

The Pragmatic Suitability of the Algerian ELT Secondary School Textbooks: A Focus on Speech Acts

Abstract

This study investigates to what extent the Algerian ELT secondary school textbooks are pragmatically-suitable with regard to speech acts, with a focus on two of the most frequent ones: request and apology. The study aims at exploring the appropriacy and adequacy of the input at the pragmalinguistic level and the sociopragmatic one, the explicitness of that input and the metapragmatic information associated with it. All the requests and apologies that appear in the material are identified, then coded and analysed. Findings show that although the textbooks provide a minimum of the linguistic forms used for the realisation of these two speech acts, they are rather limited when it comes to associating them with the relevant contextual and cultural factors. The input is, on the whole, implicitly presented while there is paucity in the metapragmatic information that is necessary to guide the learners to the best production of these two acts. In this respect, the material used is highly unlikely to provoke the acquisition of these two speech acts. It is, therefore, recommended that the syllabus designers should address these shortcomings.

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Introduction

ملخص

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى البحث في مدى ملائمة المنهاج الدراسي الجزائري الخاص باللغة الإنجليزية في الطور الثانوي من الناحية التداولية، مركزة على الأفعال الكلامية، وبالأخص الطلب والاعتذار. وقد تم تحليل بيانات الدراسة من حيث الكم والكيف بمراعاة البعد التداولي-اللغوي والبعد التداولي-الاجتماعي. كما سلط الضوء على طريقة تقديم هذين الفعلين الكلاميين للمتعلمين (ضمنيا أو ظاهريا) وكذا المعلومات التداولية المرفقة. بعد تحديد كل الصيغ الواردة في المنهاج، قمنا بتفسيرها

The textbook is a part and parcel of the teaching/learning process. In communicative language teaching (CLT), the textbook is not supposed to provide learners with only the linguistic knowledge, but also with the contextual and the pragmatic ones. In foreign language (FL) learning setting, learners are less likely to be provided with the pragmatic input necessary to develop their pragmatic potential in comparison with the second language (SL) context (Kasper and Schmidt 1996: 160). For this reason, the textbook in FL setting is of vital importance as it is, almost, the only source to which the FL

وتحليلها وأظهرت النتائج المحصلة محدودة المحتوى المقدم في الكتب المدرسية على المستوى التداولي-اللغوي وقرها شبه التام فيما يخص تطرقها لعاملَي السياق والثقافة اللذين يؤثران في استعمال صيغ الطلب والاعتذار. أما عن طريقة تقديم هذا المحتوى، فقد جاء في المجلد ضمناً، كما بينت النتائج كذلك محدودة المعلومات التداولية التي من شأنها توجيه المتعلمين نحو الاستعمال الأمثل لهذين الفعلين الكلاميين. وعلى ضوء هذه النتائج تخلص للقول بأن المنهاج الدراسي الجزائري الخاص باللغة الانجليزية لا يشجع فعلاً المتعلمين على اكتساب صيغ الطلب والاعتذار. وعليه نوصي مصممي المناهج بإعادة النظر في النقائص المسجلة.

learner is exposed and, thus,, it plays a sensitive role in developing pragmatic competence.

In Algeria, where English is taught as an FL, the new syllabus for teaching English, as designed by the Ministry of National Education in the 2005 reform brought about the CLT in the Algerian curriculum. The syllabus designers state that the syllabus and, thus, the textbooks are grounded on the Competency-Based Approach (CBA) with the following objectives: enabling the learners to interact orally in English, interpret and produce oral and written texts (Riche et al., 2006: 4). This amounts to saying that the pragmatic development is at the heart of the newly introduced syllabus. Since then, to our knowledge, no

comprehensive study has ever been conducted to assess to what extent the stated objectives have been fulfilled by the proposed input in the textbook at the three secondary school levels. The objective of this paper is to evaluate the appropriacy of that input with reference to the speech acts of request and apology. The reason behind selecting the area of speech acts is that it occupies a considerable place in pragmatic theory. Furthermore, requests and apologies are among the most frequent speech acts in the target language (TL), which their production is a complicated task that requires the awareness of various linguistic and contextual factors.

In this respect, the paper addresses the following questions:

1. Does the provided input cover the production of speech acts in their pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic dimensions?
2. Is this input explicitly presented?
3. What kind of metapragmatic information related to the production of these two speech acts is provided and is it adequate?

1. Theoretical Background

1.1 Linguistic proficiency and Pragmatic Competence

The models of Communicative Competence (CC), in the context of pedagogy, sought to balance between the linguistic abilities that enable learners to produce grammatically acceptable sentences, on the one hand, and the potential of being appropriate in a particular social context, on the other one. Canale and Swain (1980), Bachman (1990), Celce-Murcia et al (1995), Saville-Troik (1998) and Celce-Murcia (2007) etc. proposed models of CC that gave importance to the pragmatic competence without neglecting the linguistic one. As an example, Celce-Murcia (2007) proposed a model of CC, which was actually a revision of the 1995 model (Celce-Murcia et al, 1995). This model includes the following competencies: the *sociocultural* (participants'

relation, politeness strategies, cross-cultural awareness etc.), the *discoursal* (cohesion, coherence, generic structure) the *linguistic* (phonology, morphology, syntax etc.), the *formulaic* (ready-made chunks of language like collocations, fixed phrases), the *interactional* (the production of speech acts and speech act sets, conversational routines like turn-taking and non-verbal behaviour) and the *strategic* (learning and communication strategies employed to improve L2 learning). According to Celce-Murcia, the importance of interactional competence lies in the fact that the realisation of speech acts and speech act sets is often considerably different across languages. So, the communicative success of SL and FL learners depends on being aware of the norms governing their realisation along with the routines of turn-taking and the paralinguistic non-verbal habits that accompany them in oral face-to-face interactions. Furthermore, This revised model, as Celce-Murcia herself stated, gives, in context of pedagogy, importance to culture, discourse and strikes balance between language as a system and as a formula (communicative means) and focuses on the dynamic aspects of interaction as well as learners' strategies (2007: 51-54).

