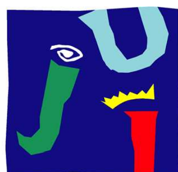

REALITAT DE GÈNERE I CONEIXEMENT PRAGMÀTIC *OFFLINE*: PERCEPCIÓ DE MODIFICADORS DE PETICIONS PER APRENENTS D'ANGLÈS COM A LLENGUA ESTRANGERA

TESI DOCTORAL

Presentada per:
Otilia Martí Arnándiz

Dirigida per:
Dra. Maria Pilar Safont Jordà

Departament d'Estudis Anglesos

UNIVERSITAT JAUME I

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OBJECTE I OBJECTIUS DE LA INVESTIGACIÓ:

El principal objectiu d'aquesta tesi doctoral és considerar l'efecte potencialment positiu del gènere (a favor de les dones) dels aprenents d'anglès com a llengua estrangera en el seu coneixement pragmàtic *offline*. L'esmentat coneixement pragmàtic *offline* ha estat definit per autors com Félix-Brasdéfer (2010: 45, traducció amb subratllat de l'autor) com "allò que els participants *saben*, en comptes de com *usen* la seua habilitat per a interactuar amb un interlocutor". Aquesta habilitat per a interactuar lingüísticament s'hi concreta en la competència pragmàtica dels participants en l'estudi. Més específicament, en el grau de cortesia amb el qual formulen l'acte de parla de les peticions en llengua anglesa, bo i centrant-nos, no en el cor de l'acte de parla com a tal (i.e. "request head act"), sinó en els recursos lingüístics que s'hi adjunten ("adjunts", "support moves"; o, "modifiers"en la terminologia emprada al llarg de la present tesi).

Ens referim, doncs, als anomentats modificadors de la petició o "request modifiers", consistents en paraules i frases que ajuden a modular —be siga mitigant o agravant— l'efecte impositiu d'una petició sobre la persona a la qual es demana el favor. Aquests modificadors de les peticions serien de tres tipus, segons la posició i/o la seua funció respecte al cor de la petició: interns/internal com ara "***T'importaria*** obrir la finestra?" (i.e. "**Would you mind** opening the window?"); externs/external com, per exemple, en "***Podries ajudar-me?*** [...] Pots obrir la finestra?" (i. e. "**Would you help me out?** [...] Can you open the window?"); i, finalment multifuncionals/multifunctional realitzats per mitjà d'expressions o paraules com "***excuse me***" (i.e. "**disculpi**") o "***please***" (i.e. "**si us plau**").

Seguint aquesta classificació general de modificadors de la petició es van formular les següents quatre hipòtesis:

1) Els aprenents femenins d'anglès com a llengua estrangera superarien els masculins, tant en el nombre com en la varietat dels modificadors de peticions mostrats (Lakoff, 1975: 57; Brown, 1980: 17; Oxford, 1993: 71, 73; Holmes, 1995: 2-6, 222; Nikula, 1996: 19; Barrios Espinosa 1997-1998: 430-431; Molina Plaza, 1997-1998: 902; Cameron, 1998a: 444; Lakoff, 2005: 178;

Martí, 2007; Cameron, 2008: 23; Blakemore *et al.*, 2009; Ning *et al.*, 2010: 19).

2) Els aprenents femenins d'anglès com a llengua estrangera produirïen més modificadors de les peticions de tipus intern que els seus homòlegs masculins, amb un èmfasi especial en aquells propis de la cortesia de tipus negatiu orientada al respecte (e.g. *openers*) i more tentatius i cortesos des del punt de vista positiu orientat a la solidaritat (e.g. *hedges* i *fillers*), mentre que els modificadors de tipus reforçador o agravant (e.g. *intensifiers*) apareixerien amb molta menys freqüència (Lakoff, 1975: 53; Holmes, 1995: 222; Barrios Espinosa 1997-1998: 434-435; Martí, 2007).

3) Els subjectes femenins produirïen més sub-tipus de modificadors externs que els masculins, quan aquests mitigadors pogueren compensar a l'interlocutor per proveïr-lo/-la amb el producte requerit i/o concedir-li un favor, el grau d'imposició dels quals no puga ésser alleugerit per la persona que fa la petició (Brown, 1980: 117; Cameron 1998: 444; Martí, 2007).

4) Els subjectes femenins emprarien més sub-tipus de modificadors multifuncionals que els masculins, sempre que aquests modificadors marquin la natura de la relació en termes de poder i/o distància social entre la persona que fa la petició i la que la duu a terme, així com cada volta que els modificadors multifuncionals expressen uns matissos de caràcter apelatiu i/o emocional (Davis, 1995; Barrios Espinosa 1997-1998: 433-434, Barrett *et al.*, 2000; Fisher & Manstead, 2000: 90; Ackerman *et al.*, 2001: 811; Wichmann, 2005; Martí, 2007).

PLANTEJAMENT I METODOLOGIA UTILITZATS:

Per tal de testar aquestes quatre hipòtesis de partida, la primera part de la tesi, és a dir, el seu marc teòric, s'ha dedicat a aclarir els conceptes de competència pragmàtica, model comunicatiu des d'un punt de vista pedagògic, teories de la cortesia, teoria dels actes de parla; i, l'acte de parla de les peticions, pel que fa tant al cor d'aquestes com als seus modificadors. A partir d'un recorregut per tota la literatura anterior ja publicada, amb una especial atenció als estudis de tipus cross-cultural i, sobretot, als desenvolupats dins del marc de la pragmàtica de l'interllenguatge, es va arribar a unes definicions adaptades als objectius/hipòtesis de la tesi respecte a com s'entèn (i) la competència pragmàtica (Levinson, 1983), (ii) en quin model comunicatiu de tipus pedagògic es basarien les interpretacions dels resultats (Celce-Murcia, 2007), (iii) per quina teoria de la cortesia s'optaria (Brown & Levinson, 1987 [1978]; (iv) quin

concepte i classificació d'actes de parla s'empraria —més en línia amb la teorització d'Austin (1962) que no la de Searle (1969)—; i, finalment, (v) quines taxonomies tant del cor de les peticions (Trosborg, 1995) com dels modificadors de les peticions (adaptació d'Alcón *et al*., 2005) es farien servir per processar les dades.

En optar per una metodologia de tipus quasi experimental, s'hi va elaborar una tasca per a completar amb discurs escrit (i.e. *a written discourse completion task*) que posava als participants en l'estudi en la tesitura de redactar una petició davant de 16 situacions de tipus divers (e.g. "En una oficina la cap necessita 40 còpies d'un informe. La seua secretària està a punt d'anar-se'n a casa. La cap pregunta a la seua secretària:...). De fet, les 16 situacions varien d'acord amb la teoria de la cortesia de Scollon and Scollon (1995) que planteja, segons el poder i la distància social existent entre els interlocutors, tres models de relacions humanes, a saber, de deferència, solidaritat i jerarquia. Per acabar d'explorar quina seria la percepció sociopragmàtica d'aquest grup d'aprenents d'anglès com a llengua estrangera respecte als modificadors de peticions, els tres models es van redactar donant lloc a dos diferents graus d'imposició de la petició demanat (i.e. bé fos *feble* com quan es demana que ens presten un bolígraf; o, *fort*, com quan la petició implica el préstec de diners). Els modificadors de peticions emprats en aquesta tasca per cada subjecte es van analitzar mitjançant el programa informàtic SPSS (Statistical Pacage for the Social Sciences) en la seva versió 15.0.1, bo i emprant tests de distribució de variables de tipus *Kolmogorov-Smirnov* i *Two-way ANOVA.*

El grup de 100 estudiants de la Universitat Jaume I pertanyents a totes les facultats que van participar voluntàriament en l'estudi estava format per 100 discents, 50 xics i 50 xiques, amb dos nivells diferents de proficiència, és a dir, 25 estudiants de cada gènere amb un nivell de coneixement de l'anglès elemental i 25 estudiants de cada gènere amb un nivell mitjà. Des del punt de vista de l'edat (amb una mitjana de 20,08 anys), l'oritge ètnic (i.e. de tipus Caucàsic), el seu bagatge lingüístic (es van descartar tot l'alumnat bi- i multilingüe, tant en llengües pròpies com estrangeres, i aquelles persones que

haguessen passat un temps en un país de parla anglesa); i el seu oritge socio-econòmic de classe treballadora i/o mitjana, compte fet del caràcter públic de la Universitat Jaume I, la població resultant es pot descriure com homogènia.

APORTACIONS ORIGINALS:

Tret d'un estudi pilot sobre la influència del gènere dels aprenents d'anglès com a llengua estrangera realitzat en l'any 2007 per Martí, una revisió de la literatura sobre els factors que poden facilitar l'adquisició de la competència pragmàtica fa palesa l'absència de l'esmentat factor. La manca d'estudis de la variable gènere contrasta amb la presència de variables molt més investigades, com ara, els efectes beneficiosos en el desenvolupament de la competència pragmàtica causats per un major nivell de coneixement de la llengua anglesa (e.g. Martí, 2008a), l'aprenentatge d'aquesta llengua en contextos d'immersió —i.e. la durada de les estades de treball o,en centres d'ensenyament de països de parla anglesa— (e.g. Barron, 2003; i, Schauer, 2009) el bilingüisme/multilingüisme dels subjectes que converteix l'anglès en la seva tercera, quarta, cinquena, o sisena llengua, etc (e.g. Safont, 2005).

A més d'aquesta falta de tractament de la variable gènere, plantejar un estudi de tipus quantitatiu suposava un repte des d'una perspectiva tant teòrica i com metodològica. Per una banda, l'estudi de la influència del gènere partint de la base d'adscriure a les dones un nivell de cortesia major que la mostrada pels homes, des del punt de vista lingüístic, implicava un recurs a coneixements teòrics de tipus interdisciplinari. En aquest sentit, calia començar per una opció a favor d'una definició productiva de gènere, seguida d'una recerca en les aportacions sobre aquesta variable des del punt de vista de la psicologia evolutiva, la lingüística aplicada i la sociolingüística interaccional derivada de la teoria feminista.

Mentre que la revisió dels estudis dins del camp de la lingüística aplicada va desvetllar que els lingüistes s'havien centrat en elements no-pragmàtics (sobretot estratègies comunicatives i aprenentatge de vocabulari); l'aproximació a les bases biològiques, emocionals i als estereotips occidentals respecte al

comportament social d'homes i dones ens permetia fer una connexió entre la major inclinació pro-social de les segones, i el seu ús del llenguatge per tal de consolidar les relacions humanes mitjançant recursos pragmàtics que expressen amabilitat i preocupació per no imposar els seues desitjos sobre els del seus interlocutors. Malgrat aquesta potencial connexió entre psicologia i sociolingüística interaccional o competència pragmàtica, els estudis analitzats, tant pel que fa a diversos actes de parla com respecte als centrats en les peticions, partien de la premissa que l'ús de la variable de gènere, majoritàriament desenvolupada en estudis de cas i/o de tipus contrastiu, no era viable quan s'aplicava a estudis de pragmàtica de l'interllenguatge de tipus quantitatiu. En aquest sentit, la present tesi desenvolupa un tractament innovador, tant des d'una perspectiva teòrica interdisciplinària, com des del convenciment que el tractament metodològic de dades de tipus quantitatiu no és només possible, sinó també desitjable i fructífer (vegeu Holmes & Schnurr, 2005; i Hultgren, 2008).

CONCLUSIONS OBTINGUDES I FUTURES LÍNIES D'INVESTIGACIÓ:

Els resultats de la tesi han confirmat tres de les quatre hipòtesis formulades en el primer apartat d'aquest resum. Precisament, el fet que siguin aquells modificadors de les peticions propis de la interacció oral (e.g. *hedges* i *fillers*, com "kind of", or "You know"), els quals es troben absents o apareixen amb molt poca freqüència en el corpus recollit, confirma la nostra percepció en el sentit que les classes d'anglès en el nostre context educatiu estan encara massa orientades a l'ensenyament de la gramàtica, en comptes del de la pragmàtica, que podria reforçar, en major mesura, la capacitat comunicativa dels discents. En conclusió, la major facilitat de les aprenents femenines per tal de captar i emprar recursos pragmàtics s'hauria de potenciar i aprofitar en l'aula d'anglès com a llengua estrangera, mitjançant el disseny de tractaments didàctics com els d'*awareness-raising*, més rics en informació de tipus pragmalinguístic i sociolingüístic i basats en la provisió de materials autèntics (i.e. *realia*).

To my family: Vicent, in loving memory, Otília, Teresa,
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION……………………….……………..……..1

PART I: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1. PRAGMATIC COMPETENCE: THEORETICAL BACKGROUND...………..…7

1.1 Pragmatics and communicative competence models………..…………...….7

1.2 Pragmatics and politeness theory…………………...……………………..18

1.3 The scope of pragmatics………………..…………………..…...…..………..34

1.4 Speech act theory……………………………………….……………………36

1.5 Studies on speech-act use and learning………………………………………44

2. THE SPEECH ACT OF REQUESTING……………………..………..………..55

2.1 Defining requests……………………………………………….………………55

2.2 The request head act……………………………………………...………..59

2.3 Studies on the request head act…………………………………………….…65

2.4 Request modifiers………………………………………...………………..76

2.5 Studies on request modifiers……………………………………….………..95

3. THE EFFECT OF GENDER ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF PRAGMATIC COMPETENCE……………………………….…………………..…...…….113

3.1 A working definition of gender…………………………….……..………….115

3.2 Gender and developmental psychology…………….…………………………117

3.2.1 Gender and its biological bases……………………………………………118

3.2.2 Gender and the social/relational/emotional domain……………………..126

3.2.3 Gender and Western contemporary stereotyping…………….………………136

3.3 Gender and applied linguistics…………………….…………………………142

3.3.1 Gender and the ESL/EFL classroom……………..…………………………144

3.3.2 Gender and communicative competence……………………...…………157

3.4 Gender and pragmatic competence……………...…………………………..165

3.4.1 Gender and feminist linguistics………………………………...…………166

3.4.2 Gender and politeness……………………..…………………………….179

3.4.3 Gender and speech acts…………………………………………………….188

3.4.4 Gender and requests………………………………………………………..195

3.5 Concluding remarks……………………..…………………..………………207

PART II: LEARNERS' PERCEPTION OF REQUEST MODIFIERS

4. THE STUDY…………………………..………………...………………………211

4.1 Hypotheses………………………………..………………………………211

4.2 Participants……………………………………………………..……………212

4.3 Data collection procedure…………………………………..………………218

4.4 Methodological decisions taken in the analysis of the data………..……..235

4.5 Results and discussion…………………………………………...………237

4.5.1 Effect of gender on the use of request modifiers……………………..……250

4.5.1.1 Effect of gender on the use of internal request modifiers……………...252

4.5.1.2 Effect of gender on the use of external request modifiers…………..…260

4.5.1.3 Effect of gender on the use of multifunctional request modifiers……..272

4.6 Limitations and further research…………………………...…..……………288

CONCLUSION……………….……..……...…………....……293

REFERENCES……………………..……..........................……297

APPENDIX: Written discourse completion task……..……....……353

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1	Canale and Swain's (1980) and Canale's (1983) models of communicative competence in relation to Hymes' (1972) definition of communicative competence	10
Figure 1.2	Bachman's model of communicative competence (1990: 87)	12
Figure 1.3	Schematic representation of communicative competence in Celce-Murcia *et al.* (1995: 10)	13
Figure 1.4	Revised schematic representation of communicative competence in Celce-Murcia (2007: 45)	14
Figure 1.5	Chronological evolution of communicative competence models deriving from Hymes' (1967, 1972) distinction between linguistic and sociolinguistic competences	15
Figure 1.6	Brown and Levinson's (1987: 69) available strategies for doing face threatening acts (FTAs)	21
Figure 1.7	Watts' representation of relational work (taken from Locher, 2006: 257)	26
Figure 1.8	Meier's (2004: 13) patterns of effective communication	30
Figure 4.1	Distribution of participants according to age	214

LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1	Typology of linguistic strategies in requests (adapted from Trosborg, 1995: 205)	60-61
Table 2.2	Typology of peripheral modification devices in requests (adapted from Alcón *et al.*, 2005)	79-80
Table 3.1	Findings of meta-analysis for studies of gender differences in verbal/communicative behaviour (presented in Cameron, 2008: 43, who adapted them from Hyde, 2005)	120
Table 3.2	Sex differences in social behaviours (adapted from Blakemore *et al.*, 2009: 99-101)	129-130
Table 4.1	Distribution of participants according to gender and proficiency level	213
Table 4.2	Distribution of participants according to university degree	215
Table 4.3	Type of (pragma)linguistic mistakes processed as valid data	236-237
Table 4.4	Descriptive statistics concerning *internal request modifiers*	240
Table 4.5	Results of Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for Poisson distribution concerning *internal request modifiers*	241
Table 4.6	Descriptive statistics concerning *external request modifiers*	242
Table 4.7	Results of Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for Poisson distribution concerning *external request modifiers*	242
Table 4.8	Descriptive statistics concerning *multifunctional request modifiers*	243-244
Table 4.9	Results of Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for Poisson distribution concerning *multifunctional request modifiers*	244
Table 4.10	Descriptive statistics concerning aggregated *multifunctional request modifiers* and aggregated global request modification (i.e. internal, external, and multifunctional modification)	246
Table 4.11	Results of Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for normal, Poisson, uniform and exponential distributions	247-248

	concerning *low & medium SD addressees*	
Table 4.12	Results of Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for normal, Poisson, uniform and exponential distributions concerning "please"	248
Table 4.13	Results of Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for normal, Poisson, uniform and exponential distributions concerning *multifunctional request modifiers*, and *request modification*	249
Table 4.14	Descriptive statistics concerning *request modifiers* (i.e. internal, external, and multifunctional request modifiers)	251
Table 4.15	Two-way ANOVA test results concerning the production of *internal request modifiers*	254
Table 4.16	Descriptive statistics concerning *openers*	258
Table 4.17	Descriptive statistics concerning *internal request modifiers*	259
Table 4.18	Two-way ANOVA test results concerning the production of *external request modifiers*	260
Table 4.19	Descriptive statistics concerning *non-intruders* (a sub-type of *disarmers*)	261
Table 4.20	Descriptive statistics concerning *cost-minimizers* (a sub-type of *disarmers*)	263
Table 4.21	Descriptive statistics concerning *option-givers*	265
Table 4.22	Descriptive statistics concerning *appreciation tokens*	267
Table 4.23	Descriptive statistics concerning *reasons*	269
Table 4.24	Descriptive statistics concerning *grounders*	269
Table 4.25	Descriptive statistics concerning *disarmers*	269
Table 4.26	Descriptive statistics concerning *promises of a reward*	270
Table 4.27	Descriptive statistics concerning *external request modifiers*	272
Table 4.28	Two-way ANOVA test results concerning the production of *multifunctional request modifiers* (i.e. different sub-types of *attention-getters* and different sub-types of "please") and all aggregated sub-types of request modification (i.e. internal,	274

	external, and multi-functional request modifiers)	
Table 4.29	Descriptive statistics concerning the production of *apologetic attention-getters*	275
Table 4.30	Descriptive statistics concerning the production of *prescriptive-face-saving* "please"	275
Table 4.31	Descriptive statistics concerning the production of *attention-getters with family as addressees*	276
Table 4.32	Descriptive statistics concerning the production of *attention-getters with friends as addressees*	276
Table 4.33	Descriptive statistics concerning the production of *attention-getters with low SD addressees* (i.e. family and friends)	276
Table 4.34	Descriptive statistics concerning the production of *attention-getters with acquaintances as addressees*	277
Table 4.35	Descriptive statistics concerning the production of *attention-getters with work-colleagues and superiors as addressees*	277
Table 4.36	Descriptive statistics concerning the production of *attention-getters with medium SD addressees* (i.e. acquaintances, and work colleagues and/or superiors)	277
Table 4.37	Descriptive statistics concerning the production of *attention-getters with high SD addressees* (i.e. strangers)	278
Table 4.38	Descriptive statistics concerning the production of *pleading*	281
Table 4.39	Descriptive statistics concerning the production of "please" (i.e. *manipulative* "please", *prescriptive/face-saving* "please", *contract-based* "please", elliptical request "please", and *pleading*)	282
Table 4.40	Descriptive statistics concerning the production of *manipulative* "please"	284
Table 4.41	Descriptive statistics concerning the production of *multifunctional request modifiers* (i.e. different sub-types of *attention-getters* and "please")	284

CODES USED THROUGHOUT THE STUDY[1]

FTA/FTAs	Face threatening act/Face threatening acts
D	Distance
P	Power
R	Ranking of imposition
ILP	Interlanguage Pragmatics
IFID	Illocutionary force indicating device
CCSARP	Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Patterns
DCTs	Discourse Completion Tasks/tests
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
L1	First language
L2	Second language
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ESL	English as a Second Language
SD	Social distance
FDCTs	Free Discourse Completion Tasks/tests
MET	Multimedia Elicitation Task
L3	Third language
UJI	Universitat Jaume I
CofP/CofPs	Community of Practice/Communities of Practice
CA	Conversational Analysis
PWC	Powerful women in charge
UCLES	University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate
ESP	English for Specific Purposes
LAELA	**L**ingüística **A**plicada a l'**E**nsenyament de la **L**lengua **A**nglesa/ Linguistics Applied to English Teaching
COPT	Cartoon Oral Production Task
WDCTs	Written Discourse Completion Tasks/tests

[1] In order of appearance

INTRODUCTION

The main purpose of our study is to consider the effect of the variable gender on the *offline* pragmatic knowledge in a non-interactive format (i.e. that of a written discourse completion task), shown by English as a foreign language learners with respect to the perception of request modifying devices. This *offline* pragmatic knowledge, defined by Félix-Brasdefer (2010: 45, his emphasis) as "what the participants *know*, rather than how they *use* their ability to interact with an interlocutor", is our way of approximating to the very notion of pragmatic competence as one of the six components of the communicative competence pedagogically oriented construct.

That is why we deal with the theoretical background of pragmatic competence throughout Chapter 1. In so doing, the first two sections of this chapter will develop a notion of pragmatics such as Levinson's (1983: 9) in which it is defined as "the study of those relationships between language and context that are grammaticalized, or encoded in the structure of a language". When highlighting, from the beginning of Chapter 1, the social indexing of linguistic devices, we advance our interest in focusing on the sociopragmatic side of pragmatic competence. In fact, we consider the consequences of an insufficient pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic knowledge in terms of politeness conventions. Additionally, such courtesy conventions are presented as deeply

ingrained in culture-bound notions of *face* (e.g. Meier's, 1997, 2004), relational work (e.g. Locher's, 2006); and, gender identity itself (Mills, 2002, 2003, 2004).

The third section of Chapter 1 begins by narrowing the scope of pragmatics to speech-act theory through the Anglo-American school view which puts forward a component view of pragmatics. Such perspective, contrary to the European one, highlights the place of pragmatics within the communicative competence constructs analysed in the opening section of the chapter. After exploring the foundations of speech-act theory by Austin (1976 [1962]) and Searle (1969) in section four, this first chapter also offers, in its fifth and final section, an overview of both cross-linguistic and acquisitional studies conducted to date on different speech-act use and learning within the field of interlanguage pragmatics.

Having established the premise that the present study resides within the scope of interlanguage pragmatics, and before dealing with the targeted items on focus (i.e. pragmatic force modifiers), Chapter 2 defines the speech act of requesting and distinguishes between the request head act and its request modifiers, also known as *adjuncts* or *support moves*. This second theoretical chapter, does not only give an account of a review on the literature regarding both speech-act main constituents, but it also introduces the main tools to classify the targeted pragmatic aspects. Those

instruments are Trosborg's (1995) typology of linguistic strategies concerning the request head-act and an adaptation of Alcón *et al.*'s (2005) typology of peripheral modification devices in requests classified into *internal*, *external* and *multifunctional* request modifiers.

Closing the theoretical framework and first part of the study, a third chapter dealing with the effect of gender on the development of pragmatic competence will be found. The chapter opens with a brief section on a working definition of gender, followed by those studies which have explored gender as an individual variable mainly within the fields of first language pragmatics and cross-cultural pragmatics.

In that respect, the very same definition of gender will be widened throughout the pages that follow, being approached from three different perspectives, namely, (i) gender and developmental psychology, including its biological bases, its social/relational/emotional domain, and, its notion according to Western contemporary stereotypes; (ii) gender and applied linguistics with one subsection dealing with research on gender and the ESL/EFL classroom, and another one reporting the findings of the existent literature with respect to gender and strategic and linguistic competence; and, finally, (iii) gender and pragmatic competence, which embraces the different trends developed within interactionalist sociolinguistics from a feminist point of view.

The empirical analysis of the data is reported in the second part of the research project throughout the pages of Chapter 4, which refers to the study as such. The study takes as a point of departure the exploration of the effect of gender on the three main types of request modifiers classified in the previous proposed taxonomy, after having established the condition of this individual variable (i.e. gender) as one of the most neglected ones dealt with in the field of interlanguage pragmatics, in comparison with others such as proficiency level, or length of stay abroad.

Such exploration results in the formulation of the four hypotheses guiding this piece of research, according to which female subjects in the corpus collected by means of a written discourse completion task would outperform men concerning the modification of the illocutionary force of the request head act formulated to fulfil polite requirements. Besides, they would resort to more request modifiers both in general and with respect to their three main categories, namely, *internal*, *external* and, *multifunctional* request modifiers.

After stating these four hypotheses, however, a twofold attempt is made, on the one hand, to introduce the main traits of the population participating in the experiment, according to their gender, proficiency level, age, university degree, linguistic background, ethnic origin, and social class; and, on the other hand, to clarify methodological issues, from

data collection procedure (see the appendix) to those decisions taken referring to the data regarded as valid, which are processed by means of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS 15.0.1).

The last section of Chapter 4 evaluates the findings with respect to the aforementioned hypotheses, with the goal of integrating both statistical results and some qualitative examples which might contribute to the ongoing debates within the field. Finally, the conclusion will move from dealing with the main limitations of the present study to concentrate on a recapitulation of outcomes. Afterwards, possible points of departure for future research and some pedagogical implications are also suggested, such as the need to implement pragmatic instruction from an awareness-raising approach.

PART I: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Chapter 1

Pragmatic competence: theoretical background

The purpose of our study is to consider the effect of the variable gender in the pragmatic competence shown by English as a foreign language learners with respect to the use of modifying devices when requesting. This first chapter will be devoted to theoretical issues. Firstly, we will focus on the definition of pragmatic competence and its place within the different models of communicative competence presented in the field of second language acquisition since 1980. Secondly, the close relationship existing between pragmatics and politeness concerns will be also explored, since politeness theory is one of the most influential constructs concerning assessments of pragmatic performance. Thirdly, a delimitation of the scope of pragmatics will lead to introduce, on the one hand, a number of considerations on speech act theory and, on the other hand, a summary of the literature on speech-act use and learning.

1.1 Pragmatics and communicative competence models

Nowadays, the development of communicative competence is the commonly agreed educational need in foreign-language teaching contexts. Indeed, it has been defined by the Council of Europe as “those competences which empower a person to act using specifically linguistic means” (2001: 9) and “comprising several components: linguistic,

sociolinguistic and pragmatic" (2001: 13). However, this communicative language turn began to materialize forty years ago, in the late 60s and early 70s of the twentieth century. In fact, such a shift succeeded thanks to a number of theories of communicative competence stated by scholars from different humanistic fields, among which, it deserves to be highlighted the one proposed by Hymes (1974). The very first notion of *communicative competence* was coined by this anthropological linguist in 1967 in response to the Chomskyan conception of *linguistic competence*. According to Chomsky, *competence* corresponded with the ideal native monolingual speakers' grammatical knowledge with no consideration of contextual constraints, and thus, of real language use termed as *performance*.

When substituting the generative concept of *linguistic competence* by his notion of *communicative competence*, Hymes did much more than merely broadening the term of linguistic competence in order to include other components related to social and contextual appropriateness. In fact, in Cenoz' view, (1996), Hymes' (1967, 1972) sociolinguistic account of communicative competence involved both a quantitative and a qualitative change in the notion of competence as such. This is so because, contrary to Chomskyan linguistic competence described as a kind of static, absolute, individual and product-oriented grammatical knowledge; Hymes'

communicative competence was defined in terms of a dynamic, relative, social and process-oriented skill focused mainly on speaking but also on writing (Cenoz, 1996: 99-101).

As Kasper (2000) pinpointed when referring to Habermas' (1970) theory of communicative competence, however, all these theoretical assertions, "in order to serve as a guiding construct for foreign language teaching", should be "specified into components that could be learnt, taught, and assessed". In that sense, models of communicative competence, like Canale and Swain's (1980) proposal, emerged to divide communicative competence into *grammatical competence*, *strategic competence* and *sociolinguistic competence*. Such division was thought to be relevant in the fields of language teaching and applied linguistics, since the three essential components that Canale and Swain (1980: 1) included as part of their construct were explained as those which "will lead to more useful and effective second language teaching and allow more valid and reliable measurement of second language communication skills".

Three years later, Canale (1983) maintained the three aforementioned elements, but the latter, that is, sociolinguistic competence was further divided into *sociolinguistic* and *discourse competence*. In so doing, the construct of communicative competence was made up of four components: (i) *grammatical competence* understood as all the lexical,

morphological, syntactic, phonologic and semantic knowledge needed to produce accurate language, (ii) *strategic competence* entailing both verbal and non-verbal communication strategies aimed at clarifying the speaker's communicative intention and, thus, intended to avoid misunderstandings and/or communication breakdowns, (iii) *sociolinguistic competence* as the knowledge of context-dependent norms of language use and (iv) *discourse competence* involving the knowledge of the two basic norms of discourse, namely, formal cohesion and semantic coherence.

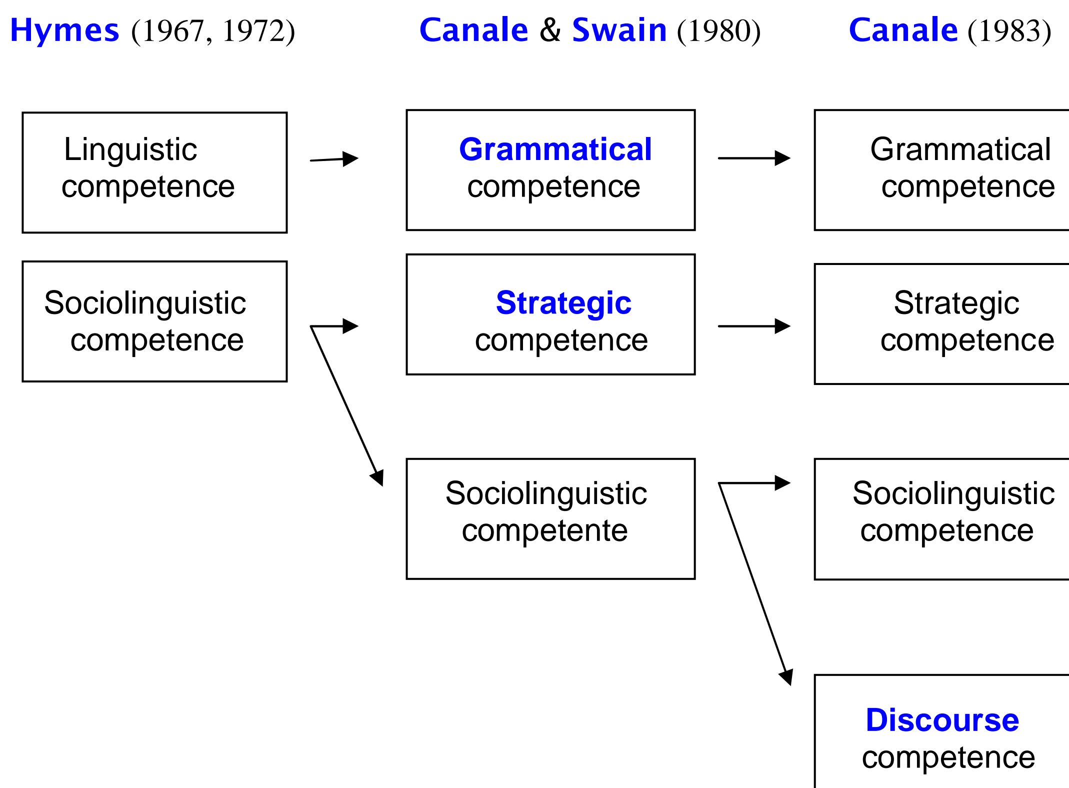

Figure 1.1 Canale and Swain's (1980) and Canale's (1983) models of communicative competence in relation to Hymes' (1972) definition of communicative competence

Being our main focus of concern foreign language learners' pragmatic knowledge and perception in relation to the use of requestive modifiers, it is obvious that these first two models do not give a full account of pragmatic competence as an independent component of the communicative competence construct. As a matter of fact, it was Chomsky (1980: 224), in his 1978 Woodbridge lectures delivered at Columbia University, that is, two years before Canale and Swain presented their first proposal, the one who pinpointed the need to make a distinction between *grammatical competence* and *pragmatic competence*, as could be seen in the following quotation:

> The grammar must deal with the physical form of a sentence and its meaning. Furthermore, the person who knows a language knows the conditions under which it is appropriate to use a sentence, knows what purposes can be furthered by appropriate use of a sentence under given social conditions. For purposes of inquiry and exposition, we may proceed to distinguish "grammatical competence" from "pragmatic competence", restricting the first to the knowledge of form and meaning and the second to knowledge of conditions and manner of appropriate use, in conformity with various purposes.

