main strategies to develop sociopragmatic competence in learners is creating a negative backwash effect because learners are receiving the message that grammar and structure are more important than what is being communicated. Most of the learners studying in the Language Center are learning English because they want to get a good grade in the EXCI exam in order to get their bachelor’s degree and because their parents want them to know the language. Every time an exam date is near, the facilitators begin to suggest to learners to study and memorize the grammar rules, patterns and structures. Therefore, learners receive the message that they just need to have grammar knowledge to get good grades in an English exam. This negative backwash effect is causing that the majority of learners do not focus on the sociopragmatic competence because facilitators transmit the idea that they only need to know grammar structures to pass an English exam, and what is being communicated is not important. The results show that the message that learners receive is that the most important thing

is to pass the exams and in order to achieve that, they just need to memorize the structure patterns.

All the results obtained from all the data collected answer all the research questions stated in Chapter 1. The learners showed a slow development of the sociopragmatic competence which was measured through their production of requests in English. They tend to make more mistakes in using the requests in different situational contexts than in producing grammatically correct requests. The origin of the problem lies in the negative backwash effect learners are receiving, and the results show that such issue can be changed if the language facilitators implement most of the four strategies suggested in the literature. It is considered that language facilitators do know those strategies, but in the moment of teaching the language, they tend to use the language itself as the main topic of the class; instead of using other topics in which the language can be practiced by the learners with authentic material to provide them with different contexts in which language can be used in real life.

## **CHAPTER 5. PROPOSAL: COURSE DESIGN**

### **5.1 Needs Analysis**

It was noticed that language facilitators focus more on language structure than in meaning. This course aims to train language facilitators in how to help learners focus more on what, when or to whom they say the sentences they are able to create (sociopragmatic competence). The purpose is to teach language facilitators different strategies to help learners develop their sociopragmatic competence.

In the needs analysis, the participants were two groups:

- A class of 19 English learners studying in the Language Center.
- A group of 6 language facilitators teaching in the Language Center: 1 facilitator of 4<sup>th</sup> level; 4 facilitators of 5<sup>th</sup> level; and 1 facilitator of 6<sup>th</sup> level.

#### **5.1.1 Philosophy**

The importance of the philosophy lies in the type of information that was gathered in the needs analysis. There are four philosophies of needs assessment (Brown, 1995): discrepancy, democratic, analytic and diagnostic; each of them sees the needs from a different perspective. For this course, two philosophies were considered:

- Discrepancy philosophy. In this course, the needs are seen as differences between a desired performance from learners and facilitators and what they are actually doing.

- Diagnostic philosophy. The needs are also seen as anything that would prove harmful if it was missing. In this study, the needs which are seen as harmful if missing are the teaching strategies to help learners develop their sociopragmatic competence.

### **5.1.2 Points of view**

After a philosophy is chosen to gather specific information in the needs analysis, a point of view must be taken in order to establish the importance of the needs. A list should be made to recognize that some needs are more pressing than the others in each case. There are three basic dichotomies (Brown, 1995): situation needs vs language needs; objective needs vs subjective needs; and linguistic content vs learning processes. These dichotomies help narrow the choices of on what to focus in a needs analysis.

For this course Objective vs Subjective needs dichotomy was chosen because the needs are determined on the basis of observable data gathered about the situation, the learners, and the language that students must acquire their present proficiency and skills levels. But also the learners' "desires" and "expectations" are considered and both needs (objective and subjective) are balanced.

### **5.1.3 Instruments**

The types of instruments used for this needs analysis are indicated below:

- Existing information:
  - Literature review

Similar studies were found published on scientific journals, and they were read and used as a basis to know more about the needs found.

- Observations:
  - Diary study (with audio recording and notes)
- Interview:
  - Group interview

After learners were observed, they were interviewed. The interviews were in groups of three, as proposed by Burns (1999). They were asked their purpose of studying English in order to gather information about their needs as learners.

### **5.1.4 Results**

As it was already discussed on Chapter 4, the results showed that most learners are studying English because they have intentions of traveling for different purposes, which means that they want to communicate in a native environment.

Other great amount of learners want to pass the EXCI exam which is necessary to get their bachelor's degree, which means that they would not pay much attention on speaking, since the EXCI exam does not have a speaking section. The rest of the learners said that they were studying English because their parents want them to know the language.