There is a controversy in the literature on whether linguistic proficiency helps in better pragmatic achievement, especially at the level of speech acts production. For example, Maeshiba et al. (1996) dealt with the correlation between proficiency and apology in Japanese learners of English (intermediate and advanced) production. The authors concluded that the more proficient learners are the less likely they are to fall back on their native language 'guidelines' and, thus, were better able to emulate American apology behavior. The study of Sabaté and CurelliGotor (2007) dealt with the apologising act with more focus on the developmental issues. The findings suggested that the increase in the proficiency level leads to the decrease in 'non-L2-like' pragmalinguistic performance, but exhibition of more sociopragmatic 'non-native-like' performances

All in all, such studies show that there is a mismatch between the learners' linguistic knowledge and pragmatic performance. That is to say, even advanced learners in terms of grammar are likely to face pragmatic problems (Salazar Campillo 2007: 208). For this reason, researchers are no longer betting on linguistic proficiency for enhancing pragmatic performance, but they are rather more thoughtful about the possible ways for direct and explicit teaching of pragmatic competence.

1.2 Teaching Pragmatics

For Kasper and Schmidt (1996: 160), "there is every reason to expect that pragmatic knowledge should be teachable," especially in the setting of FL where the chances of the full range of human interactions are very limited. To test whether the pragmatic knowledge is really teachable, many studies have been conducted. The studies of Billmyer (1990) on the teaching of compliments and compliment responses and that of Bouton (1994) on the comprehension of the different types of implicature are example from the early studies, on the L2 context, which showed that certain pragmatic forms can be developed through instruction. As for metapragmatic knowledge, the study of Kasper (1996) indicated that the learners who were exposed to metapragmatic information in communication courses had an advantage over those who were not. At the level of speech acts, Olshtain and Cohen (1990, cited in Cohen,

1998) dealt with the effect of explicit teaching on the performance of advanced EFL learners' apologies. The learners were first pretested to determine the state of their pragmatic knowledge, then they were posttested after exposing them to three 20-minute lessons on the strategies for performing the speech act sets of apology and the different modifications. The researchers concluded that aspects like intensification, downgrading, the subtle differences between strategies and the situational features can really be taught. More recent studies on the issue of the impact of pragmatic instruction are found in Cohen (2005: 284-287). One of them is that of Takahashi (2001) who (i) exposed a group of Japanese EFL learners to explicit requests teaching (ii) gave them the opportunity to compare their production and that of other EFL peers with native speakers' one (iii) had them to read transcriptions of interactions and (iv) had them to answer comprehensive questions about the content. The findings suggested that the kind of input which had the strongest impact on the acquisition of request forms is the *explicit teaching* over the other conditions. Eslami-Rasekh et al. (2004) exposed a group of Iranian EFL learners to twelve-session metapragmatic instruction that include procedures like teacher-fronted discussion, role play of the intended speech acts, discussion of the frequent sociopragmatic or paralinguistic deviations of examples produced by students, then responding to a discourse completion task. The subjects were pre-tested and posttested regarding their comprehension of three speech acts (request, apology and complaint). The authors concluded that explicit metapragmatic instruction facilitates interlanguage pragmatic development. This, therefore, suggests that pragmatic competence does not seem resistant to explicit metapragmatic instruction. To put it in Cohen's words "[d]espite the studies with mixed results, it would still appear that learners stand to benefit from explicit focus on pragmatics (2005: 287)."

Among the very likely ways to present learners with pragmatic input is through the textbooks to which they are exposed. Nevertheless, the growing literature of studies assessing the appropriacy and adequacy of the pragmatic input reveal a shortage of such information in learning/teaching materials. Vellenga (2004) analysed eight ESL and EFL textbooks to determine the amount and the quality of the pragmatic information. As her findings indicate, there is a dearth in metapragmatic and metalinguistic information as regards the spoken language; the EFL textbooks included more amounts while the ESL textbooks had better quality in terms of the number of speech acts and the metapragmatic cues. Additionally, the included metapragmatic information was limited in range of options. This led the author to conclude that the acquisition of pragmatic competence via these materials is highly unlikely. Salazar Campillo (2007) analysed mitigation in ELT textbooks' requests from the discipline of tourism. The findings suggested the ignorance of a number of mitigators and the focus on a small number of them, namely the use of *please* and some other combinations. Given the fact that FL classroom is an impoverished setting for the acquisition of the pragmatic knowledge, the author recommended exposing learners to data drawn from spontaneous speech so as to offer the real use of language (p. 219).