Following this Chomskyan distinction and bearing language assessment issues in mind, Bachman presented a model in which, for the first time, pragmatic competence was not embedded within the scope of sociolinguistic competence. Quite the opposite, it was sociolinguistic competence the element regarded as one of the two constituents of pragmatic competence. Indeed, Bachman's (1990) communicative competence model divided what he called *language competence* (equivalent

to communicative competence) into *organisational competence* and *pragmatic competence*. Whereas organisational competence referred to *grammatical competence* along with *textual competence*, or discourse competence in Canale and Swain's (1980) terminology; the pragmatic competence component, as a full member of the model, placed in the foreground the existing link between language and language users by distinguishing two main subcomponents: (i) *illocutionary competence*, including both speech acts and illocutionary force or intended meaning and (ii) *sociolinguistic competence* restricted to those contextual variables which result in appropriate language use.

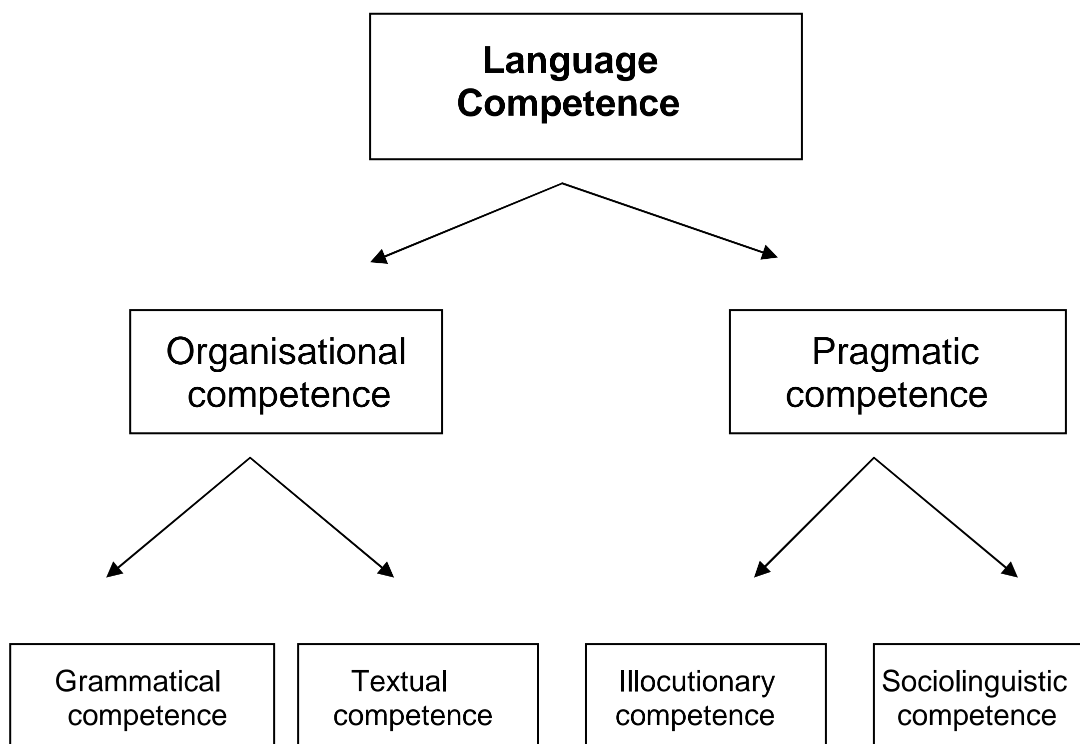

Figure 1.2 Bachman's model of communicative competence (1990: 87)

Apart from the different treatment given to pragmatic competence, and according to authors like Alcón (2002a: 86-87), Canale and Swain's, Canale's, and Bachman's models were found to present among their shortcomings the fact that none of them specified how their different subcomponents were related to each other. This lack of explicit interrelationship was tackled in 1995 by Celce-Murcia *et al.* who placed, at the core of their suggested construct, *discourse competence*. That discursive or textual (to borrow Bachman's term) constituent was shaped, in turn, by *linguistic, socio-cultural* and *actional competence* and it appeared surrounded by *strategic competence*, seen as a repertoire of communicative, cognitive, and metacognitive strategies available "to compensate for deficiencies in any of the other competencies" (Celce-Murcia, 2007: 44).

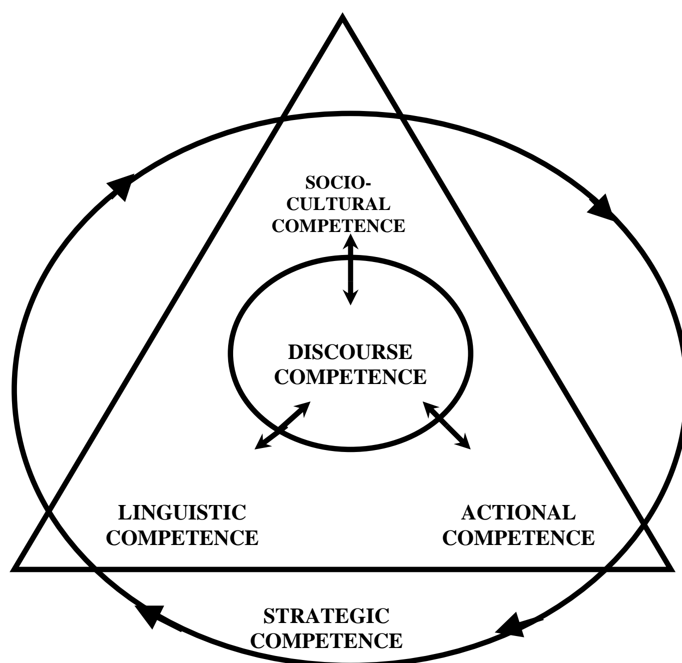

Figure 1.3 Schematic representation of communicative competence in Celce-Murcia *et al.* (1995: 10)

In her recently proposed revision of the 1995 model, Celce-Murcia maintains the central place of discourse competence and the encircling position of strategic competence, but she changes the so-called actional competence by *interactional competence* and adds *formulaic competence* to her proposal, as the natural counterpart of *linguistic competence*:

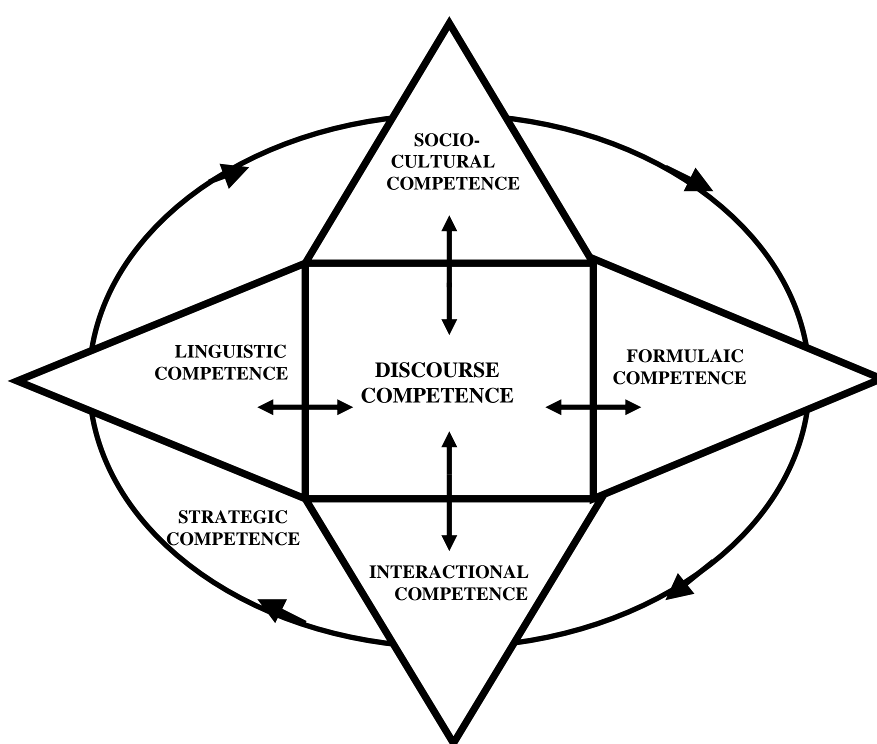

Figure 1.4 Revised schematic representation of communicative competence in Celce-Murcia (2007: 45)

Underlying these terminological changes, whose evolution is represented in figure 1.5 below, there is a constant widening and further concretion of the different components of which the communicative competence construct is supposed to be made up:

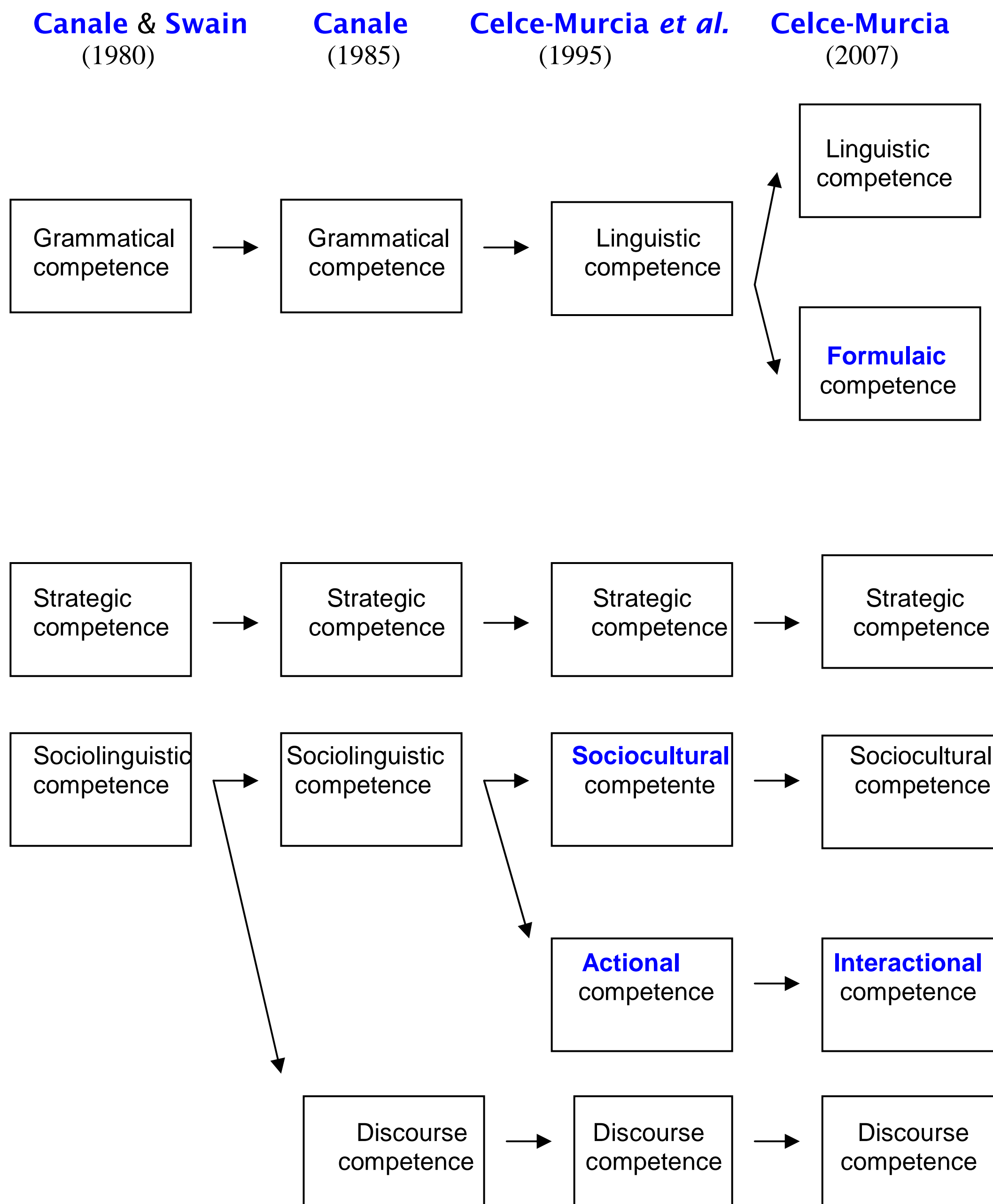

Figure 1.5 Chronological evolution of communicative competence models deriving from Hymes' (1967, 1972) distinction between linguistic and sociolinguistic competences

Thus, over the years and throughout the four communicative competence models we have reviewed up to this point, Hymes' (1972: 277)

sociolinguistic competence, which he first defined as knowing "when to speak, when not to, what to talk about and with whom, when, and in what manner to interact", has given place to four "new" constituents: strategic, discourse or textual (in Bachman's construct), sociocultural or *intercultural* (in Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor's model, 2006: 16) and actional/interactional competences.

As previously mentioned, however, the changes in these pedagogically motivated models above went beyond the subdivision and addition of new components. Even those constituents which kept their names have widened their scopes to include new focuses of interest within the field of second language acquisition. That is what can be inferred from Celce-Murcia's (2007: 45-50) last proposed framework of communicative competence in which these two simultaneous movements of division and broadening have become quite evident.

On the one hand, there are constituents which have achieved independence from previously existing ones. That is the case of *formulaic competence* which includes in its domain routines, collocations, idioms and lexical frames, that is, all the linguistic knowledge which does not belong to the systemic elements of language as a code (i.e. phonology, lexis, morphology and syntax put under the label of linguistic competence). On the other hand, other elements are further described by adding factors

which were not considered before. That is what happened, for example, with *interactional competence* and *strategic competence*. Whereas the former now takes into consideration not only actional competence (i.e. knowledge of how to perform speech acts) but also conversational one (e.g. turn-taking moves), the latter also embraces learning strategies along with communication ones.

Furthermore, by presenting her rethinking of the communicative competence construct in a pyramidal form (see figure 1.4, p. 11), Celce-Murcia makes more evident the counterbalance existing between those components which are more closely linked and which even used to belong to a former unified domain. In fact, linguistic competence faces formulaic one, whereas interactional competence is opposite sociocultural one. That is why it is our contention that Celce-Murcia's (2007) proposal better conveys the multifaceted nature of pragmatic competence , despite the fact that pragmatic competence is not presented as a full and visible member of her model, as it does appear in Bachman's (1990) or Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor's (2006) construct. Indeed, as far as pragmatic ability is concerned, Celce Murcia's (2007) design might be seen as building on previous definitions of key pragmatic constituents, according to which pragmatics can be divided into pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics (see Leech, 1983).

While pragmalinguistics refers to "the particular resources which a given language provides for conveying particular illocutions" (Leech, 1983: 11), sociopragmatics accounts for those socio-cultural perceptions underlying participant interpretation and performance of communicative acts. In that sense, the speech act theory cuts across this working definition of pragmatics and it will be dealt with in section 1.4, whereas politeness theory is very present in its sociopragmatic side.

In fact, Celce-Murcia (2007: 46) defines sociocultural competence as "the speaker's pragmatic knowledge" not only on several cultural factors (e.g. major dialects) but also about the following sociocultural variables:

> -*social contextual factors*: the participants' age, gender, status, social distance and their relations to each other re: power and affect
>
> -*stylistic appropriateness*: politeness strategies, a sense of genres and registers.

Such socio-pragmatic factors, as we will see in the following section, have been addressed by different versions of the so-called politeness theory.

1.2 Pragmatics and politeness theory

In an interview recorded at MIT on January 12, 2004, Chomsky was asked about the suitability of language as a communicative device. His answer (Andor, 2004: 108) was adamant in refusing that the primary function of language is "to create a symbolic world in which we can plan, interpret,

act, think and so on and so forth". Instead, Chomsky argued that we humans use language as a form of internal dialogue, that is, to talk to ourselves.

Contrary to this claim, Pyysiäinen's (2002: 167) portrait of human beings as "at once biological, psychological, and cultural social beings" supports the prevalence of interaction over other linguistic functions. Such prevalence, in turn, would explain why politeness studies are so closely linked to a common aspiration to ensure the smoothness and success of communication.