Comparing the results from the interview and the observations to learners, it can be seen a correlation between learners who plan to travel abroad and their high sociopragmatic competence; and another correlation between learners who just want to pass the EXCI exam and their high interest to memorize grammatical structures and patterns. The correlation seem to show that the more travel they want to do, the better sociopragmatic competence they have. Learners, whose motivation is to pass the EXCI exam in order to graduate, show more interest in learning grammar and structure than in communicating.

After those needs were identified in the learners, the facilitators were observed to gather information about their needs since the course is being designed for them. The results from the observations of facilitators show that only 1/6 facilitator use all the 4 strategies proposed by different authors (Bot, Lowie, & Verspoor, 2005; Minegishi Cook, 2001; Ohta, 2005); and only one facilitator use half the strategies. The rest of the language facilitators do not use any of the strategies. Such information means that most of the language facilitators observed did not use the main strategies to help learners develop their sociopragmatic competence. The fact that most of the English facilitators are not using the main strategies to develop sociopragmatic competence in learners is creating a negative backwash effect

because learners are receiving the message that grammar and structure are more important than what is being communicated.

One possible and feasible solution for this problem seems to be reminding the learners the four main strategies to help learners develop their sociopragmatic competence, and in this way the solution can have more impact because the language facilitators will continue teaching more learners and they can continue adapting and applying the strategies in all their classes.

## **5.2 Approach**

All the courses in the Language Center are based on the Communicative Approach, and this course uses some principles of it. The main features and principles of the Communicative Approach to be used in this course are (Larsen-Freeman D. , 2010; Littlewood, 1981):

- The emphasis is on the process of communication rather than in language forms.
- Learners are expected to interact with other people, through pair and group work, or through writing.
- Dialogues are mainly used with communicative functions.
- Language is used in real contexts.

- The target language is a vehicle for classroom communication, not just the object of study.
- The social context of the communicative event is essential.
- Learning to use language forms appropriately is an important part.
- The teacher acts as a facilitator in setting up communicative activities.
- Learners must be given opportunities to listen or read language as it is used in authentic communication.

The communicative approach in this course is used combined with a specific aspect a more recent approach, which is called Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL). The course is integrated with content in order to immerse the learner in a language context; and in the same way, content courses will include foreign language aspects to develop the language skills the learners need. As it was studied in the literature review, promoting genuine communication among foreign language learners is one of the main teaching strategies to use in order to help learners develop their sociopragmatic competence.

The syllabus in this course is shaped with a modular format because it integrates thematic and situational language content with skills orientation. Each module consists of two themes and one or two activities. Since the participants of this course are language facilitators, the activities are mainly problem-solving tasks (small group discussions); experiential tasks; and group dynamics activities (working in pairs to solve problems or to discuss issues). The role of the course instructor is

as a facilitator who just provides the information and mediates the discussion and activities; while the role of the students is participative and active during the whole course.

### **5.3 Competences**

- Produces and applies different messages for specific situations developing communication in its sociopragmatic aspect.
- Adapts the discourse through the recognition of linguistic and non-linguistic elements prompting the sociopragmatic aspect of communication.
- Exposes ideas correctly using linguistic and non-linguistic skills in different situations to develop the exchange of opinions.

### **5.4 Module 1**

#### **5.4.1 Competences**

- Produces and uses different messages for specific situations developing communication in its sociopragmatic aspect.
- Adapts the discourse through the recognition of linguistic and non-linguistic elements prompting the sociopragmatic aspect of communication.

#### **5.4.2 Content**

- Strategy 1. Providing different examples with different contexts.
- Strategy 2. Using authentic material to establish specific situational context.

- ✓ Authentic materials enable learners to interact with the real language and meaning rather than the form.
- ✓ Learners feel that they are learning a target language as it is used outside the classroom.

### **5.4.3 Activities**

- To produce oral messages and use the appropriate discourse with different purposes in specific situations practicing pragmatic routines.
- To interpret implicit messages and contextual cues in oral texts, recognizing linguistic and non-linguistic elements in a conversation to adapt the discourse according to the situational context.

### **5.4.4 Resources**

- ✓ Charles, K., Lawrence, K., Offner, M., & Vorland, B. (2002). Effective Ways to Use Authentic Materials with ESL/EFL Students. *The internet TESL Journal*.
- ✓ B., K. M. (2011). Advantages and Disadvantages of Authentic Materials Use in EFL Classrooms. 125-127.