1.3 Producing and Analysing Requests and Apologies

The production of speech acts may be easy for acquisition at one level, but it may not be as such at another. Given the fact that speech acts are, to a large extent, a

routinised linguistic behaviour, a learner finds them very accessible in the sense that the used strategies are predictable. As an example, in compliments, adjectives like *nice*, *good*, *beautiful*, *pretty* and *great* are the likely options. However, regardless of this routinised characteristic, the semantic formulae used for the performance of a given speech act are so linked to various sociocultural constraints. This is why often, when performing speech acts, FL and SL learners fall back on their native language and culture and, thus, deviate from the target language and culture norms (Cohen 1998: 408). The above statement suggests that the appropriate production of the illocutionary force requires, from the learners' side, *sociocultural* and *sociolinguistic* abilities (Cohen, 1996). The sociocultural ability denotes the skill to choose the appropriate strategies given the target culture, the age and the gender of the interlocutors, their social class and occupation and their role and status in the interaction. The sociolinguistic ability denotes the skill to select the appropriate linguistic forms to realise the speech act like the choice between *sorry* or *excuse me* in apology (p. 22-23). For Thomas (1983), deviations as these two levels lead to *sociopragmatic* and *pragmalinguistic* failure, respectively (p. 99-101).

Requests and apologies are *face threatening acts* i.e. threaten the public self-image of the requester and the apologise (Brown and Levinson, 1987) and among the highly routinised speech acts. To cope with the different realisations of these two acts, many modals have existed for analysing them. Requests and apologies have been among the focal concerns in the fields of cross-cultural pragmatics (compares the realisation of speech acts across cultures, e.g. Blum-Kulka et al, 1989) and interlanguage pragmatics (deals with L2 learners' development and production of speech acts, e.g. Kasper and Blum-Kulka, 1993), and most of the modals of their analysis were developed within these two fields.

1.3.1 Requests

As defined by Trosborg (1995: 187), "a request is an illocutionary act whereby a speaker (requester) conveys to the hearer (requestee) that he/she wants the requestee to perform an act which is for the benefit of the speaker." Requests can be divided into two parts: Head Act (HA) or core request and peripheral element.

Example 1:

Could you please lend me your dictionary? I just need it for a minute.

Core request Peripheral element

Table 1 represents the taxonomy suggested by Trosborg (1995) for HA strategies. The strategies included are organised from the least to the most direct. The organisational pattern corresponds to Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness strategies: bold-on/direct requests, positive politeness/conventionally indirect (hearer-oriented), negative politeness/conventionally indirect (speaker-based) and off record/hints.

Request Strategies (Increasing Directness)		
Situation Hearer's Car		Speaker Requests to Borrow
Indirect Request	<i>Hints</i> mild Strong	<i>I have to be at the airport in half an hour.</i> <i>My car has broken down.</i>
Conventionally Indirect	<i>Hearer-oriented conditions</i> Ability Willingness Permission Suggestory Formulae <i>Speaker-based conditions</i> Wishes Desire/needs	<i>Could you lend me your car?</i> <i>Would you lend me your car?</i> <i>May I borrow your car?</i> <i>How about lending me your car?</i> <i>I would like to borrow your car.</i> <i>I want/need to borrow your car.</i>
Direct Request	Obligation Performatives Hedged Unhedged Imperatives Elliptical phrases	<i>You must/have to lend me your car.</i> <i>I would like to ask you to lend me your car.</i> <i>I ask/require you to lend me your car.</i> <i>Lend me your car.</i> <i>Your car (please).</i>

Table 1: Trosborg's (1995) Taxonomy for HA Strategies

HA strategies are not often used alone; they are accompanied by certain mitigating devices so as to increase the success possibility of the requestive act. Modifications are classified into *internal* and *external*. External modifications are also known as Supportive Moves (SMs).

Example 2:

I forgot my wallet at home and I need some money to make photocopies. Do you think
External (SM) Internal *that you could lend me 30 cent?*

Several taxonomies have been developed to account for the various supporting moves and internal modifiers. The one we use in this paper is that of Alcón et al. (2005).

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

Table 2: Modification Devices in Requests (Alcón et al. 2005)

Openers, softeners, intensifiers and fillers are the internal modifications that are likely to be encountered in English requests. According to Campillo Salazar (2007: 214), openers are the conventional way for introducing requests in English. They are realised through opening words and expressions the speakers use to seek co-operation of the hearer (e.g. *do you think ...*). As for softeners, they mitigate the face-threatening nature of requests and they are of three types: understatement (*for a moment, for a second...*), downtoners (*just, possibly, perhaps ...*) and hedges (*kind of, sort of...*). Contrary to softeners, intensifiers are used to aggravate the impact of the request (*terribly, awfully, sure ...*). The other type of internal modifications is fillers. They are of four types. Hesitators (e.g. *er, em*) are the commonest fillers in English and are used when the speaker is uncertain of his request's impact on the hearer (Sifianou, 1999: 179). As for cajolers, they are employed for the sake of inviting the hearer to participate in the interaction and maintain harmony (e.g. *I mean, you know, you see*). With appealers, the speaker seeks the requestee's understanding (*ok, right, yeah ...*). By means of attention getters, the speaker alerts the requestee before directing the request (*excuse me, hello, listen ...*).

Preparators, grounders, disarmers, expanders, promise of reward and the discourse marker *please* are the six types for modifying requests externally. As their name indicates, Preparators are used to prepare the hearer for the request. As for grounders, they give reason or justification for the request; they come before or after the core request. Regarding the third type, disarmers, they are employed to avoid possibilities of refusal and increase the chances of compliance. By means of expanders, a request is repeated or rephrased by a synonymous expression. To increase the possibility of compliance, a promise of reward may be offered. As regards the last type of external modifications, the discourse marker *please* which is used to reduce the imposition inherent in the requestive act. This expression, according to Sifianou (1999: 179), is the commonest and the most significant modifier in the requesting act.

1.3.2 Apologies

Bergman and Kasper (1993: 82) define apology as “compensatory action to an offence in the doing of which S [the speaker] was causally involved and is costly to the H [hearer].”