Although there is no clear definition of what politeness is, Eelen (2001: 245) sees it as a "socially regulative force in the maintenance of social order and stability" in his critique of different politeness theories. The fact that politeness is regarded a resource intended to grant human interaction reveals to what extent such interaction is conceived as involving friction and subsequent miscommunication.

The conceptualization of politeness as a strategic construction of cooperative social interaction or as strategic conflict-avoidance (Vilkki, 2006) is implied in a number of "traditional" politeness theories, in Terkourafi's (2005) terms. Fraser (1990) has classified these traditional, classic or first generation politeness theories under the following labels: the *conversational-maxim* view, the *face-saving* view, and the *conversational-*

contract view. Whereas Fraser himself, along with Nolen (1981), have coined and developed the latter; the former is indebted to Lakoff's (1973) and Leech's (1977) theories of politeness. In between, Brown and Levinson's theory (1987 [1978]) represents the so-called *face-saving* view which, to date, has proved to be the most influential among them.

Because of the collective need to go beyond the function of language as the passing of information in order to consider it as a facilitator of human interaction, the aforementioned theories has in common the search for an explanation to the need of flouting Grice's (1975 [1967], 1989) communicative maxims (i.e. be informative, be brief, be relevant and be truthful). However, while Lakoff and Leech try to complement Grice's cooperative principle with the addition of a number of politeness rules (Lakoff's "Don't impose", "Give options" and "Make A feel good, be friendly") or politeness maxims (Leech's maxims of tact, generosity, approbation and modesty), Brown and Levinson see politeness in terms of the preservation of *face*.

In their politeness theory, the notion of face is reported as having a lay sense and a theoretical one. The former is enshrined in English folk terms such as "losing face" which conveys the idea of becoming embarrassed or being humiliated, whereas the latter is defined by Brown and Levinson (1987: 61) as "the public self-image that every member wants to claim for

himself". Besides, every member of a society has either a negative or a positive face. Negative face (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 62) is defined as "the want of every 'competent adult member' that his actions be unimpeded by others" and positive face would be "the want of every member that his wants be desirable to at least some others", in other words, "the desire to be ratified, understood, approved of, liked and admired".

Those speech acts which defy the speaker's or the hearer's positive or negative face needs have been coined by Brown and Levinson's as "face threatening acts" (henceforth FTAs). The performance of such acts, among which requests are included, calls for, in Brown and Levinson's terms, "any rational agent" seeking to avoid FTAs or resorting to certain strategies aimed at minimizing the threat as presented in the following figure:

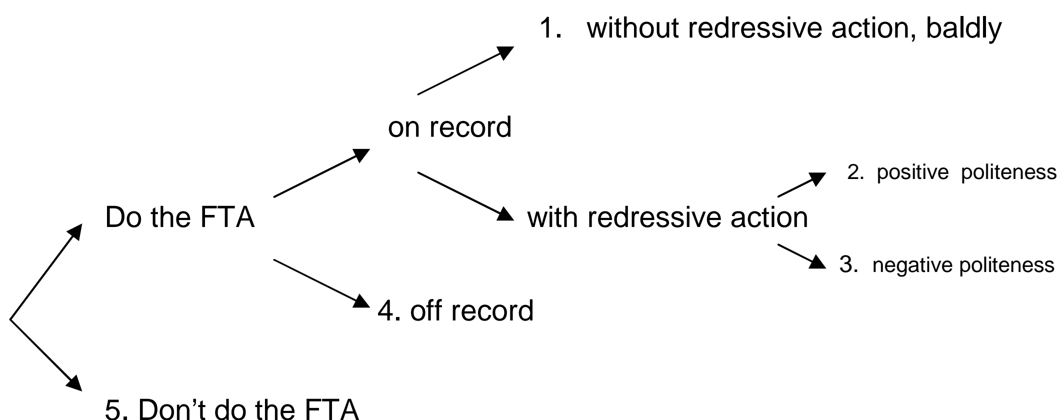

Figure 1.6 Brown and Levinson's (1987: 69) available strategies for doing FTAs

As shown in figure 1.6 above, there seems to be a correspondence between this list of strategies and Grice's cooperative principle in the sense that the conveyance of politeness by all the strategies −with the exception of the first one (i.e. on record, without redressive action, baldly)− is related to the degree of deviation from such principle. Hence, the avoidance or silence ("don't do the FTA") can be regarded as the most face-saving option, followed by *off record* or unconventionally indirect expressions or hints and by *on record* strategies made up of (conventionally) indirect strategies addressed to meet the needs of either positive-oriented politeness or negative-oriented politeness.

Furthermore, the choice of linguistic form and a given pragmatic strategy is, according to Brown and Levinson, influenced by the so-called weightiness of a FTA computed by means of a formula in which S and H stand, respectively, for speaker and hearer; while D means distance, P means power and R is the ranking of imposition:

$$\mathbf{W_x = D\ (S, H) + P\ (H, S) + R_x}$$

With the above formula, the three basic concepts around which Brown and Levinson's (1987 [1978]) theory revolves (i.e. face, FTAs and politeness strategies) have been introduced. They are the underpinnings and, therefore, the targets of most of the criticism the theory has arisen over time.

Beginning with the definition of face, several pragmatists have warned against Brown and Levinson's excessive focus on negative face, in as much it seems secondary or even absent in non Anglo-Saxon contexts. In particular, Japanese (e.g. Matsumoto, 1988; and Ide, 1989) and Chinese scholars (e.g. Gu, 1990; and Mao, 1994) have reported the inadequacy of applying Brown and Levinson's notion of negative face in Eastern societies where the respect of the community is sought not to satisfy a want of freedom or independence but to signal membership. The same deficits in terms of negative face might be observed when analyzing the clear orientation to positive face in some European language-cultures such as Greek (Sifianou, 1999), Polish (Wierzbicka, 1985) or Spanish (see Placencia & García, 2007 for a summary).

The identification of these two shortcomings has led Pizziconi (2003: 1474) to ascertain that Brown and Levinson's theory would embody an individualistic *versus* a contextualist paradigm. Supporting an egotistic stance in the definition of face poses a serious challenge to the theory's claim for universality. In fact, Brown and Levinson's construct has been repeatedly put into question for its ethnocentrism which, in Kasper's opinion (1990), derives from the individualism prevailing in the Western medium where the authors are immersed.

The accusation of being ethnocentric has been extended by authors such as Meier (1997, 2004) to the linguistic realisations of FTAs strategies. Since in Brown and Levinson's (1987 [1978]) model meeting facework requirements is equated to politeness, the face-saving properties of their five strategies have been usually transferred to the linguistic markers (e.g. lexical or syntactic devices) that realise them in interaction to the point of establishing a directness-to-indirectness or formal-to-informal scales in which +indirect +formal is regarded as +polite. Nevertheless, as pinpointed by Meier (1997: 23), this linear relationship between indirectness and politeness, which marks all direct linguistic strategies as impolite (e.g. the use of the imperative in the performance of requests) cannot be sustained beyond Anglo-Saxon contexts of use. In fact, as mentioned above, there are a number of speech communities which do not adhere to this supposedly universal inverse relationship between politeness and directness (see Meier, 2004: 8).

The formulation of weightiness is another element in Brown and Levinson's theory which has deserved some criticism. As the speaker is expected to choose among the FTAs strategies by taking into consideration no more than three variables, namely, relative power (P), social distance (D) and ranking of imposition (R), their calculation of facework has been seen as problematic. On the one hand, Watts *et al.* (1992) pointed to the

lack of relationship existing among the three variables above, which they clearly saw as interdependent, and, thus, necessarily intertwined. On the other hand, scholars such as Slugoski and Turnbull (1988) wondered why only these three variables should be considered and claimed for the addition of other factors like affect.

In spite of all the criticism arisen, several proposals have been elaborated to address the main shortcomings of Brown and Levinson's politeness model with the aim of complementing it. Thus, the main principles of the theory pervades from Kerbrat-Orecchioni's (1997) face-enhancing acts (FEAs) to Culperer's (1996) anatomy of impoliteness, passing through Ide's (1989) notion of discernment or Chen's (2001) model for self-politeness. Only the so-called "post-modern" theories (see Watts, 2003; Eelen, 2001; or, Mills, 2003) involve an actual paradigm change in that they open the path to what Usami (2002) has labelled as "discourse politeness".

By going beyond the sentence-level, this second generation of theories, in Kasper's view (2006a: 244), turns politeness into a discursive phenomenon that challenges both the static nature of linguistic repertoires and any deterministic view of social context, in favour of emphasizing "the mutually constitutive roles of agency and social structure in situated, concrete activities". This discursive and interactive approach to politeness has research methodological implications by advocating for more

ethnographic forms of investigation such as conversational analysis (CA) procedures (see an example in Kasper, 2006b), instead of relying on tailor-made instruments of data elicitation (i.e. discourse completion tests).

Proposals such as Locher's (2006), built on Watts' notion of *politic* (i.e. appropriate) behaviour, challenges the equivalence of certain linguistic strategies like mitigation with politeness, whenever appropriateness is not assessed "at the local level", that is, in a given community of practice. Furthermore, when borrowing Watts' concept of politic behaviour, Locher demonstrates, on the one hand, that what was traditionally considered as polite behaviour is only a small part of everyday interaction; and, on the other hand, she calls our attention in that both rude/impolite and over/polite behaviour should be seen as non-politic and, therefore, inappropriate behaviour, as can be seen in figure 1.7 below:

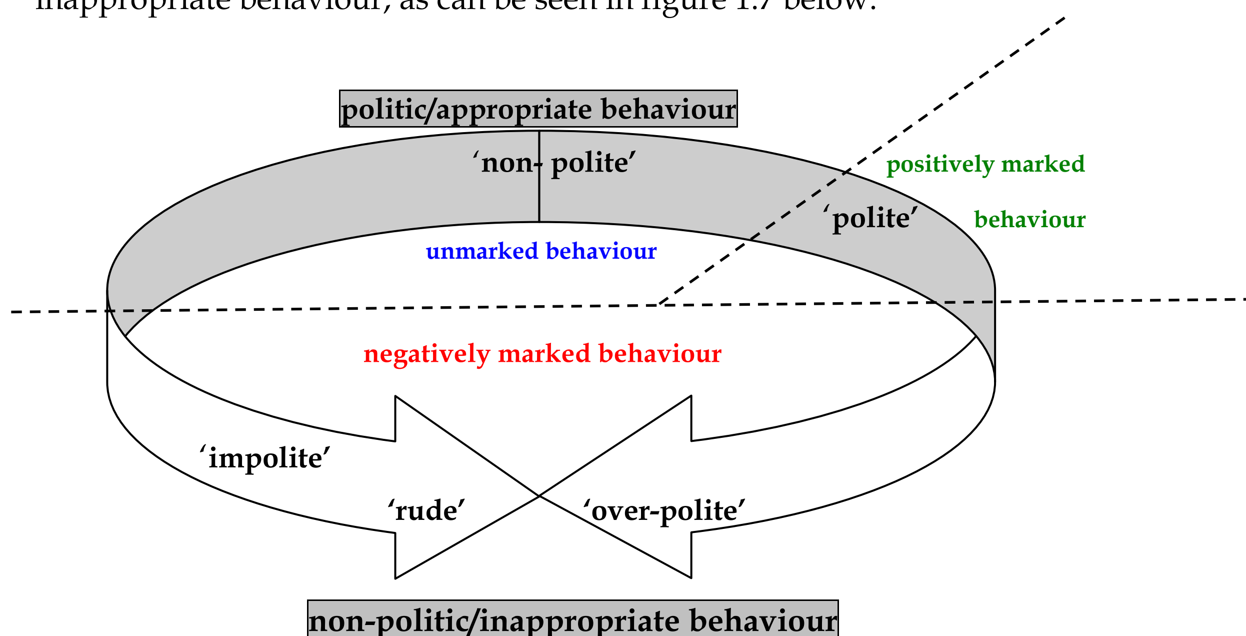

Figure 1.7 Watts' representation of relational work (taken from Locher, 2006: 257)

As a result, these recent models of politeness draw a distinction between participants' judgements and scientists' assessments of what polite behaviour is with relation to unmarked politic/appropriate behaviour. In placing all the emphasis on first order politeness (interactants') over second order or scientific politeness (Watts *et al*., 1992), such postmodern views seem to make unviable the study of the pragmatic aspects of linguistic politeness beyond the situational analysis of a specific speech event.

In fact, Locher (2006: 264) holds that "politeness itself can never be conclusively defined with respect to specific linguistic devices, nor can it be universally predicted in a theoretical way". That is to say, pragmatics would turn into a peripheral concern in favour of social theorization nourished by notions like Bourdieu's "habitus" (1984 [1979]) borrowed to explain participants' contribution to the observed interaction, not to mention the lack of a method which ensures the access to interactants' perception of *the* communicative situation as such.

Nevertheless, as suggested by Beeching (2004: 80), Brown and Levinson's theory is still useful as an analytical tool within the field of pragmatic studies because "its categories are […] broad ones which can be given a local interpretation". Part of the criticism on its anglocentric nature derives from the fact that, in O'Driscoll's (2007: 463) opinion, the model might

have been seriously misunderstood. For instance, when Brown and Levinson (1987: 76) present the different components of FTAs weightiness, they make it clear that distance, power and ranking of imposition would be rated "in that culture". In so doing, as posited by Chen (2001: 93), "the fact that a particular speech act is viewed as having different degrees of politeness in different cultures is taken care of by B&L's formula of calculating a strategy".

On the one hand, the validity of the formula makes understandable the efficiency of Scollon and Scollon's (1995) model when applied to empirical analysis. Drawn on an elaboration of Brown and Levinson's notions about power and distance, Scollon and Scollon (1995: 33-49) define three politeness systems which have been and still are in force: a deference one (-P, +D) between equals but distant interlocutors, a solidarity one (-P, -D) between equals and close participants, and a hierarchical one (+P) between superiors and inferiors.

On the other hand, it seems that Meier (1997, 2004) was wrong when proposing to abandon Brown and Levinson's notion of politeness as face-saving strategies. She (1997: 24-25) did so by redefining politeness as situation-dependent appropriateness and, at the same time, by maintaining and even increasing the relevance of socio-contextual factors, provided the values ascribed to the roles of power, distance and rights of

imposition were regarded as changing across cultures. However, the cultural-bound nature of those contextual factors was already considered by Brown and Levinson. It is this cross-cultural versatility what puts on the teaching agenda an inter-cultural approach to the study of speech acts in second language acquisition. Moreover, this need is a must in foreign language instruction settings, where the convenience of making students aware of the likely different values given in the target language to perceptions of power, distance and degree of imposition becomes of the utmost importance.

By highlighting the existence of different cultures of politeness and of different perceptions of appropriateness and of social variables such as "dominance" or "intimacy" across cultures, Meier is not so far from Brown and Levinson's (1987) construct in that it really does have the potential she (2004: 11-12) claims for putting forward a new research objective concerning those linguistic strategies (e.g. the requestive modifying devices considered in our study) labelled as "politeness phenomena" whose explanation "resides in culture". When reconsidering politeness in terms of appropriateness and communicative effectiveness, the concept of face or the attention to contextual variables are not discarded whatsoever, but they are informed by underlying cultural

values and beliefs ingrained in a specific speech community as shown in figure 1.8 below:

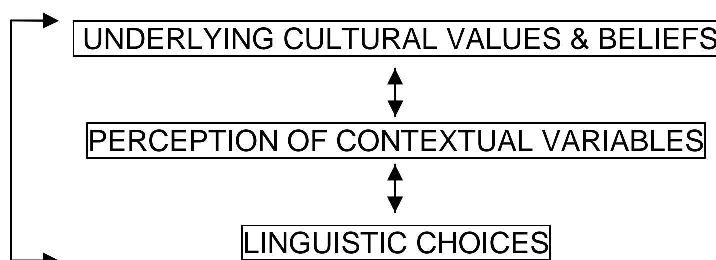

Figure 1.8 Meier's (2004: 13) patterns of effective communication

Hence, the need to state the relevance of the concept of face, since, as stated by Scollon and Scollon (1995: 49), "there is no faceless communication." In that vein, there are some scholars who have opted for reconsidering the validity of the original source of Brown and Levinson's notion of face, namely, Goffman's (1967) definition. Based on the Chinese concept of face, Goffman (1967: 5) defines face in terms of "the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact". It should be noted that face as equated to self-image is at the core of the definition of pragmatic failure. In fact, as Thomas (1983: 96-97) pinpoints, native speakers are much more tolerant concerning non-native speakers' grammatical errors than pragmatic infelicities, in that the latter can be mistaken by rudeness or unfriendliness on the part of a non-expert hearer.