### **5.4.5 Assessment**

- ✓ Evaluation is ongoing and informal. The instructor can participate or just observe the conversations to note communicative abilities.

## **5.5 Module 2**

### **5.5.1 Competence**

- Exposes ideas properly using linguistic and non-linguistic skills in different situations to develop the exchange of opinions.

### **5.5.2 Content**

- Strategy 2. Communicative activities using real, authentic social contexts.
  - ✓ Types of workouts
  - ✓ Theater games (role-plays)
  - ✓ Mediations/Interventions (Dialogues, exchanging opinions, debates)
  - ✓ Group dynamics
  - ✓ Problem-solving tasks
- Strategy 3. Promoting genuine interaction through communicative activities.
  - ✓ Reduction in the centrality of the teacher.
  - ✓ Chances for students to express themselves in meaningful ways.
  - ✓ Opportunities for students to negotiate meaning with each other and the teacher.
  - ✓ Choices, both in relation to what students say and how they say it.

### **5.5.3 Activities**

- To use linguistic and non-linguistic abilities of oral messages in different situational context to exchange opinions exposing own ideas properly.

### **5.5.4 Resources**

- ✓ Book “Course Design: Developing Programs and Materials for Language Learning” by Frida Dubin.
  - Chapter 5 “The scope of a communicative syllabus”
    - ✓ 5.2 Communicative processes: workouts.
- ✓ Part II. Activity Packets. Activities to Promote Interaction and Communication.

[http://www.cal.org/caela/tools/program\\_development/elltoolkit/Part2-41Interaction&Communication.pdf](http://www.cal.org/caela/tools/program_development/elltoolkit/Part2-41Interaction&Communication.pdf)

### **5.5.5 Assessment**

- ✓ Oral presentation simulating an English class using authentic material and promoting interaction among students.

## **5.6 Module 3**

### **5.6.1 Competence**

- Plans strategies to help learners develop their sociopragmatic competence.

### **5.6.2 Content**

- Sociopragmatic competence in learners of English in the Language Center.
- Scale for assessing communicative activities.

### **5.6.3 Activities**

- To adapt some of the strategies seen in teams, using the scale for assessing communicative activities for oral messages and discourse organization.
- To plan some new strategies to help learners develop their sociopragmatic competence, based on the information seen in Module 1 and 2 and using the scale for assessing communicative activities.

### **5.6.4 Resources**

- ✓ Book “Course Design: Developing Programs and Materials for Language Learning” by Frida Dubin.
  - Chapter 5 “The scope of a communicative syllabus”
    - ✓ 5.2 Communicative processes: workouts.
      - 5.2.2 A scale for assessing the communicative potential of workouts.

### **5.6.5 Assessment**

- Plan of set of activities to help learners develop their sociopragmatic competence done in pairs and peer revision of other’s group plan.

## **5.7 Program Application**

The course was applied to 4 English facilitators of advanced levels teaching in the Language Center in one hour with thirty minutes. Before the course applications it was explained to the participants the importance of the course, and the findings of the study were mentioned in general terms. Because of that, some activities had to be modified in the moment because they would had taken more time; and all the activities were carried out by the whole group (including the instructor) as a team.

### **5.7.1 Module 1**

In this Module, the first two strategies were presented, some examples were given and the participants shared some experiences about using authentic material. However, some of them said that usually they do not provide enough examples before the learners' turn to produce the language. So, the importance of providing the learner with enough examples in different contexts before asking them to produce the language was emphasized. The use of authentic reading material was considered to be one of the most appropriate in this case, because it gives the learner an authentic context that can be used outside the classroom in everyday life. However, it was also mentioned in this Module that such authentic material must consider the learners' interests to promote participation. One important aspect for that consideration is that in a single group the learners can be any age from 16. Therefore, the facilitator should know their learners' needs to use the most

appropriate material in each case. Therefore, the conclusion was that it is important to help learners be aware of what they are communicating and one way of achieving that is through the use of authentic material considering the learners' ages and interests; which means that the facilitator should know a little bit more about their learners.

### **5.7.2 Module 2**

In the first part of this Module, information about the types of activities that can be performed in class to help learners develop their sociopragmatic competence was presented to the participants. These activities are planned to use real, authentic social contexts in the classroom. Some examples were provided on each type of activity, and then they were asked to share an experience when applying one of those activities, if they had applied one. Promoting genuine interaction through communicative activities.