According to Cohen (1998: 386), the following strategies make up the speech act set of the apologising act:

1. *An expression of apology [IFIDs: illocutionary force indicating devices]*, whereby the speaker uses a word, expression or sentence which contains a relevant performative verb like *apologise, forgive, excuse, be sorry*.
2. *An explanation or account of the situation* which indirectly caused the apologise to commit the offense.
3. *Acknowledgement of responsibility*, whereby the offender recognises his or her fault in causing the infraction.
4. *An offer of repair*, whereby the apologise makes a bid to carry out an action or provide payment for some kind of damage which resulted from the infraction.

5. *A Promise of nonrecurrence*, whereby the apologiser commits himself or herself not to have the offence happen again.

The above strategies may also be reinforced by *intensification*. Intensification is of two types: adverbial like *very, so, terribly, awfully* or emotional expressions like *oh no!, oh crap! oh my gosh, oops!* Each of the above strategies may stand by itself as an adequate apology, but often the apologisers opt for a combination of strategies. Here are some examples (author's examples):

Example 3

I'm so sorry I forgot the book at home. Can I bring it by your office tomorrow morning?
(strategy 1 + intensifier + strategy 4).

Example 4

I have no excuse. Please forgive me (strategy 3+ strategy 1)

Example 5

I am terribly sorry, but I was in rush this morning and forgot your book at home.
(strategy 1+ intensifier + strategy 2)

2. The study

2.1 Data

The data of this study are all the requests and apologies, whether spoken or written, that appear in the Algerian secondary school manuals and the teacher's books that accompany them. In Teacher's Books, the teachers are given certain practical recommendations on how to manage these textbooks; they also include the key answers for the tasks. Teachers have the freedom to adapt the input and are repeatedly advised by both the syllabus designers and by the inspectors not to be 'enslaved' by either the textbooks or the teacher's books. Both the textbooks and the teacher's books are considered in this paper. Therefore, the pairs of textbooks and teachers' books for each of the three years are referred to as Book 1, Book 2 and Book 3 respectively.

2.2 Results and Discussion

2.2.1 Requests

As shown in Table 3, most of the requests appear in Book 1. The higher we go, the fewer requests we encounter. This is, most probably, due to the fact that learners are prepared step by step to the Baccalaureate Examination which is of a written nature. The author and his collaborators hint this in the third year teacher's book, "the graded tasks are of the type to be found in the English paper of the *Baccalauréat* examination (Arab et al., 2006: 10).

Requests N (%)	Book 1	Book 2	Book 3	Total
	61 (61)	23 (23)	16 (16)	100 (100)

Table 3: Number of Requests in the Three Textbooks

As for the HA strategies (core requests), we have got the following statistics (Table 4):

HAs N (%)	Sub-Types	Book 1	Book 2	Book 3
Indirect	Hints	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)
Convention-ally Indirect	<i>Hearer- Oriented</i>			
	Ability	40 (61.54)	7 (30.43)	5 (31.25)
	Willingness	6 (9.23)	6 (26.09)	1 (6.25)
	Permission	3 (4.62)	1 (4.35)	0 (0.00)
	Suggestory Formulae	0 (0.00)	4 (17.39)	0 (0.00)
	<i>Speaker-Based</i>			
	Wishes	2 (3.08)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)
	Desires/Needs	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)
	Total	51 (78.46)	18 (78.26)	6 (37.50)
Direct	Obligation	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	2 (12.5)
	Performatives	2 (3.08)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)
	Imperatives	10 (15.38)	5 (21.74)	5 (31.25)
	Elliptical Phrase	2 (3.08)	0 (0.00)	3 (18.75)
	Total	14 (21.54)	5 (21.74)	10 (62.50)
General Total		65 (100.00)	23 (100.00)	16 (100.00)

Table 4: Use of HA Strategies in the Three Textbooks

In Book 1, the use of conventionally indirect HAs outnumbers the use of direct ones, while indirect HAs (hints) have not been used at all. Though the author encounters some utterances that can be considered indirect requests in the three textbooks, he has not been able to take them into consideration, because the interpretation of hints as such requires contextual information like the description of the situation, the intent of the speaker etc. that the textbooks do not offer. The conventionally indirect HAs found in the textbooks correspond, in terms of frequency, their presence in native production (e.g. Blum-Kulka et al, 1989). It is also shown in the table that the hearer-oriented HAs are more frequent than the speaker-oriented ones; an aspect which is also common in authentic data. It is obvious that *ability* is the most used sub-type (61.54%), then *willingness* (9.23%), *permission* (4.62%) and *wishes* (3.08%). Direct forms have also been used. *Imperatives* (15.38%) are the most used then *performatives* (3.08%) and *elliptical phrases* (3.08%). The *elliptical phrases* need the teacher's intervention to draw the learners' attention that they function as requests. It is always dependent on the contextual factors to assess if they can be interpreted as requests. All in all, Book 1, disregarding the absence of hints provides the learners, at this level, with common forms for realising requests. These forms need not be analysed in a vacuum since they have been accompanied with mitigating devices as we will see.

Like Book 1, Book 2 offers the common forms for realising requests. The conventionally indirect HA strategies are more frequent than the direct ones while the indirect ones are totally absent. We notice this time decrease in the use of *ability* and the appearance of *suggestory formulae* and the disappearance of speaker-oriented HAs.

As for the indirect strategies, they are limited to some *imperatives*. Generally speaking, there is a reduction in the overall number of requests and an insertion of certain forms like *suggestory formulae*.