In fact, according to Brown and Levinson (1987: 56), although self-image's demands might be ignored "in cases of urgent cooperation, or in the

interests of efficiency", every member of a society has either a negative or a positive face. Moreover, Ji's (2000: 1061) revision of face in Chinese culture justifies Brown and Levinson's dichotomy of positive and negative face because "although the two types of face may play an unbalanced role in a particular culture, there has been no evidence that they can not be identified in that culture". When re-examining face in the case of Japanese, Pizziconi (2003) also denies that negative face is not universal.

As previously mentioned, Brown and Levinson's notions of negative and positive face has been widely questioned. This is due to the fact that they seem to emphasize volitional in detriment of social indexing aspects of politeness and the latter need to be accounted for especially in the case of more collectivist cultures such as Chinese or Japanese. As a result, there has been a movement in favour of replacing Brown and Levinson's distinction between negative and positive face with Goffman's (1967: 10) definition of face as a positive social value "on loan [...] from society". Goffman's situational variable and more socially ingrained notion appears as particularly useful in some studies based on non-Western cultures as it is Kadt's (1998) contribution on the applicability of face to the Zulu language .

Nevertheless, it is O'Driscoll's (2007: 467-468) contention that the anglocentric turn identified in Brown and Levinson's (1987 [1978])

definition of negative and positive face results from having prioritized face-as-wants, and therefore a non-situational egotistic claim for self-image, instead of face as social dependent as it was originally delimited by Goffman. Despite this significant departure from Goffman (1967), however, O'Driscoll (2007) argues in favour of reinstating the validity of Brown and Levinson's positive and negative face to shed light on interaction across cultures.

In order to do so, this author (O'Driscoll, 2007) does not see the need to propose alternative terms as when authors such as Scollon and Scollon (1995), Arundale (2006) or Terkourafi (2007) rename negative and positive faces in terms of "independence", and "involvement"; "separation face", and "connection face"; or, "withdrawal", and "approach". Instead, he (O'Driscoll, 2007: 474) suggests equilibrating the scope of both faces in that "positive is too large and negative apparently too small". In addition, O'Driscoll (2007: 480, 474) posits the need to reconsider these concepts according to a given situation, in line with the last post-modern theories, and liberating them from a narrower understanding in terms of rational and individual "values or desires".

What O'Driscoll's (2007: 465) theoretical revision shows is that, in order to make the most of Brown and Levinson's model of politeness, some of its core notions need to be retained in so far as they have concurred to "put

socio-pragmatic concerns at the forefront of pragmatic research and the affective aspects of interaction firmly on the pragmatics map". As seen in Bou-Franch and Garcés-Conejos' (2003) methodological proposal to teach linguistic politeness, the new discursive approach put forward by the more recent models of politeness can be compatible with Brown and Levinson's (1987 [1978]) main assumptions.

Mirroring Leech' (1983) distinction of pragmatics as a continuum, which, in Bou-Franch and Garcés-Conejos' (2003: 2) words, "includes pragmalinguistics at the more linguistic end and sociopragmatics at the social end", these authors combined Brown and Levinson's (1987 [1978]) approach to politeness as (i) linguistic strategies, and Fraser's (1990) definition of politeness as (ii) contextual appropriateness or social judgements on adequacy, in order to build a methodological proposal to teach linguistic politeness. In so doing, they (2003: 2) claim to have adopted a discursive, interactional and socio-cognitive orientation which presents politeness "as the encoding of social relations".

There are other scholars like Terkourafi (2005) who also see the first and second generations of politeness models as complementary. The problem lies in determining whether the analysis of individual utterances in terms of speech acts is still possible. In other words, the extent to which

pragmatics is linked to speech-act theory and in what terms this connection seems to be opened to discussion.

1.3 The scope of pragmatics

Throughout section 1.1, we defined pragmatics as one of the components of communicative competence. Nevertheless, according to a recent review on contemporary pragmatics by Huang (2007), there is still no agreed definition about its scope to the point of existing competing general definitions of the term ascribed to two different trends: a broad definition of pragmatics held by a European Continental group of scholars and a narrow notion advocated by its Anglo-American counterparts.

The European Continental school has developed, so far, almost a pan-pragmatic vision known as the *perspective* view, by virtue of which pragmatics would embed sociolinguistic, psycholinguistic and discursive issues related to the production of meaning. In that vein, authors like Verschueren (1999: 7, 11, 195, italics added) maintain that "pragmatics constitutes a general functional (i.e. cognitive, social and cultural) *perspective* on linguistic phenomena in relation to their usage in the form of behaviour", since "all verbal communication is self-referential to a certain degree, and […] all language use involves a constant interplay between pragmatic and metapragmatic functioning". We fully agree with Huang (2007: 5) when pinpointing the fact that the broader European Continental

notion of contemporary pragmatics is hardly viable from an academic viewpoint, because "to say that 'everything is pragmatics' amounts to saying that 'nothing is pragmatics'".

Conversely, the Anglo-American school of thought has put forward the so-called *component* view of pragmatics, which, in line with the concept of pragmatic competence in terms of a fundamental constituent of communicative competence, as explained in section 1.1, sees pragmatics at the same level of what was previously presented as linguistic competence, namely, knowledge of phonetics, phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics (Huang, 2007: 4). On the pages that follow and in accordance with the models of communicative competence previously introduced, we will opt for the Anglo-American narrower definition of pragmatics. It is our contention that such definition of contemporary pragmatics delimits its scope as a discipline, by distinguishing, according to Trosborg's classification (1995), among the following main subfields: sociopragmatics or speech-act theory, contrastive or cross-cultural pragmatics, and interlanguage pragmatics. Thus, in this study, we will restrict our analysis of the pragmatic scope to the Anglo-American conception of the discipline, taking as a point of departure Levinson's (1983: 9) notion of pragmatics as "the study of those relationships between language and context that are grammaticalized, or encoded in the structure of a

language". In that way, we will maintain Leech' (1993) subdivision of pragmatics into *pragmalinguistcs* and *sociopragmatics*, focusing successively, on the one hand, on speech-act theory; and, on the other hand, on the studies conducted both on its pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic sides in terms of speech-act use across languages and pragmatic learning within the field of the so-called interlanguage pragmatics (henceforth ILP).

1.4 Speech act theory

Both in Bachman's (1990) and in Celce-Murcia *et al.*'s (1995) communicative competence models, the notion of pragmatic competence was defined from the very beginning with a close and direct link to speech act theory. Thus, whereas Bachman introduced *illocutionary competence* as one of the two main sub-components of pragmatic competence, Celce-Murcia *et al.* referred to the former as *actional competence*. In fact, when they (1995: 17) explain that actional competence is equated to "competence in conveying and understanding communicative intent", that is, matching actional intent with linguistic form based on "the knowledge of an inventory of verbal schemata that carry illocutionary force (speech acts and speech act sets)", Celce-Murcia *et al.* (1995: 17) not only relate this specific competence to the field of interlanguage pragmatics, as they clearly pinpoint, but also to a speech act framework of analysis.

The term *illocutionary force* or the very notion of *actional intent* were formed in the late 1930s and introduced by the philosopher J. L. Austin in his 1952-54 Oxford lectures and, especially, in his William James lectures delivered at Harvard in 1955 and published posthumously as a book entitled *How to do things with words* in 1962. Although according to authors like Lyons (1977: 725), the term 'speech-act' was hardly used by Austin, the truth is that the Oxford philosopher was the first one who identified the existence of a new kind of sentence. He coined this sentence as *performative*, which differs from the so-called *statement* in that the latter serves, in Austin's terms (1962: 1) "to 'describe' some state of affairs, or to 'state some fact', which it must do either truly or falsely".

Conversely, performatives, according to Sadock (2004: 54, his emphasis) when referring to Austin's examples of the kind 'I christen this ship the Joseph Stalin' or 'I now pronounce you man and wife'), "seem designed to ***do*** something, here to christen and wed, respectively, rather than merely to ***say*** something". Apart from its actional potential, performatives embrace both highly institutionalized events like the ones exemplified above (i.e. christening a ship or marrying somebody), as well as everyday use of words in ordinary contexts such as apologizing, complimenting, thanking, requesting, suggesting, advice-giving or congratulating, to name but a few.

Therefore, the main legacy of Austin's contribution to the field of speech acts relies not only on his discovery of those institutional and ordinary sayings through which doings are achieved (i.e. *performatives*), but also on his distinction among the linguistic means employed to say something (i.e. *locutions*), the intended act done in speaking (i.e. *illocutions*) and the effects accomplished by uttering those given words (i.e. *perlocutions*). In our opinion, however, his main weakness derives from the fact that he shows that words really *do* things, but despite of the title given to his seminal collection of lectures, Austin never explains *how* words become deeds.

In fact, it is Austin's American disciple, Searle (1969), the one who elaborates and introduces a general theory of speech acts, whose presentation as a faithful development of Austin's original thought is nowadays quite controversial, if we attend to the following departures from the Oxford philosopher's original theory (Rajagolapan, 2000). On the one hand, Searle rejects Austin's three-fold distinction among locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts and dismisses his five-categories speech-act taxonomy. On the other hand (Sadock, 2004), and quite contrary to his mentor's reluctance to mix with "grammarians", Searle proposes to substitute *locutionary* acts by *propositional* acts and states that the formal features of a given utterance determine both the propositional

act and its literal illocutionary force, called *illocutionary force indicating device* (henceforth IFID) .

In putting forward that the so-called illocutionary force indicating device (IFID) is embedded in the propositional act, Searle holds that the successful accomplishment of a given speech act depends on five constitutive rules which he exemplifies with the act of making a promise: (i) a propositional content rule (e.g. a promise is to be uttered by a sentence which predicates some future), (ii) and (iii) preparatory rules (e.g. a promise is to be uttered respecting both hearer's and speaker's preferences and expectations), (iv) a sincerity rule (a promise is to be uttered only if the speaker intends to fulfil it); and, (v) the essential rule (e.g. the promise is uttered to undertake an obligation). As the aforementioned five constitutive rules, especially the first one, are made inseparable from speech-act illocutionary force, Searle (1969: 36-37) locates at the core of his programme the idea that "speaking a language is performing acts according to rules".

This existence of rule-governed or essentially conventional speech acts has been challenged from a theoretically point of view by authors such as Miller (2000) or Harnish and Plunze (2006). The former has focused on Searle's conventions governing the illocutionary force of the speech act of promising, whose rules have been reviewed above, only to ascertain that

at least with respect to the so-called essential rule one might put himself/herself under obligations by resorting to some non-conventional means, that is, without realising the promise through any pre-determined linguistic norm or convention. In fact, contrary to Searle's contention in favour of the conventionality of illocutionary acts derived from the conventionality of meaning, Miller (2000: 161) opts for subscribing the Gricean's view of illocutionary meaning as not essentially conventional, along with an interpretation of sentential meaning in terms of speakers' meaning .

Harnish and Plunze, in turn, go beyond the previous statement on the not necessarily conventional nature of meaning devices, to point out the incompatibility existing between specifying a rule (whether semantic or pragmatic) to perform a given speech act and to expect that its propositional content be appropriate to the context in which it is uttered (2006: 39). Searle might agree with this claim in as much he has been supposed to be against the Chomskyan view of language, which is normative-oriented as far as the relationship between sounds and meaning is concerned. However, it is well documented (Rajagolapan, 2000: 370) that whereas, in the seventies, Searle rejected the Generative school founder's main contentions, he appears to be very much in tune with the core of the so-called Generative Semantics' proposals, a

movement developed by some of Chomsky's formers disciples, such as Fillmore or Lakoff. In attempting to prove that semantics is at the core of grammar, this schismatic followers of generativism concur which the American philosopher in their reject of the Chomskyan separation of syntax and semantics. Such coincidence is enthusiastically celebrated by Searle, who affirms (1975: 90) that speech-act theory as a philosophy of language theory meets with linguistics in the work of the generative semanticists, who "do the study of syntax, using the theory of speech acts as one of the bases".

Thus, and much to the regret of some pragmaticists like Sbisà (1984), who laments the lack of direct reference to Austin's ideas within the current speech-act theory, it is hardly surprising that it is Searle's (1969) version of speech-act theory the one which has become more influential in the linguistic domain, to the extent of being still widely used as a basic framework for both research and instruction within the pragmatic field. When equating "pragmatics" with "performance", provided the latter were used in its Chomskyan sense, Searle would provide us with a highly conceptualized philosophical version of speech act theory, which would focus, as he, along with Vanderveken (1985), has more recently pointed out, on potential or idealized rather than on real communication. This is so, as far as what they (Searle & Vanderveken, 1985: 1-2) call illocutionary

logic "studies all illocutionary forces of utterances in any possible language, and not merely the actual realization of these possibilities in actual speech acts, in actual languages".

Such assertion bears little resemblance, on the one hand, with the place of pragmatics within Celce-Murcia's (2007) model of communicative competence (see figure 1.4), who conceives the development of the so-called *interactional* (i.e. pragmatic) competence as inseparable from the growth of the rest of communicative competence constituents. On the other hand, this idealization also clashes with one of Searle's (1979: 178) former contentions, according to which the aim of language is human communication and its unit, illocutionary acts; what had led him to identify as one of the main concerns of linguistic theory "how we get from the sounds to the illocutionary acts".

What is more, Searle and Vanderverken's (1985: 1) discarding of "actual speech acts in actual languages" fully contradicts any sociological orientation like the one maintained, in 1992, by Schegloff's who, as quoted by Rajagopalan (2000: 378), questioned Searle's departure from Austin's first notion of *illocutionary force* by asserting that "when we examine the details of the actual talk of the actual people in interaction, we encounter the omnipresent relevance of context".

In that vein, Sbisà (2002: 421-424) holds that the suppression of context observed from Searlean-Gricean versions of speech-act theory to Sperber and Wilson's (1986) relevance theory has ended up affecting the very same conception of what a speech act is. In her view (Sbisà, 2002: 424-429), the context of a speech act should be (i) construed by is participants while their interaction proceeds, (ii) limited, in order to evaluate it in terms of some key criteria such as appropriatness/inappropiatness; and, (iii) objective *versus* cognitive. In other words, actual appropriateness of a speech act can only be ascertained not in virtue of the understanding of the addresser's cognitive states and intentional attitudes as understood by their addressees, but in terms of a set of external circumstances, either material or social.

As a conclusion, Sbisà's (2002: 434) description of speech acts in terms of "context-changing social actions" puts in the foreground of the analysis of *actional* or *interactional competence* the need to examine the "changes in the conventional features of the context, notably those regarding rights, obligations, entitlements, [and] commitments of the participants" brought about by the realization of speech acts themselves. In fact, the need to examine the actual performance of actual speech acts by actual people held by both Schegloff (in Rajagopalan, 2000) and Sbisà (2002), in which either speakers of different languages or learners of a target language are

involved, has been carried out in several studies, an overview of which is offered in the following section.

1.5 Studies on speech-act use and learning

In a recent review on cross-cultural variation, Huang (2007) reports the fact that many speech acts are culture-specific in the following respects: whether they are absent in the conceptual repertoire of a given speech community (e.g. the speech act of promising does not exist among the members of a Philippine tribe called Ilongots), or they are only present in certain cultures (e.g. a kind of specific requestive behaviour based on kinship rights and obligations was detected in Walmajarri, an Australian aboriginal language).

Besides, the same speech act can be used in a broader range of speech situations (Huang, 2007: 119-124), as it happens when a Japanese guest performs an apology after having enjoyed a dinner party, instead of thanking or complimenting his/her host. What is more, even the same speech act may be responded differently as it is the case with compliments, which are followed by self-denigration, not by acceptance and thanking, in languages such as Polish, Chinese or Japanese. Last but not least, the linguistic realizations of a given speech act may differ in the degree of directness/indirectness with which it is performed and,

furthermore, in the different values granted to this directness/indirectness continuous in terms of politeness.

The analysis of the last issue (i.e. the inter-language variation regarding the degree of indirectness shown in the performance of speech acts) was the main goal of the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Patterns (henceforth CCSARP) project (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984; Blum-Kulka *et al.*'s, 1989) which compared across eight languages —Australian English, American English, British English, Canadian French, Danish, German, Hebrew and Argentinian Spanish—the realization patterns of two face-threatening acts (FTAs): those of requests and apologies.