In the second part of Module 3, the last of the four main strategies suggested in the literature was explained. This strategy implies applying some main principles, such as: reduction in the centrality of the teacher; chances for students to express themselves in meaningful ways; opportunities for students to negotiate meaning with each other and the teacher; choices, both in relation to what students say and how they say it. The participants mentioned that even though the principles behind this strategy are somehow obvious they do not use them all the time because they are generally focused on covering the topics; and it was at this moment when the topic

of the test came to light. The participants agreed that they focused on the grammar and structure topics because in the exam learners are asked to know them and that is what the test evaluates the most.

The evaluation of this Module was not done because the issue about the test evaluation was covered and it was not considered in the course design. It was discussed the purpose of the course they teach and its approach, which is communicative. And even though the tests are considered to evaluate more the grammar structure, the learners' needs are that they need to communicate in the target language. Of course the grammar is needed, but also the sociopragmatic competence: as it was stated in Chapter 2 it must be a balance with all the four aspects of the communicative competence. Therefore the conclusion was that the facilitators need to balance their teaching strategies and help learners develop all the skills needed to cover completely the communicative competence.

### **5.7.3 Module 3**

During this Module the evidence of the slow development of the sociopragmatic competence in learners of advanced levels of English in the Language Center was quickly shown. After that, a scale for assessing communicative activities proposed by Dubin (1986) was presented to the participants. This information was very useful to do the last activity of the course which was adapting a strategy seen in the previous modules using the scale. This activity was performed by the whole group,

including the instructor as a team, all the participants contributed actively in this activity.

The assessment of this module was modified, instead of planning the activities in the course and then doing peer revision, the participants were asked to plan the activities at home and then they will be observed when applying them in the classroom. All the participants agreed to these terms and the course was concluded satisfactorily.

### **5.8 Program Evaluation**

The evaluation of this course was carried out with a process-oriented approach because the limits are not set on studying the content of the course, but the effect and impact that it will have on the participants (Brown, 1995). The outcomes of this course are be dynamic, since each participant will use and apply the information learned in different ways in their classes; therefore, the evaluation will not be limited to a single static product. The purpose of the information gathered from the evaluation of this course after its implementation, will be use to revise and improve the content and assessment of it in order to fulfill the learners' needs and to determine the degree to which the course was successful, efficient, and effective.

To gather the evaluation data, quantitative and qualitative information was collected using the following instruments:

- Class observations. As the participants of this course are language facilitators, their classes after taking the course were observed (one hour per facilitator) to

compare how their strategies change or improve. The same rubric used for observing the facilitators the first time was used again (Appendix 2) Such information was gathered using:

- Interactional analyses
- Inventories
  
- Questionnaires. The opinion of the participants was considered as well. So, after being observed, they answered an opinion survey (Appendix 4) in which they explained which strategies were more useful and which ones did not work as expected.

The results from the observations (Table 5) after the program application show that there was an improvement on the strategies applied in the classroom by the facilitators. They seem more aware of the activities and even all of them prepared an activity based on Module 3 of the course.

Table 5. Program evaluation: observation of language facilitators after the course application.

Strategies facilitators use to help learners develop their sociopragmatic competence.	English facilitators			
	1	2	3	4
S/he promotes learners' interaction with authentic (similar to real-life) situations.	✓	✓	✓	✓
S/he promotes learners' genuine classroom interaction.	✓	✓	x	✓
S/he uses communicative tasks in which learners play different roles in real authentic social contexts.	x	✓	✓	✓
S/he provides different examples with different contexts.	✓	✓	x	✓

Even though not all the strategies were used by all the facilitators, it is an important improvement because they did not use any when they were first observed. Furthermore, the learners seemed more participative and had a positive reaction to the authentic material, and that was also noted by the language facilitators. Even some learners mentioned during the class that they liked it more the way the class was being conducted that day.

According to the answers of the language facilitators obtained from the opinion surveys, the aspects of the strategies presented in the course that seemed to work better in their classes are providing different examples in different contexts and using authentic material, specifically short readings of magazines and

newspapers and short videos of actual news where famous people appear. All the language facilitators that answered the opinion survey agreed that the type of communicative activities that work better in their classes is mediation/interventions workouts, such as dialogues and debates and problem-solving tasks.

In the opinion survey, the language facilitators also answered two questions about the course application. They mentioned that the information provided in the course was very useful; however, some information about tests evaluation should have been useful. This topic was not covered because it was considered that as they do not create the evaluation tests not much could be done to that area. But, after the course implementation, it is considered to add another Module about the backwash effect which contains the topic of the evaluation effect in the learners.

## CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The first results show a correlation between learners' purpose of studying English and the backwash effect facilitators promote. Learners who want to pass the English proficiency test (EXCI<sup>1</sup> for its acronym in Spanish) to get their degree, do not focus on the sociopragmatic competence because facilitators transmit the idea that they only need to know grammar structures to pass an English exam. The results show that the message that learners receive is that the most important thing is to pass the exam and in order to achieve that, they just need to memorize the structure patterns. Promoting the use of language for purposes of genuine interaction, where participants have to manage their own communicative needs and match them with a specific situational context, may help learners' development of sociopragmatic competence: the ability to use language effectively to communicate meaning in a way that is accepted and "appropriate" for the situational context.

After the intervention, the results show that a change in the teaching strategies used in the classroom makes a huge improvement that over time can overcome the problem concerning this study. It is important to consider the teaching style of each language facilitator and also the learners' needs and interests to apply the strategies and activities proposed. Even though the tests evaluations in the Language Center cannot be changed by the facilitators, the message that their

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<sup>1</sup> EXCI is an English proficiency test which has to be passed by all students at UANL, because it is one of the requirements for obtaining a degree (either bachelor's, master's or PhD).

learners received does can through the application of strategies that promote the development of all the aspects of the learners' communicative competence.

The course was applied to only four facilitators and some aspects mentioned in Chapter 5 had to be changed in the moment. For future studies it is recommended to add a topic related to the impact of a negative backwash effect of evaluation tests which are focused on grammar and structure. This study did not covered the progress of the learners' sociopragmatic competence after the application of the strategies by their facilitators; therefore, it is also recommended to review the progress of the facilitators' classes after the course application, and then compared the results with the ones showed in Chapter 4 of this study. This work studied the sociopragmatic competence of learners of English as a foreign language of advanced levels, it would be interesting to see if the application of the four strategies during the first levels would make a better improvement in the learners' sociopragmatic competence performance.

Finally, it is suggested to use the strategies not only when teaching a language, but also when teaching another subjects in a foreign language (bilingual education). As it was mentioned in Chapter 2 learners of foreign languages often do not have the opportunity of practicing the language outside the classroom, which limit their experiences to a formal context (the classroom). All language facilitators should always keep in mind that the main purpose of studying a language is to be able to communicate, so that the topics should not be the language itself, but topics that are actually use in real life interactions.

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## **Appendices**

### **Appendix 1**

Guide for interview to learners

1. How old are you?
2. What is your academic level: high school, undergraduate, graduate...?
3. Why are you studying English?
4. How many hours a week do you practice (speaking or writing) English outside the classroom?

## Appendix 2

Checklist for observing the language facilitators.

Check list for observing the language facilitators

\* Sociopragmatic competence is promoted when:

- Teacher promotes students' interaction with authentic (similar to real-life) situations.
- Teacher promotes students' genuine classroom interaction.
- There are communicative tasks in which students play different roles in real, authentic social context.
- Teacher gives different examples with different contexts.

\* Sociopragmatic competence is not promoted when:

- Textbooks focus mainly in grammar/structure.
- Teacher focuses on structure and not in what is being communicated.
- Teacher uses mainly written discourse completion tasks (complete the sentence/ use the correct structure, etc)
- Teacher promotes memorization of structures/grammar.

### Appendix 3

Writing exercise to learners

Answer the following situations using the first sentence that comes to your mind:

- Imagine that you are very tired and hungry, you just arrived home and the food is not ready, how would you ask your mom for food?

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- Imagine that you are in a fast food restaurant, how would you ask for a hamburger without onion and with double cheese, some fries and a diet coke?

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- Imagine that you are in a really fancy restaurant and you want to ask a waitress where the bathroom is. How would you ask him?

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- Imagine that you forgot to do your homework, how would you ask your best friend to let you copy the correct answers?

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- Imagine that you forgot to do your homework, how would you ask your smartest classmate who always gets 100.

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## Appendix 4

### Opinion Survey for Program Evaluation

1. Which aspects of the four strategies presented in the course seemed to work better in your class?

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2. What kind of communicative activities do you consider to work better in your class?

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3. What kind of authentic material do you consider to work better in your class?

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4. Do you consider the information in the course to be enough for its purposes?

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5. What kind of information do you considered was missing in the course?

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