Book 3 includes very few HA strategies. Here, the direct forms outnumber the conventionally indirect ones. Like Book 1 and Book 2, *imperatives* and *ability* are the most used forms, 30.43% and 21.74% respectively. In this textbook no specific attention has been paid to requests i.e. no task deals with them explicitly. This is quite understandable as the overall aim of the syllabus designers, as already mentioned, is to prepare learners to the *Baccalauréate* examination which is of a written nature. That is, most probably, written language is prioritised at the expense of the spoken one.

One important aspect of the requestive act in English is the use of modality. In the three textbooks, a variety of modals have been used as shown in Table 5:

Modals	Can	Could	Will	Would	May	Shall	Total
N (%)							
Book 1	24(74.06)	16(31.37)	0 (0.00)	7 (13.73)	3 (5.88)	1(1.96)	51(100.00)
Book 2	1(7.14)	5(35.71)	1(7.14)	5 (35.71)	1(7.14)	1(7.14)	14(100.00)
Book 3	2 (28.57)	0(0.00)	1(14.29)	2 (28.57)	0 (0.00)	2(28.57)	7 (100.00)

Table 5: Use of Modals in Three Textbooks

In Book 1, the modals *can* and *could* are the most used. The high frequency of the use of these two modals seems to be counterintuitive. The syllabus designers may have done that to push learners to learn these two modals in requests, but presenting them with such frequency may lead the learners to over-learn them and, thus, open the door for what is called *induced errors* i.e. the errors resulting from the faulty presentation of a structure in the textbook (Stenson, 1974). *Would* has been less used (13.73%) besides *may* (5.88%) and *shall* (1.96%) In Book 2 and 3, fewer modals have been used, but their presentation is more balanced as no modal is noticeably overused. From a pragmatic standpoint, modals of English ought to be handled with care, because they have a pragmatic value and are indicators of politeness. That is to say, some of them are more polite than others. According to Palmer (1997), the past forms of the modals are more polite than their present counterparts. Though it is mentioned in Book 1 that *can* is used in informal requests and *could* in more formal ones, there have not been any metapragmatic information that raise awareness towards the pragmatic attitudes they convey.

The above core requests have been modified by the following internal mitigators and SMs as presented in Table 6. *Openers*, *Understatements*, *downtoners* and *attention-getters* are the used internal modifiers in Book 1. The relatively high use of *Openers* and *Attention-getters* is a feature which really reflects the actual use of these mitigators in native speakers' requests as they are considered a common speech routine. *Attention-getters*, for instance, were the commonest modification in request drawn from a sample of films in a study conducted by Martinez-Flor (2007). The absence of *hedges*, *intensifiers*, *hesitators*, *cajolers* and *promises* in Book 1 and some other mitigators in Book 2 and 3 maybe motivated by the fact that these elements may not be salient features to be included in an input directed to FL learners (Salazar Campillo 2007: 219), despite the fact that such categories namely *cajolers* and *appealers* are quite common in authentic data drawn, for instance, from films (Martinez-Flor, 2007).

Type	Sub-Type	N (%)	Book 1	Book 2	Book 3
Internal Modification	Openers		2 (4.08)	2 (5.41)	0 (0.00)
	Softeners	Understatement	3 (6.12)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)
		Downtoner	1 (2.04)	1 (2.70)	1 (16.67)
		Hedge	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)
	Intensifiers		0 (0.00)	2 (5.41)	0 (0.00)
	Fillers	Hesitators	0 (0.00)	2 (5.41)	0 (0.00)
		Cajolers	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)
		Appealers	1 (2.04)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)
		Attention-getters	4 (8.16)	0 (0.00)	1 (16.67)
		Total	11 (22.45)	7 (18.92)	2 (33.33)
External Modification	Preparators		2 (4.08)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)
	Grounders		4 (8.16)	6 (16.22)	0 (0.00)
	Disarmers		2 (4.08)	1 (2.70)	3 (50.00)
	Expanders		1 (2.04)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)
	Promise of a reward		0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)
	Please		29 (59.18)	23 (62.60)	1 (16.67)
	Total		38 (77.55)	30 (81.08)	4 (66.67)
	General Total		49 (100.00)	37 (100.00)	6 (100.00)

Table 6: Internal and External Modification in the Three Textbooks

As for the SMs i.e. external modifiers, apart from the over-presence of *please* and the absence of the *promise of reward*, they seem to be balanced. The use of *Grounders* is relatively higher and this is intuitively concordant with the fact that this mitigator is one of the typical sub-types of SMs (e.g. Trosborg, 1995 and Martinez-Flor, 2007). As for *preparators* and *disarmers*, they are equally employed (4.08%), whereas *expanders* and *appealers* are relatively fewer (2.04%). Pragmalinguistically speaking, exposing learners to the main external modifications at this level is considered an advantage. Yet, the more we proceed in the analysis, the more we feel a lack in sociopragmatic and metapragmatic knowledge that guide learners to the appropriate use of such features and suffice with just knowing them. A very outstanding feature in Book 1, as well as Book 2, is the overuse of *please* (59.18% and 62.60% respectively). Using this category in such a high frequency may lead the learners overusing it and, as already pointed out, to commit induced errors. However, the placement of this politeness marker within the core requests is, to a large extent, concordant with its presentation in natural speech. In other words, *please* has been found in initial (6.90%), middle (10.34%) and end (82.76%) positions. According to Sifianou (1999) its occurrence at initial position may best be considered as *attention-getter* or *apology* for interruption. *Please* can fulfil other functions and can also substitute the core request itself in real interactions (Martinez-Flor 2007: 271). In our analysis, it has only been considered as a politeness marker due to the lack of the contextual clues that would guide us to other interpretations.