In order to ensure the comparability between the native and non-native English speakers' answers, the data collection instrument chosen consisted of eight incomplete dialogues designed to elicit requests and eight aimed at being completed with apologies. Every dialogue including a maximum of two or three turn moves was preceded by a brief introduction in which matters of degree of intimacy and dominance between interlocutors, as well as the main features of the setting, were specified. As far as requests are concerned, the general results obtained in the CCSARP showed that the most indirect requestive strategies were displayed by Australian English participants, whereas the most direct ones were found among Argentinian Spanish speakers followed by speakers of Hebrew, with

Canadian French and German subjects occupying a mid-position in the line of indirectness/directness.

Outside the framework of the CCSARP projects, a number of contrastive studies on FTA have been conducted to date. Most of them still regard the English language as a yardstick, but they have come to involve a broader range of non-native speakers' linguistic backgrounds. For example, in Bayraktaroglu and Sifianou's book (2001), several comparative studies of speech act realization patterns in Greek and Turkish are included, from advice-giving to complimenting. Precisely the latter was the focus of Nelson *et al.*'s (1996) previous study in which American and Egyptian participants' production of compliments, while being interviewed, were analysed. The findings reported shorter compliments on the part of American respondents and a higher resort to comparatives in the case of Egyptians, as well as the influential effect of gender.

Expressions of gratitude and complaints were the focus in a collection of studies edited by Gass and Neu in 1996. The first one concerning gratitude and conducted by Eisenstein *et al.* showed the effect of negative pragmatic transfer in the expressions uttered by non-native speakers of American English, in comparison with those produced by American native speakers of English. Regarding the speech act of complaining, Murphy and Neu reported how American speakers assessed the fact that Korean speakers

responded to a series of oral completion tests designed to elicit the use of complaints with a number of criticisms, demonstrating that different cultures may lead to different perceptions of sociopragmatic variables to the point of producing distinct speech acts in the same context or situation.

Some recent studies by Félix-Brasdefer (2003) and by Kown (2004) have tackled the speech act of refusing. The former, in his study of 2003, focuses on strategies used to decline an invitation in American English and Latin American Spanish while participating in role-play activities. He concludes that American English native speakers prefer more direct strategies than Americans speaking Spanish and Latin American native speakers of Spanish who opt for the most indirect ones, being the perception of the social status of the situation a crucial factor in this continuum.

Kown's (2004) analysis of refusals in Korean and American English, in turn, has shown how data collected by means of discourse completion tests (henceforth DCTs) prove that participants are sensitive to refusal eliciting tasks (i.e. requests, invitations, offers, suggestions) with a different degree of attention concerning the status of their interlocutors. It seems that Korean respondents display more mitigators before higher status subjects. Besides, their refusal formulae are more hesitant and appear preceded by apologies and followed by reasons. Conversely,

American English subjects introduce their refusals with positive expressions of gratitude and resort to the same kind of justifications regardless the status of their interlocutors.

Although this cross-cultural perspective is still present in some speech-act current studies, from the early nineties onwards, some authors like Kasper (1996) have advocated for restoring the link between pragmatics and second language acquisition (henceforth SLA) by expanding the scope of interlanguage pragmatics. From an acquisitional perspective, the field of ILP was introduced as "a second-generation hybrid" by Kasper and Blum-Kulka (1993: 3) and took after *interlanguage*. This term was coined by Selinker (1972) to refer to the in-between linguistic system with both features of the first language or mother tongue (henceforth L1) and the second language or target language (henceforth L2), developed by language learners while acquiring a second or a foreign language. The production of some authors, such as Félix-Brasdefer, illustrates this evolution from the cross-cultural to the interlanguage perspective (see for example his 2009a article, in which this author has recently revisited dispreferred responses in Spanish learners' interlanguage pragmatic knowledge as far as the performance of refusals is concerned).

Given the fact that ILP does not only refer to language learners' use of speech-acts but it also puts the emphasis on developmental features, it is

hardly surprising that, recently, ILP has been defined (Schauer, 2004: 253) as "the acquisition, comprehension and production of contextually appropriate language by foreign or second language learners". In light of this definition, it seems clear that the main concerns of interlanguage pragmatics have to do with those factors which might facilitate or hinder the acquisition of pragmatic competence, such as grammatical competence, exposure to input or length of stay in target-language communities, along with individual factors related to both biological (i.e. gender or age) and affective variables (i.e. motivation).

Such acquisitional factors have been dealt with by means of two types of research designs: cross-sectional and longitudinal studies, whose main traits are described by Kasper and Roever (2005) in a review on pragmatics and SLA. According to these authors, the former are based on elicited data and have paid more attention to pragmatic ability, with a special focus on the realization of speech acts as performed by learners at different proficiency levels. Longitudinal studies, in turn, encompass a wider range of data types including those collected in authentic settings and, by being carried out over an extended period of time, allow a new focus on developmental stages in pragmatic competence acquisition.

Besides, these long-term studies (Kasper & Roever, 2005: 321) are not only restricted to the analysis of speech-act sets, but also include "pragmatic

routines, discourse markers, pragmatic fluency, and conversational ability —features that require study in a full discourse context". Despite the aforementioned advantages, longitudinal studies pose some problems in the process of data collection. Furthermore, the shortcomings derived from their range of case-studies in terms of difficulty in inferring valid generalizations explain their scarcity in comparison with cross-sectional designs. As a result, little is known about the order of acquisition in pragmatic development.

All in all, regardless the acquisitional factor(s) into focus or the design project chosen, it is noteworthy that ILP research projects try to ascertain learners' convergence in terms of both awareness and production with respect to L2 pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic conventions. In so doing, interlanguage and cross-cultural pragmatics studies share a common endeavour: the need to avoid negative pragmatic transfer. This phenomenon is two-fold, namely, it happens, either when learners have insufficient L2 pragmalinguistic knowledge, both at the level of comprehension (i.e. awareness), and performance (i.e. production); or, when learners transfer their L1 perception of socio-cultural and situational variables to the L2 context.

As far as the pragmalinguistic side is concerned, Eisenstein and Bodman's (1986) study on non-native speakers of American English expressions of

gratitude, Bisshop's (1996) research on apologies performed by Asian speakers of Australian English, as well as Salsbury and Bardovi-Harlig's (2000) analysis of disagreement in American English, illustrate the inadequacy of the linguistic strategies chosen by learners to convey these speech acts in the case of L2 English (e.g. "I very appreciate", "I am apologize" and "I know what you mean, but I don't think so"). All in all, it appears that it is misunderstandings at the level of sociopragmatic competence that lead to major pragmatic failures. That is what House (1993) has pinpointed when reporting how a German learner of English at a party interpreted a native-speaker's suggestion "Should we go and get some cheese now?" as an indirect request about her desire of keeping the conversation going and, thus, she replied with a "Oh, no, no, no, I stay here".

Lack of pragmatic competence seems to point to the existence of a correlation between transfer phenomena and level of proficiency, as far as an insufficient command of both grammatically correctness and socio-cultural appropriateness of L2 linguistic devices seems to lead to transfer of L1 knowledge. Whether this correlation is negative or positive is still subject to discussion. Most ILP studies appear to demonstrate an inverse relationship between negative pragmatic transfer and proficiency, as shown in Maeshiba *et al.*'s (1996) observation of non-native speakers'

apology production. In this study, transfer from subjects' L1 is stronger in intermediate proficient learners than in advanced subjects. The opposite, however, is also true, as demonstrated in Cohen's (1997) longitudinal analysis on his attempts to learn how to request, thank and apologize in Japanese, according to which a lower level of proficiency may hinder negative pragmatic transfer. Besides, as Kasper and Roever (2005: 320) note, although very few studies have tackled to date issues related to positive pragmatic transfer, this "is equally important to understand what aspects of learners' prior pragmatic knowledge that converge with L2 pragmatic practices are in fact transferred".

Nevertheless, as some of the aforementioned studies are longitudinal in nature, they also provide us with relevant outcomes with respect to other two developmental factors: order of acquisition and length of stay. Concerning the former, although it is not still clear that comprehension precedes production, according to Jung (2001: 16), several studies seem to prove that, specially in the early stages of pragmatic development, pragmalinguistic targetlike features are acquired before sociopragmatic ones. The same is corroborated by a number of cross-sectional analyses like the ones by Scarcella (1979) on Arabic learners' production of English politeness strategies or by Edmonson and House (1990), who coined as the

“waffle phenomenon” the tendency to verbosity observed even in advanced learners’ use of speech-acts.

This mismatch concerning targetlike sociopragmatic conventions should affect mainly those students learning English as a Foreign Language (henceforth EFL), because opportunities to be exposed to authentic input and to practice the language under real-life conditions are significantly reduced in EFL contexts. In that vein, pieces of research like Matsumura’s (2001) or Félix-Brasdefer (2004) have proven that length of stay might have a positive influence in the acquisition of nativelike sociopragmatic conventions. Matsumura (2001) analyses the acquisition of advice-giving by a group of Japanese English as a Second Language (henceforth ESL) students during a one-year stay in Canada, when it is compared with the performance of a control group of EFL students who remained in Japan. In turn, Félix-Brasdefer (2004) points to the positive effect of length of residence in the target community in the case of 24 learners of Spanish regarding the negotiations and mitigation of refusals. It seems that Spanish learners in Félix-Brasdefer’s study ended up approximating native Spanish speaker norms in terms of greater use of mitigation and preference for solidarity and indirectness.

Nevertheless, the findings concerning this pragmatic acquisitional factor are not conclusive. Counterevidence is provided by contentions like

Bardovi-Harlig's (2001), in the sense that some learners' L2 pragmatic competence never achieves targetlike levels, no matter the length of the period living abroad. Additionally, in Kim's (2000) study on Korean adult ESL learners' production of four speech acts, the author states that both an earlier onset age and a positive attitude towards the L2 have a facilitative effect in acquiring sociopragmatic competence. Conversely, the previously mentioned longitudinal study by Cohen (1997), regarding his own learning process of Japanese, underlines, among the reasons of his relative failure, the demotivation resulting from his reluctance to learn honorific forms which were against his egalitarian Western societal beliefs.

Following this concise overview of a number of cross-cultural and interlanguage pragmatic studies focused on different speech acts, we will next define the one which is the object of our study. In other words, the next chapter will focus on the speech act of requesting. On the one hand, we will distinguish between the core of this illocutionary act, and the different types of modifying devices accompanying it. On the other hand, the final sections of Chapter 2 will be devoted to give an account of a number of studies on requestive behaviour conducted to date.

Chapter 2
The speech act of requesting

As stated in Chapter 1, our study focuses on request modifiers. On that account, in the present chapter, we shall describe, firstly, the speech act of requesting by considering its two main subcomponents, that is, the request head act and its peripheral modification devices. Secondly, we will introduce a linguistic repertoire concerning the strategies realizing the core of the request act, followed by an overview on the literature regarding its choice and interpretation across boundaries. Thirdly, a working taxonomy of peripheral modification items, based on previous typologies and studies, is to be presented as a tool, which will be used, later on, in the classification of our subjects' requestive behaviour. Finally, outcomes from previous research which has dealt with the perception, use, and acquisition of modifiers will be reported.

2.1 Defining requests

When Austin (1976 [1962]: 151) tries to classify speech acts, he writes: "I distinguish five general classes: but I am far from equally happy about all of them". We are unsure about the origin of his unhappiness, but in view of the five categories he establishes, namely, (i) *verdictives*, (ii) *exercitives*, (iii) *commissives*, (iv) *behavities*, and (v) *expositives*, along with their exemplifications —in which a mixture of institutional and ordinary acts are conveyed—, it is hardly surprising that once again it is Searle's (1976)

proposal the one which has attained more and everlasting influence. In fact, the speech act of requesting in Austin's classification (1976 [1962]: 151) is not even mentioned among other belonging to its same category, that of *exercitives*, defined as "the exercising of powers, rights, or influence", and exemplified by actions such as "appointing, voting, ordering, urging, advising, warning."

Searle (1976) also delimits five items in his taxonomy of illocutionary speech-acts (i.e. *representatives*, *directives*, *commissives*, *expressives* and *declarations*) but their definitions are more generic in that, for example, the category encompassing the speech act of requests, that of *directives*, occurs when the speaker tries to get the hearer to commit themselves to some future course of action. In Searle's words (1976: 13), directives are "attempts by the speaker to get the hearer to do something. They may be very modest attempts as when I invite you to do it, or they may be very fierce attempts as when I insist that you do it". Drawing on Searle's (1976) proposal, Havertake (1984) further specifies what he calls *exhortative* speech acts, by which the speaker wants the hearer to do something. He does so when subdividing this kind of speech-acts into *impositive* and *non-impositive*. Requests are included in the former along, with pleas and orders; whereas the latter encompass the speech acts of suggesting and instructing.

Both Searle (1976) and Havertake's (1984) contributions highlight, in Brown and Levinson's (1987 [1978]) terms, the nature of requests as face-threatening acts and, in fact, these authors' strategies for doing FTAs (as shown in figure 1.6) were explained using examples of requesting behaviour (see Brown & Levinson, 1987: 69). Since requests can be distinguished from other *directives* or *exhortatives* in that the action asked for will be performed by the hearer but on the speaker's own sake, the intrusion on the hearer's independence and freedom of action is a given. That is, the need to pay attention to negative-face politeness demands explains why subsequent suggested classifications of requestive behaviour have focused on the linguistic realizations which are intended to aggravate ("as when I insist that you do it") or to mitigate ("as when I invite you to do it") the *impositive* force of this illocutionary act.

The problem is that, in some subsequent taxonomies, such as Wunderlich's (1980) or Cruse's (2000), the linguistic realizations of requesting are limited to the presence of a performative verb (i.e. "request" or "ask") or to the inclusion of a marked grammatical mood (i.e. use of imperatives). Such a limited view of the requesting pragmalinguistic repertoire calls for a sociopragmatic perspective which, as stated by Thomas (1995), should focus on contextual factors which are, in the end, the ones that might influence how the illocutionary force of a

given directive speech act is linguistically encoded. Besides, the boundaries delimiting distinct kinds of *directives* or *exhortatives* are not so clear-cut as they might appear to be in previous taxonomies. What is more, as far as requesting shares identical linguistic formulae with other *directives* like commanding, ordering, asking, suggesting or inviting, it seems relevant to refine its definition at least in two respects. On the one hand, Ellis (1994: 167, italics added) has identified requests as those speaker's attempts to get the hearer to perform or *to stop performing* some kind of action. On the other hand, it might be also useful to resort to Thomas' (1995) interpersonal notions of *cost* and *benefit*, according to which the action requested by the speaker results in some benefit for him/her but involves cost to the hearer, contrary to similar speech acts such as advice-giving or warning which are aimed at benefiting the hearer, rather than the speaker.

The interpretation of linguistic verbalizations of *directives*, however, is not limited to the need of discriminating among different kinds of them. When analysing the speech act of requesting in her study of Greek, Sifianou (1999) finds that this speech act does not always impose on the hearer. In some non Anglo-American societies, where languages such as Greek, Polish or Spanish are spoken, direct requestive strategies are preferred to attend to positive-face demands in terms of solidarity and

involvement among the members of the speech community. This implies that the appropriateness of request linguistic formulae is not only context specific but also culture-bound. Before dealing with matters of choice, however, we will next focus on linguistic strategies concerning the verbalization of the request head act by presenting Trosborg's (1995) suggested classification of them.

2.2 The request head act

There are many different linguistic strategies to convey the illocutionary force of a request speech-act. Nevertheless, most of them are made up of two main parts: the core or head of the request and its modifying devices. Whereas the former conveys the requestive illocutionary force and might appear by itself, the latter serve to mitigate, reinforce or aggravate, either internally or externally, the force of the request encoded at its core. Thus, although we will devote two distinct sections to the request head act and to request modifiers in order to facilitate the presentation of the different taxonomies created to deal with them separately, both components of the request speech-act do not always appear detached from each other in real language use. In fact, pioneering studies on requesting such as Blum-Kulka and Olsthain's (1984) CCSARP analysis on requests and apologies refer to request modifiers as *adjunct(s)* to the head act.

Going back to the core of requesting formulae, Sifianou (1999) proposes a classification in terms of the grammatical mood employed (i.e. imperatives, declaratives, interrogatives) along with negatives and elliptical realizations, in which declaratives are identified with *pragmatic indirectness* while *structural indirectness* would be performed by imperatives and interrogatives.Nevertheless, here, we will follow Trosborg's taxonomy suggested four years earlier, in 1995, because it better conforms not only to Austin's (1976 [1962]) and Searle's (1976) speech-act theory, but, most importantly, to the directness-indirectness continuum outlined in Brown and Levinson's (1987 [1978]) politeness theory. Both speech-act theory and Brown and Levinson's directness-indirectness continuum had been adopted and adapted in the framework of the aforementioned Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Patterns (CCSARP) project, when presented by Blum-Kulka and Olshtain in 1984.

TYPE		STRATEGIES	EXAMPLE
INDIRECT		Hints	Statements implying the speaker's requestive intention: *My car is in the garage;* *I'm in a hurry and I cannot find a taxi elsewhere…*
CONVENTIONALLY INDIRECT	(hearer-oriented)	Ability	-*Could you* lend me your car?
			-*Can you* lend me your car?
		Willingness	-*Would you* lend me your car?
			-*Will you* lend me your car?
		Permission	-*May I* borrow your car?
		Suggestory formulae	-*How about* lending me your car?
	(speaker-based)	Wishes/desires	-*I would like you to* lend me your car
		Wants/needs	-*I want you to* lend me your car
			-*I need you to* lend me your car

DIRECT	Obligation	-*You must* lend me your car
		-*You have to* lend me your car
	Performatives	-*I ask you to* lend me your car
	Imperatives	-Lend me your car!
	Elliptical phrase	-Your car

Table 2.1 Typology of linguistic strategies in requests (adapted from Trosborg, 1995: 205)

As shown in table 2.1 above, Trosborg's (1995) taxonomy on request head acts consists of three main request-types: indirect, conventionally indirect and direct linguistic strategies. The first kind of strategy comprises *(unconventionally) indirect* linguistic formulae or *hints* and could be equated to Brown and Levinson's (1987 [1978]) *off record* strategies (see figure 1.6) in that the speaker does not encode his/her requestive intent clearly or explicitly by choosing a transparent linguistic formula. Such opacity concerning the illocutionary force involves a high degree of shared knowledge operating between the speaker and the hearer, either in interpersonal or socio-cultural terms. Otherwise, the speaker cannot be sure that the implicature of such statements will be understood and, consequently, his/her request might be finally unfulfilled.

Contrary to hints that are realized by means of positive or negative statements, *structural indirectness*, to borrow Sifianou's (1999) terminology, or *conventionally-indirect* requests, in Trosborg's 1995 taxonomy, display a wider range of linguistic strategies —from statements to interrogatives and negatives—, and they would correspond to Brown and Levinson's (1987

[1978]) *on-record* strategies. In comparison with indirect strategies or hints, here the request act expected to be performed by the hearer is rather explicitly conveyed, although *hearer-oriented* strategies are much more opaque than *speaker-based* ones. This is so, because the former also demand from the hearer some knowledge, for example, about the pragmatic meaning of modal verbs, as well as some familiarity with the so-called suggestory formulae. Suggestory formulae, as their name implies, are shared by requests with other *directives* like the speech-act of suggesting, whose nature, according to Havertake's (1984) classification of *exhortatives* previously seen, are less or *non-impositive*. In fact, as stated by Trosborg (1995), when using suggestions in order to perform requests, the speaker may test his/her interlocutor's willingness to co-operate while softening his/her own impositive intention.

With respect to *speaker-based* conventionally indirect requests, they are more transparent than the previous conventionally-indirect category, in that the speaker clearly shows his/her illocutionary intention. Even though, the linguistic realizations through which wishes and desires are performed (e.g. "I would like you to lend me your car") are much more indirect than those of needs and wants ("I want you to lend me your car"), and, thus, they mitigate the degree of imposition on the hearer. Additionally, a comparison between *hearer-oriented* and *speaker-based*

conventionally-indirect strategies in terms of the subject employed concurs with Sifianou's (1999) contention in the sense that, apart from a different degree of directness/indirectness or imposition, some request strategies also signal the existing social relationship between participants. Since the speaker in his/her purpose of getting something done by the hearer may choose the interlocutor that will be placed in a prominent position when uttering the request, this choice might be regarded as an attempt to mitigate the hearer's costs in performing the requested act as illustrated in the following examples: (a) the addressee "Can *you* close the door?" (b) the speaker "Can *I* close the door?" (resorting to a permission strategy), (c) both speaker and addressee "Could *we* close the door? (meaning can *you* close the door *for me*?), and (d) the action "Would *it* be possible to close the door?" (still meaning can *you* do it for *me*?, in spite of its apparent impersonality and detachment).

As a result of this variation within the type of conventionally indirect requests, it seems to be clear that none of the categories above are as explicit and transparent as those employed to perform the last item considered in Trosborg's taxonomy: that of *direct requests*. Obligation and performative direct subcategories are easily recognized as requests due to the semantic meaning of the main verbs they include. Both modals like "must" or "have to" conveying obligation, or performative verbs such as

"ask", "request", or "demand"; are more likely to be employed between unequals, what unveils their undeniable authoritative nature. In spite of obligations and performatives authoritarian tone, however, the most direct requestive strategies are those realized by a particular verbal mood, the imperative, along with elliptical phrases which simply denominate the requested good (e.g. "Your car!", or "Your pencil!").

In sum, according to Brown and Levinson's (1987 [1978]) politeness theory, Trosborg's (1995) main requestive strategies outline a continuum in which the more indirect realizations would convey a higher degree of politeness, only superseded by silence or avoidance; whereas the more direct strategies should be regarded as impolite or rude. Despite the criticism raised (e.g. Meier, 1997, 2004) against a positive correlation between directness and impoliteness and/or indirectness and politeness, which we reported in the first chapter, the truth is that, as we will see next, findings in the field of interlanguage pragmatics have proved that this directness to indirectness continuum is present in every speech community studied so far. A rather different matter is whether their interpretation in terms of politeness can and should be generalized irrespective of socio-cultural perceptions (see Meier, 1997, 2004), since such perceptions are culture-bound, as it will be also demonstrated in the literature review reported in the next section.

2.3 Studies on the request head act

Requesting is for its usefulness in day-to-day interaction one of the speech acts available in every speech community studied so far. What is more, to date, request perception and use has been the main concern of contrastive studies, on the one hand, between two different languages other than English and, on the other hand, requestive behaviour variation has been also considered within the realm of two majority languages such as Spanish and English. Among those studies that have taken into consideration this speech act from a cross-linguistic perspective without including English in the comparison, we find Baba and Lian (1992) stating the differences between Chinese and Japanese requests, Van Mulken's (1996) comparison of politeness strategies in the performance of Dutch and French requests, Wei's (1998) exploration of the same speech act in Chinese and German; and Bayraktaroglu and Sifianou's (2001) work, in which a number of comparative studies of speech act realization patterns in Greek and Turkish are included, like the one focusing on requesting in brief serving encounters.

As far as intralanguage variation is concerned, some recent studies, in line with the pioneering research by García (1993) on Peruvian Spanish speakers' requests, have dealt with differences in the performance of requestive behaviour. They have focused, on the one hand, on intralingual varieties of Spanish, like for example, Stapleton's (2004) analysis of

apologies and requests in peninsular Spanish, Félix-Brasdefer's (2005, 2009b, in press) successive studies on Mexican, Costa Rican and Dominican Spanish requests; or, Placencia's (2008) work on Ecuadorian Andean and Coastal Spanish requests in corner shop transactions. On the other hand, there are also available some pieces of research on the peculiarities of requests in a South-African variety of English (Kasanga, 2006), along with Barron's (2008a, 2008b) variational pragmatic approach to the comparison between Irish English and English English requests, or to Inner Circle Englishes various realizations of the same speech act, as well as Warga's (2008) study about German requestive behaviour, to name but a few.

From an acquisitional perspective, however, it is widely assumed that certain languages such as Spanish, French, German, or Indonesian are numbered among those interlanguages which have mostly called scholars' attention. Félix-Brasdefer (2007) has recently dealt with proficiency effects concerning the development of requests (encompassing both head acts and modifiers) in the case of American English learners of Spanish. Warga's (2002, 2005a, 2007) work, in turn, focuses on the requestive behaviour displayed by Austrian German learners of French. Lee-Wong (2000) compares Chinese and German requests, whereas Barron's (2003) findings also refer to the acquisition of requests, offers and refusals by

Irish learners of German. Finally, Hassall's (2003) study gives account of Indonesian requests performed by Australian learners. All in all, English is still the best-studied interlanguage involving request use by learners from different L1 backgrounds, such as Japanese, Korean, Chinese and Cantonese, on the one hand; or Turkish, Greek, Spanish, Catalan and Uruguayan Spanish, on the other.

Takahashi and Dufon (1989), for example, analysed the performance of English directives by Japanese speakers, whereas Rinnert (1999) dealt with the issue of appropriate requests in English and Japanese; and, Rinnert and Kobayashi (1999) focused on the realization of requestive hints in English and Japanese. More recently, Fukushima (2002) has offered an overview of culture and requests in the same two languages. In 1994, Kim presented an approach to requests which took as a point of departure the influence of five conversational constraints related to face-saving, clarity and effectiveness concerns in the performance of this FTA by Korean, Hawaiian US and Mainland US speakers. In that vein, Byon's (2001) analysis of Korean and English requests has reported that the former tends to be less direct than the latter. Still within the realm of Eastern languages, Kim's (2000) research comparing Korean and American English requests was replicated by Spencer-Oatey and Jiang (2003), but this time two varieties of Chinese with British English participants' answers were

contrasted. Finally, Lee (2005) conducted a cross-cultural study including requests in Cantonese and English.

Regarding Western languages, Otcu and Zeyreck (2006) have recently presented a study on pragmatic requesting development by Turkish learners of English. Both Sifianou (1999) and Economidou-Kogetsidis (2002) have studied requests in British English and Greek, although the latter collected her data in a specific setting, that of an airline's call centre. Bearing in mind cross-cultural perceptions of social context, Mir (1995) also contrasted a bilingual (Catalan/Castilian) Spanish with an American group of learners' performance and assessment of English requests while Márquez-Reiter (2000) compared request and apologies in British English and Uruguayan Spanish.

Most of the aforementioned studies have focused on what Márquez Reiter (2000: 127) defines as "the minimal unit which can realise a request", namely, the core of the request or the request head act. Nevertheless, not all research dealing with this main constituent of requestive behaviour corroborates the same linguistic repertoire, as well as the significance attributed to its directness and indirectness continuum in Trosborg's (1995) taxonomy included earlier. This mismatch is due to two reasons: lack of English pragmalinguistic knowledge and different sociocultural

perceptions on the meaning of indirectness and directness in terms of politeness or impoliteness.

As far as the interpretation of linguistic devices is concerned, Schmidt and Richards' (1980) overview on speech acts and SLA provides us with the following examples concerning the awareness of requests by non-native English learners. First of all, it seems that Czech learners find difficulties in identifying the English modals *can* and *could* as signalling request illocutionary force. Japanese subjects, in turn, do not always recognize the English conditional form *would* as carrying a directive force. Finally, some speakers of Spanish, Hebrew, Swahili and Yiddish may perceive the imperative construction "Let's" as an ungrammatical structure. Nevertheless, what appears to be more relevant is how learners choose among the available repertoire of linguistic strategies, once they have solved any problem concerning their meaning. It is at this point when different sociocultural values ascribed to (unconventionally) indirect or hints, conventionally indirect and direct request-types of strategies come into play.

Contrary to Trosborg's (1995) study on Danish learners of English which, as shown in table 2.1, corroborates Brown and Levinson's (1987 [1978]) negative-face oriented equation between indirect strategies as more polite than direct ones, a number of both previous and subsequent studies have

challenged this interlink, but without denying the universal validity of the indirectness/directness continuum of request verbalization regarding its head act. For instance, both German (House & Kasper, 1981) and Israeli (Blum-Kulka, 1983) speakers select more direct strategies to convey politeness than Americans when requesting.

Furthermore, Hebrew speakers rated as the most polite strategy-type that belonging to the conventionally indirect category in Trosborg's taxonomy, whereas Brown and Levinson's (1987 [1978]) *off record* or (unconventionally) indirect strategies (i.e. hints) were regarded as less polite because they urge the hearer to interpret implicatures. This unnecessary, in Blum-Kulka's words (1987: 144), "cognitively burdening the hearer and making it difficult for him or her to guess your meaning" should be avoided in favour of clarity and, thus, it explains why conventionally indirect strategies are the most optimal ones in striking a balance between freedom of ambiguity (i.e. pragmatic clarity) and freedom of imposition (i.e. hearers' negative-face oriented needs).

It is hardly surprising, then, that in most interlanguage studies, conventionally indirect strategies are preferred by L2 learners of English, regardless their L1. In fact, a common finding achieved by several scholars in the field reports how unconventionally indirect strategies or hints are underused, whereas direct strategies are overused by learners' requestive

behaviour in comparison with English native-speakers' use. As previously seen, the low frequency of hints is quite understandable given their inherent ambiguity and high demands in terms of cultural shared knowledge of conventions, which are difficult to be tackled by non-native speakers of the language. Nevertheless, as reported by Sifianou (1993: 71), hints are used in Greek not to avoid intruding in the hearer's independence of action but "to provide the addressee with an opportunity to express their generosity and solicitude for the interlocutor by offering" and, hence, these unconventional indirect strategies prevent "the actual request from occurring".

Regarding the higher frequency of direct strategies, in turn, these supposedly rude verbalizations of requesting (from the Anglo-Saxon perspective) are understood in the case of Greek as markers of in-group relationship, by which a request of the kind "I'm taking a cigarette. Whose are they?" (Sifianou, 1993: 71) would not be imposing or impolite. The same example, asking for a cigarette, is also referred to by Márquez Reiter (2000) in her contrastive study of British and Uruguayan requests. In this research, the Uruguayan perception of cigarettes as "free goods", contrary to the British consideration of this product as "non-free goods", entitles Spanish speakers to employ present indicative or imperative constructions, instead of English conventionally indirect strategies,

without involving any sense of rudeness or impoliteness. Conversely, such choice of request strategies shows the Uruguayan preference for social involvement over the British orientation towards detachment or non-intrusion on the requestee's independence (Márquez Reiter, 2000).

To put it in a nutshell, cultural traditions other than Anglo-saxon are not always negative-face oriented. On the contrary, instead of being concerned by respecting hearers' privacy and freedom from imposition, they grant greater value to positive-face oriented considerations in terms of the expression of solidarity among the members of the speech community. Such difference, according to Wierzbicka (1985), would apply not only to her language, Polish, but also to Russian, Serbo-Croatian and Spanish, among others. Possibly, these different ways of conceiving face-needs and, hence, politeness or rudeness are on the bases of some negative pragmatic transfer observed in English learners' interlanguage with different L1 backgrounds.

Sometimes, the convergence with English politeness conventions concerning the request head act appears to be achieved in line with an overall improvement in proficiency level. For example, in Takahashi and DuFon's (1989) comparison between request head acts in Japanese and English, only the higher level participants' realizations resemble the use of more direct requests displayed by English native-speakers, whereas

lower-level Japanese students show a clear transference from L1 hinting strategies. Hill's (1997) developmental study on requests performed by EFL Japanese learners also supports the correlation existing between target-like pragmatic use of strategies and increased proficiency level. Focusing on the fact that learners at different proficiency levels overuse direct strategies in earlier stages of acquisition, Hill shows how, over time, learners resort to more optimal strategies in terms of the target-language politeness, as it is the case of a more frequent use of the willingness subtype within the conventionally indirect kind of strategies considered in Trosborg's (1995) taxonomy.

Nevertheless, this apparently direct relationship between grammatical and pragmatic competence is not always corroborated by other research findings, such as Pérez i Parent's (2002) study on production of requests by Catalan learners of English. Contrary to general expectations, her findings report how lower level Catalan students overuse ability conventionally indirect strategies, introduced by the modals "can…?" and "could…?" It is a group of higher level students, however, the ones who mostly resort to the use of direct requests. This is so, because, as shown in Pérez i Parent's analysis (2002), higher proficiency may lead to an extremely confident and lenient use of requestive direct strategies to the point of flouting target-like pragmatic conventions in this respect.

Such overconfidence may turn into fossilization, as claimed by Takahashi (1996) who explains in terms of *transfer of training* or *learning effects* the outcome achieved in her study. According to Takahashi's (1996) findings, after seven to ten years of formal instruction in English, Japanese learners tend to take for granted the fact that English modals *could* and *would,* belonging to conventionally indirect strategies, can be regarded as equivalents to Japanese honorific verbs. As a result, this author observes an overgeneralization of such English modal forms into formal high-imposition contexts where native-speakers would not employ them.