In Book 2, we notice the appearance of *intensifiers* and *hesitators* which are of the form *I wonder if you could*. Furthermore, we notice a relative increase in using *grounders* while *please* is still overused, though it is less frequent than in Book 1. In Book 3, there are only few modifications, and it is no surprise as their number is concordant with that of the core requests themselves. The reason behind that is always likely to be linked to the pre-set objectives by the syllabus designers that prioritise the written language at the expense of the spoken one.

For further insights, the different combinations of mitigating devices spotted in each textbook have to be considered. The combinations found in Book 1 are illustrated as follows:

- a. **Can you do one thing for me?** When you bring the photocopy, *can you also bring the book you have promised to lend me?* (**preparator + expander**)
- b. **Can you help me?** *At the end of every term at school, we have a thorough examination...Please, tell me what shall I do?* (**preparator+ grounder + please**)
- c. **Excuse me**, my name is Lydia Chenneb. *I'm doing a survey on high school students' leisure time activities.* Can I ask you few questions? (**attention-getter + grounder**)
- d. Could you **be kind enough** to speak more slowly, please? (**disarmer + please**)
- e. **Right.** Can we start, please? (**appealer + please**)

In Book 2, the following combinations have been identified:

- a. Can you **possibly** give me your pen, please? (**downtoner + please**)

- b. **I wonder if you** could help me, *please*. (**hesitator** + *please*)
 c. **Do you mind** giving me your dictionary, *please*? (**opener** + *please*)
 d. Would you therefore **please** let us know about your wishes as soon as possible *so that we can serve the room you need*. (**please** + *grounder*)

Due to the over-representation of the marker *please*, it appears in almost all the combinations. A close look at the data drawn from the native speakers' production, one can reach the conclusion that *please* does not often combine with such a range of mitigators (data collected by the author from native speakers). In other words, the textbook data should be based on patterns and frequencies drawn from natural language so as to avoid the bias of being counterintuitive (Vellenga, 2004). As expected, there is no combination of the mitigating devices that have been found in Book 3. This is due to the fact that few HAs and modifications have been presented in this book.

Having dealt with core requests and peripheral elements individually, now we see them in combination. This allows us to identify the overall structure of requests in the three textbooks. Table 7 includes the structures spotted in the three textbooks.

Structures N (%)	Book 1	Book 2	Book 3
HA Only	25 (40.32)	9 (39.13)	13 (81.25)
HA + SM	28 (45.16)	9 (39.13)	2 (12.50)
SM + HA	9 (14.52)	4 (17.39)	1 (6.25)
SM + HA + SM	0 (0.00)	1 (4.35)	0 (0.00)
Total	62 (100.00)	23 (100.00)	15 (100.00)

Table 7: Use of Request Structures

As can be seen in the above table, the total number of structures outnumbers the total number of requests in Book 1. This is due to the fact that we have coded the instance of *expander* appears in that book as two instances of HAs. In the three books, HA-Only category is widely used. This indicates the oversimplification that characterises the textbooks, which is something likely to hinder the learners' pragmatic development more than to foster it. It is quite understandable that the syllabus designers might have opted for that considering the learners' level which might not permit them to access natural or natural-like data, but this should not be at the expense of their pragmatic progress. In terms of frequency, the table implies that all the categories are presented in the textbooks. In terms of content, these structures do not really reflect the requestive patterns in natural interactions since in most requests of the type HA + SM and SM+ HA, the SM stands for *please* and *attention-getters* respectively. In other words, learners are offered a limited range of choices.

The above findings suggest that the Algerian EFL learners are exposed to some extent to an appropriate pragmatic input as regards the speech acts of requests, at least at the pragmalinguistic level. This, however, is never enough as learners should deal with that input explicitly so as to benefit from it (Cohen, 2005). In the light of this proviso, the focus on the speech acts under question is hardly ever explicit in the three

textbooks. In Book 1, only one task, in Unit One, deals with requests explicitly. The objective of this task is to raise learners' awareness of formal and informal requests and the use of the *rising intonation* at the end of them. In Book2, requests have been dealt with explicitly in two tasks, in Unit Two. In the first task, learners are required to listen to the teacher reading an adapted interview and mark intonation at the end of the requests and their replies. In the second, they are supposed to make requests out of offered forms and modify them using *please* then mark intonation on them. In Book 3, noexplicit attention has been paid to requests.

Concerning the metapragmatic information that accompanies the requestive act, it has been defined as "any information related to culture, context, illocutionary force, politeness, appropriacy and/or register (Vellenga, 2004: 5). We are not going to confine ourselves to just the pragmatic information that is related to the requestive act but any piece of information that has a pragmatic consequence. As for counting information, it should be made clear that the bit of information which is mentioned at one go is counted as one instance of metapragmatic information. In Book 1, as can be seen from table 8, there is a lack of metapragmatic information. This is concordant with the fact that alarge portion of requests is implicitly tackled.

Metapragmatic Cues	N (%)	Book 1	Book 2	Book 3
Politeness: Appropriacy and Illocutionary Force		2 (7.69)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)
Register: Formal and Informal		2 (7.69)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)
Contextual/Cultural	Situation	3 (11.54)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)
	Participants	19(73.08)	6(100.00)	10 (100.00)
	Relationship	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)
	Culture-specific	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)
Total		26(100.00)	6(100.00)	10 (100.00)

Table 8: Metapragmatic Cues in the Three Textbooks

As for appropriacy, while dealing with *Clarification-Asking Task*, learners have been explicitly offered strategies and shown how to use them in context. Furthermore, teachers have been recommended to demonstrate how they are used in real spoken interactions. Though limited, such explicit metapragmatic cues may provoke pragmatic awareness of how linguistic forms fit the context. As for politeness, it has been explicitly dealt with the issue of the *voice tone* and its role in conveying pragmatic attitudes (*Peremptory* or *polite*). This is pragmatically relevant in the production of request. Register is the pragmatic issue that has received most attention. It has been

explicitly mentioned that requests are made formal and informal using *could* and *can* respectively. Somewhere else in the teacher's book, teachers are recommended to draw the learners' attention to formal and informal (colloquial) English and their most salient features. This is in addition to how the choice of the right register should be made to fit the situation. In a *Phone-Conversation Task*, learners are offered a description of situations and, thus, the contextual factors. This is pragmatically relevant because, in phone conversations, making requests is almost inevitable. On 19 occasions, the requester and the requestee have been specified. This helps in inferring their relationship, the context and the type of interaction (e.g. customer-secretary, student-teacher, passerby-pedestrian and chairman-attendant). However, no explicit discussions have been found as regards the pragmatic impact of the relationship amongspeakers. In almost all the cases, these pragmatolinguistic cues are implied. It means, it has not been explicitly stated that they are pragmatically relevant in the production of a piece of discourse. All in all, these pragmatic cues are unlikely to motivate pragmatic awareness and development as the general presentation of requests seems to link functions of requests to particular language forms and this would limit the range of choices learners may opt for to make their requests (Vellenga, 2004), unless the teacher intervenes to fill this gap. By experience, teachers do not always indulge with their learners in such a problem due to certain considerations. Book 2 and 3 are rather limited in terms of metapragmatic information offered except from specifying the participants on certain occasions. Knowing the participants is never enough if learners are not aware that the relationship and the degree of familiarity between them have an impact on requests. Actually, in the three textbooks little has been done to make learners aware of contextual and cultural factors.

2.2.2 Apologies

In comparison with requests, the three textbooks contain very few apologies. The occurrence of apologies is far from reflecting the occurrence of the apologising act in real language use. Findings from interlanguage and cross-cultural pragmatic studies have, however, suggested that this linguistic act is frequently realised in speech act data (e.g. Blum-Kulka et al., 1986). Book 1 includes 34.50% of the apologies; Book 2 includes 30.67% while Book 3 includes 26.09 %. On the whole, the distribution of apologies seems to be random and non-patterned.

	Book 1	Book 2	Book 3	Total
Number of Apologies N (%)	9 (34.50)	8 (30.67)	6 (26.09)	23(100.00)

Table 9: Number of Apologies in the Three Textbooks

As can be seen from Table 10, *expression of apology* is the most used one in the three textbooks. This really reflects its high frequency in real interactions, but the overuse may always be a source of bias. This can also be counted as an oversimplification of the apologising act which is realised with a cluster of strategies no less complex than those of requests. The table also indicates that the textbooks are rather limited when it comes to the other strategies. The *explanation/account of the*

situation strategy appears just three times in Book 1 and the *acknowledgement of responsibility* strategy three times in Book 2 while *offer of repair* and *promise of nonrecurrence* strategies are not traceable in the three textbooks. Book 3 is always the most limited in terms of strategies since it contains only *IFIDs*.

Apology Strategies	N (%)	Book 1	Book 2	Book 3	Total
<i>Expression of Apology (IFIDs)</i>		7 (70.00)	8 (72.73)	6(100.00)	21(77.77)
<i>An Explanation/Account of the Situation</i>		3 (30.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	3 (11.11)
<i>Acknowledgement of Responsibility</i>		0 (0.00)	3 (27.27)	0 (0.00)	3 (11.11)
<i>An Offer of Repair</i>		0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)
<i>A promise of Nonrecurrence</i>		0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)
Total		10 (100.00)	11(100.00)	6(100.00)	27(100.00)

Table 10: Use of Apology Strategies in the Three Textbooks

In terms of content, the textbooks do not offer varied strategies even for *expression of apology*; *I'm sorry* has been used 80.95%, *to apologise/apologies* has been used 9.52% and the verb *to beg (pardon)* has been used 9.52% too. The over-presentation of one linguistic form in the textbooks is highly likely to push learners to over-learn it and, thus, over use it later. Findings from interlanguage studies have supported that claim. In her study, Trosborg (1995) reported that Danish learners, including the proficient ones, used the expression *I'm sorry* with a high frequency. She argued that this formula was used that it was over-learned. That is, textbooks are likely to interfere in shaping such apologetic behavior in learners' interlanguage. The wide occurrence of one item at the expense of the others may also provoke overgeneralization in the learners' performance when they are not sure about the other forms (Sabaté I Dalmau and iGotor, 2007: 300). Shofar as *excuse me*, the linguistic counterpart of *I'm sorry*, is concerned, it is worth mentioning that the occurred instances do not serve as real apologies, but rather as *attention-getters* used before the issuance of requests. For this reason, it has been considered only in the discussion of requests above.

Concerning the combination of the above strategies, it is limited since the strategies themselves are limited. Two combinations are dominant: *IFID + explanation/account of the situation* and *IFID + acknowledgement of responsibility*. Here are some examples:

Book 1

a. I am writing **to apologise** for the absence of my daughter Melinda from school yesterday *she had to take care of little sister, because..... (IFID + account of the situation).*

b. I'm **sorry** I can't. *I have to go to the dentist. (IFID + account)*

Book 2

c. **Sorry.** *I should have asked for your permission first.* (IFID + Acknowledgement)

d. **I'm really sorry.** *I shouldn't have said that.* (IFID + Acknowledgement)

Another important aspect of the apologising act is intensification. Table 11 shows the types and frequencies of intensifiers found in the three textbooks. It is obvious that the provided data do not conform to the naturally occurring data neither in terms of content nor in frequency. In Book 1, *very* is used just once. In Book 2, *really* is used once and *sincere* twice, in written apologies. In Book 3, one apology was intensified by the emotional expression *Oh!* As can be seen, some frequent intensifiers have been overlooked like *so, truly, extremely* etc.

Intensification	Book 1	Book 2	Book 3	Total
N (%)				
<i>Very</i>	1 (100.00)	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	1 (20.00)
<i>Really</i>	0 (0.00)	1 (33.33)	0 (0.00)	1 (20.00)
<i>Sincere</i>	0 (0.00)	2 (66.67)	0 (0.00)	2 (40.00)
<i>Oh!</i>	0 (0.00)	0 (0.00)	1 (100.00)	1 (20.00)
Total	1 (100.00)	3 (100.00)	1 (100.00)	5 (100.00)

Table 11: Use of Intensified Apologies in the Three Textbooks

As for the explicit focus on the apologising act, in Book 1, Unit One, there is a task in which learners have to identify a formal letter and an informal note of apology. There is also a task in which learners are asked to imagine that they have made a mistake for which they have to write a letter of apology. In Book 2, Unit Eight, apologising is among the functions to which the unit gives special attention. In the same book, there is a task that explicitly deals with apology (and criticism). Learners are required to apologise or criticize using *should* or *shouldn't have*. The resulting apologies are of the type *IFID + acknowledgementofresponsibility*. Apart from that, there are no other tasks in Book 1 and 2 while in Book 3 there is absolutely no task dealing explicitly with this speech act.

Like in requests, the metapragmatic data relevant to the apologising act production are found to be limited in range in the textbooks examined. In Book 1, teachers are recommended to guide learners to how to *ask for clarification* using forms of apology. This might be helpful in rising awareness about the dynamics of the apologising act that is not only used for compensating social offences. Elsewhere, learners are supposed to transform a formal apology in less formal one through employing *sorry* instead of the verb *toapologise*. This is an attempt to make the learners able to distinguish between registers as regards this act. As for intensification, learners are given cues how to intensify their apologies when expressing *sympathy*. They are explicitly guided to intensify their apologies using *very, really* and *extremely (sorry)*. No explicit metapragmatic cues have been given in Book 2. In Book 3, there is an

occasion where degrees of friendship in the English culture are discussed. The teacher can illustrate through apology, as well as request, how this aspect influences language as it is used in context. This pragmatic cue gives the teacher a chance to shed light on the sociopragmatic aspect of language.

2.3 Summary of the Results

The present study has revealed the following results which, in common, suggest that the acquisition of the pragmatic competence through the input presented in the three Algerian secondary school textbooks is highly unlikely:

1. The distribution of input under question in the three textbooks seems to be, on the whole, random and non-patterned as the occurrence of certain forms does not seem to vary in accordance with the level of the learners while the occurrence of some others appears to be counterintuitive.
2. At the pragmalinguistic level, learners, generally speaking, are exposed to the minimum linguistic forms for producing requests and apologies. However, certain forms are overused like the modals *can* and *could*, the politeness marker *please*, in requests and *IFIDs*, in apologies. This may result in counter effects i.e. overuse of these forms.
3. At the sociopragmatic level, the impact of the socio-cultural and the contextual factors on the production of these two acts, like the age and the participants' relation, is hardly ever tackled and, thus, the three textbooks put learners' awareness of the impact of such factors at stake.
4. There is a lack of explicit focus on the presented data. By experience, teachers fail to draw learners' attention to the implicitly presented requests and apologies and, therefore, they are, oftentimes, gone unnoticed by the learners.
5. As for the metapragmatic information, there is a severe shortage of such data in the material. The data offered are limited in terms of the range of the pragmatic choices. That is, learners may actually learn a linguistic form but miss to learn how to use it in the context.
6. The general tendency in the three textbooks is towards linking the functions of request and apology with certain linguistic forms and, hence, limiting the learners' pragmatic choices (Bardovi-Harlig, 2002, cited in Vellenga, 2004: 12). Such a tendency hinders the acquisition of the pragmatic repertoire by which a choice is made to convey the right attention with the right pragmalinguistic form.

Conclusion

Concordant with the findings of present study, the following recommendations are in order. Textbooks should be enriched with data empirically validated. Here, the syllabus designers can benefit from the already existing literature on interlanguage and cross-cultural pragmatics to identify areas of instruction. Data can also be sought from authentic and spontaneous speech. As regards this point, Martinez-Flor (2007) points out that films can be a source of rich pragmatic input. Once the data is selected, it should be boosted with explicit metapragmatic information so as to show how the

socio-cultural and the contextual factors influence the pragmatic choice. We agree with Cohen (2005) that the Appropriacy of data is not the only issue to consider; the focus on this data should be explicit without neglecting the learners' strategies in learning and performing speech acts. Cross-cultural awareness is also an inescapable factor for developing the communicative potential of language learners. To put it in Celce-Murcia's (2007) words "[i]f the role of language instruction is communicative competence, language instruction must be integrated with cultural and cross-cultural instruction (p. 51)."

Given the fact that the present study is just focused on the speech acts of request and apology, it is recommended that other studies should be carried out to shed light on other speech acts and pragmatic aspects. This would uncover how our textbooks are likely to foster pragmatic development and awareness.

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