In light of those research outcomes reported above, it can be ascertained that request head acts are culture-bound. In other words, although Trosborg's (1995) typology of indirectness (from direct strategies to hints) is assumed to be universal, the distribution of pragmalinguistic formulae realizing this typology and, above all, their conceptualization in terms of politeness/impoliteness can vary to a great extent, because different values or perceptions are granted to those sociopragmatic variables at work. In fact, the Anglo-centrist bias, according to which conventionally indirect strategies would be the preferred strategy when performing requests, has been previously challenged by other Western cultures views on politeness in terms of solidarity which can also be embedded in direct

requests, including the imperative mood that, otherwise, would be regarded as impolite.

What is more, this contention would be corroborated by the request strategies traits of three Eastern languages, like Chinese, Nepali and Korean. In Chinese (Hong, 1999), the imperative is not a request strategy to be avoided, but, quite the opposite, it is seen as the most appropriate and effective way of performing a request. Besides, the degree of politeness is increased not through the use of modal verbs, which are absent, but by accompanying the imperatives with mitigating lexical forms, such as question tags or the Chinese equivalent of "please".

Similarly, in the case of Nepali (Upadhyay, 2003) and Korean (Byon, 2006), no direct relationship between politeness and indirectness has been found. On the contrary, while the head acts are realized through imperatives or other direct strategies, politeness concerns are expressed by means of their honorific systems —made up of address terms and verbal morphological devices—, which serve to attend requesters' needs in terms of face-saving strategies or, in Byon's words (2006: 249), to indicate "respect, distance, and humility". The same potential to mitigate the impositive force conveyed by any request head act (from direct to conventional and non-conventional indirect ones) can be recognized in other types of request modifiers, which will be introduced in the next section.

2.4 Request modifiers

As previously mentioned, request modifiers are not so an optional kind of devices as their labels like *adjunct(s)* to the head act or *support moves* may convey. Although it is generally acknowledged that request head acts can stand by themselves, most studies dealing with requestive behaviour have dealt simultaneously with the two main constituents of this speech act, namely, request head acts and request modifiers. In fact, some seminal works in the field have analysed, firstly, the core of the request in accordance to indirect /direct strategies considered in Trosborg's (1995) taxonomy (see table 2.1); and, afterwards, the effect of the presence of modifiers in terms of varying head acts politeness levels or decreasing their threatening conditions. Trosborg's (1995) study extends her analysis on Danish learners of English requestive behaviour to modifying elements and the same applies to Hill's (1997), Sifianou's (1999), Márquez Reiter's (2000) and Safont's (2005a) research.

Contrary to the studies exclusively devoted to request head acts which have adopted or adapted indirect versus direct type-strategies similar to Trosborg's typology, current taxonomies on request modifiers only seem to agree in the recognition of two main types related to the position in relation to the head act, namely, internal or external modifiers. Although with some doubts concerning the internal or external status of some

categories like "please" or *attention getters,* also known as *address terms* or *alerters*, all suggested typologies to date have maintained this distinction. Another point of coincidence, drawing on previous findings by Fraser (1996) and Blum-Kulka (1985), is found in the different roles played by modifiers as mitigators, reinforcers or aggravators. According to Achiba (2003), (i) *mitigators* refer to those modifiers that soften or ease the force of the illocutionary force, (ii) *reinforcers*, in turn, increase this force without raising the modifier degree of aggravation; and, (iii) *aggravators* modulate the impact of the request head act in the opposite direction of mitigation. Given the nature of English-speaking cultures as negative-politeness ones, mitigators, qualified as social "brakes" in comparison with boosters or aggravators/reinforcers coined as social "accelerators" by Holmes (1984b: 350), have received more attention than the so called boosters, to the extent that in Blum-Kulka's (2005 [1992]: 266) contention, "mitigation can index politeness regardless of levels of directness".

In fact, Sifianou (1999), in her suggested taxonomy of request modifiers, highlights the fact that aggravators are rarely used in English, given the negative-face orientation of this language, in other words, its concern with tact. That is why Alcón *et al.*'s (2005) typology, an adaptation of which we will follow in our analysis, draws heavily on Sifianou's, instead of adopting Trosborg's (1995) classification of request modifiers. The other

reason to propose an alternative typology to the existing ones is that, some of them, especially Trosborg's (1995), classify internal request modifiers according to lexical-phrasal or syntactic criteria, and, as pinpointed by Nikula (1996) in her analysis of Finnish learners of English modifiers, a pragmatic perspective on these linguistic devices is needed.

Such socio-pragmatic view should go beyond the semantic meaning conveyed by means of lexical-phrasal or syntactic verbalizations. In so doing, it is contended that it will be possible to explore the specific interpersonal meanings expressed by modifiers, firstly, in a given setting (see Nikula, 1996: 19); secondly, according to the topic at hand and the rank of imposition conveyed (i.e. whether the favour asked is a big or a small one); and, last but not least, with respect to the type of relationship existing between the speakers in terms of dominance (e.g. boss *versus* employee) or social distance (when the interlocutors are strangers, friends or acquaintances). Besides, the typology presented below has reconsidered the inclusion or exclusion of previously accepted modifying categories, such as *cost-minimizers* or *option-givers*, in light of the analysis of, on the one hand, two corpora of oral production data by Spanish EFL learners, collected by Martínez-Flor & Usó-Juan (2006a, 2006b); and, on the other hand, a corpus of written production data also by Spanish EFL learners, processed by Martí (2007):

TYPE	SUB-TYPE		EXAMPLE
INTERNAL MODIFICATION	Openers		- *Do you think* you could open the window? - Could open the window, *do you think?*
	Softeners	Understatement	- Could you open the window *for a moment*?
		Downtoner	- Could you *possibly* open the window?
		Hedge	- Could you *kind of* open the window?
	Intensifiers		- You *really* must open the window.
	Fillers	Hesitators	- I *er, erm, er – I wonder* if you could open the window
		Cajolers	- *You know, You see, I mean*…
		Appealers	- *OK?, Right?, Yeah*…
EXTERNAL MODIFICATION	Preparators		- *May I ask you a favour?* … Could you open the window?
	Grounders	Reasons	- *It seems it is quite hot here.* Could you open the window?
		Threats	- Could you open the window? *If you don't open it, I will tell your parents.*
	Disarmers	Non-intruders	- *I hate bothering you but* could you open the window?
		Cost-minimizers	- Could you open the window? *As you are sitting by the window, it will only take you a minute.*
		Sweeteners	*You are such a helpful boy!* Could you open the window?
		Option-givers	-Could you open the window? *If you want.*
	Expanders		- Would you mind opening the window? … *Once again, could you open it?*
	Promise of a reward		- Could you open the window? *If you open it, I promise to take you to the cinema.*
	Appreciation tokens		-Could you open the window? *Thank you.*

<table>
<tr><td rowspan="12">MULTI-FUNCTIONAL MODIFICATION</td><td rowspan="7">Attention-getters</td><td colspan="2">apologetic</td><td>- Excuse me …</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">terms of endearment</td><td>- Dear…</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">greetings</td><td>- Hello, Good morning …</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">alerters</td><td>- Look!, Listen! …</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3">with acknowledgement of interlocutor</td><td>low SD addressees</td><td>- Father, sister, uncle…
- Mate, dude, buddy…</td></tr>
<tr><td>medium SD addressees</td><td>- Titles/first names…
-Boss, Teacher…</td></tr>
<tr><td>high SD addressees</td><td>- Sir/madam…</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="5">Please</td><td colspan="2">manipulative</td><td>-Please! Could you open the window?</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">prescriptive/face-saving</td><td>-Could you, please, open the window?</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">contract-based</td><td>-Could you open the window, please?</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">elliptical request</td><td>-Could you open the window?...Please!↗</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">pleading</td><td>-Please, please, please! Could you open the window?
- Could you open the window? Please, please, please!</td></tr>
</table>

Table 2.2 Typology of peripheral modification devices in requests (adapted from Alcón *et al.*, 2005)

According to table 2.2 above, request modifiers have been distributed into three main types or groups: *internal*, *external*, and *multifunctional* request modifiers. Internal modification comprises four sub-types: *openers*, *softeners*, *intensifiers* and *fillers*. In spite of their name, *openers* do not always precede the request head act, but they can also follow it. As defined by Sifianou (1999) this kind of modifiers look for the hearer's cooperation and mitigate the force of the request as a whole. Among the repertoire of *openers*, we might find some formal expressions such as "Would you

mind…?", "I would be (so) grateful if…" "I'd really appreciate it if…" or "I wonder/ was wondering if…" Nevertheless, openers might be also realized by resorting to more informal expressions, such as "do you think…?" or "I don't suppose…"

Concerning *softeners*, they have been further subdivided into *understatements*, *downtoners* and *hedges*. The three of them might be regarded as formerly embedded in Sifianou's (1999) subcategory of *miscellanous*, since this author also included *diminutives* and *tag questions* among the softener general sub-type. As a typical feature of positive-face oriented languages such as Greek or Spanish, *diminutives* do not appear in English native-speakers' requestive behaviour, except in motherese or caretaker talk samples (e.g. "doggy"); whereas *tag questions* are hardly used by learners of the English language, what would explain their exclusion from Alcón *et al.*'s typology (2005: 19).

Contrary to *diminutives*, the three softeners included in table 2.2, namely, *understatements*, *downtoners* and *hedges* are related, according to Márquez-Reiter (2000: 136) to negative politeness. In fact, *understatements* try to minimize the imposing impact of the head act on the hearer by resorting to several fixed expressions like "a second", "a little bit" or "a moment". The adverbs labelled as *downtoners* (e.g. "just", "simply", "possibly", "perhaps", or "maybe"), in turn, are also tentative in nature (Sifianou,

1999), and, hence, their high frequency of use among English native speakers. Finally, *hedges* (e.g. "sort of", somehow", "more or less") add a sense of vagueness to the core of the request, once again, in an attempt to mitigate or *soften* the negative-face threatening nature of the demand put on the hearer.

With respect to the third internal modification category, that of *intensifiers*, their function is quite the opposite of the sub-type introduced above. *Intensifiers* aggravate the imposing nature of requests by resorting to a number of adverbs and certainty expressions (e.g. "such", "so", "very", "quite", "really", "terribly", "awfully", "unfortunately", "obviously", "surely", "it's obvious", "I'm sure", "I'm positive", "I'm certain", etc.), to which some authors have added *swear words* or *toners* such as "quick", "now", "come on" and, interestingly, the *downtoner* "just" when pronounced emphatically (Achiba, 2003). In view of their aggravating pragmatic force, it is hardly surprising that, as stated by Sifianou (1999), such internal modifiers are regarded as impolite request expressions and, thus, they are rarely used in English.

The last category of internal modifying devices, *fillers*, is greatly interactional in nature and, therefore, is more likely to appear in learners' oral production. *Hesitators*, same as *downtoners*, convey tentativeness by means of shuttering and/or repetition, along with the use of some

expressions of the kind "I wonder if…" *Cajolers* (e.g. "You know", "I see", "I mean"), in Márquez-Reiter's (2000) view, supersede their phatic function to encourage the hearer to get involved in the encounter where the request is uttered, in order to restore "harmony" between interlocutors. *Appealers* (e.g. "OK?", "right?", "yeah") also go beyond their use as comprehension checks to elicit the requestee's consent, although, as pinpointed by Achiba (2003), the appealer "okay?" may be interpreted as an aggravator in some contexts.

Turning to external modification, the second main type of request modifiers, our adaptation from Alcón *et al.* (2005) (i) has excluded "please" from its linguistic repertoire and added *appreciation tokens* as a sub-type of external modification; and (ii) has widened the remaining main five sub-types by subdividing the categories of *grounders* and *disarmers* as follows: *preparators*, *grounders* (subdivided into *reasons* and *threats*), *disarmers* (made up of *non-intruders*, *cost-minimizers*, *sweeteners* and *option-givers*), *expanders* and *promises of a reward*. Alcón *et al.*'s (2005) five sub-type categories (i.e. *preparators*, *grounders*, *disarmers*, *expanders* and *promises of a reward*) were first subdivided by Sifianou (1999) into *commitment-seeking devices* (e.g. preparators) and *reinforcing devices* (e.g. grounders, disarmers, expanders and "please"). Nevertheless, both Alcón *et al.*'s (2005) typology, in line

with Trosborg's (1995), and the one we present here have situated their five/six main sub-types of external modification at the same level.

According to Márquez-Reiter (2000: 129-130), *preparators* are external pre-requests which, without mentioning the content of the request as such, ask for permission to utter it and check the requestee's availability and willingness for carrying out the requested action. They do so by resorting to expressions such as "Would you help me out?", "I wonder if you'd give me a hand", "There is something I'd like you to do for me", "I have this small problem", etc. In turn, *grounders*, also called *grounds*, provide a reason or some reasons by which the requestee should comply with the action that s/he is expected to perform on the requester's sake.

This kind of justifications are among the external modifying devices most frequently employed by L2 learners of English since, although Sifianou (1999) sees *grounders* as reinforcers, in Hassall's view (2001: 266), the fact of providing reasons to the requestee might convey either positive (expecting the hearer's cooperation) or negative politeness (showing that the intrusion is attempted just for a good reason). In fact, if we consider the example given in table 2.2, it greatly resembles Brown and Levinson's (1987 [1978]) *off-record* request strategies or *hints* (e.g. "It seems it is quite hot here"), but when they are followed or preceded by the request head act.

All in all, the triple condition of *grounders*, in Sifianou's view (1999), as mitigators, reinforcers or aggravators, explains why some authors have included *threats* within *grounders* (e.g. "Do your homework, *or I'll tell your father about it*"; "You must tidy up your room. *If you don't, I won't let you go out and play.*"). This inclusion would contradict the negative-face orientation of the English language, although at the same time, would give better account of all the external request modifiers produced by EFL learners. This is so, especially, when EFL learners' mother tongue and culture is not a negative-oriented one, as it is the case in the interlanguage corpora elicited from Greek students by Sifianou (1999) or the one obtained from Spanish subjects in this study.

With respect to *disarmers*, this external modification sub-type aims at "disarming" the requestee from the possibility of a refusal by removing any potential objection on his/her part. According to Sifianou (1999) and Márquez-Reiter (2000), *disarmers* may be verbalized by means of complimenting phrases (i.e. *sweeteners*), formulaic promises (i.e. *cost-minimizers*) or any expression of the requester's concern on imposing on the requestee (e.g. "I hope I'm not disturbing you…", "I really don't want to trouble you but…"), that is, what we have coined as *non-intruders*.

By focusing on the last kind of expressions (i.e. *non-intruders* denominated as *disarmers* in Alcón *et al.*'s 2005 taxonomy) and, in view of the absence of

sweeteners, *option-givers* and *cost-minimizers* in Martínez-Flor and Usó-Juan's (2006a, 2006b) collected oral data, Alcón *et al.*'s (2005) suggested typology excluded the aforementioned three prior independent sub-types closely linked to *disarmers*, namely, *sweeteners, option-givers* and *cost-minimizers*. The first of these sub-types would broadly correspond to complimenting phrases such as "*I've never known anyone who makes such delicious pies as you do*. Could you make an apple pie for me and my guests tonight?"; whereas the second, also labelled as *considerators* by Schauer (e.g. "…if possible" or "Only if you've got the time of course") occupies a final position in the request string and, according to this author (2007: 202), "intends to show consideration towards the interlocutor's situation".

Last but not least, the *cost-minimizer* or *imposition minimizer*, in 2007 Schauer's terminology, might be equated to formulaic promises like "Could I borrow your car tonight? *I'll have it back in time for you to drive to work tomorrow*" or "Would you mind driving to the airport to pick up Mary? *I'll pay for the petrol*". As we will see later on, the participants in our study provide us with examples of the four sub-types of *disarmers* with a higher frequency of *non-intruders* and *cost-minimizers*, in comparison with the lower one of *sweeteners* and *option-givers*.

In line with Achiba's (2003) general classification of modifiers, *expanders* share with *grounders* their triple condition as mitigators, reinforcers or

aggravators. Consisting in repeating identical words, in providing synonymous expressions, or in adding further elements to the previous head act (Sifianou, 1999) as in the example "Have I told you this before?"; *expanders*, according to Achiba (2003), can be mitigators but they usually function as intensifiers. This is so, because *expanders* usually reinforce the requestive illocutionary force of the head act but, on occasion, when emphatically pronounced, they can also aggravate the imposing nature of a given request by showing impatience or even anger.

Unlike expanders, *promises of a reward* are intended to increase the addressee's compliance by making the performance of the action requested much more attractive to him or her, since a reward is offered, provided the speech act be carried out. Sometimes, the boundaries between *promises of a reward* and *cost-minimizers* do not appear to be so clear-cut when analyzing actual language use. The reason for this potential confusion is the fact that some *cost-minimizing* examples are also introduced by the performative verb "I promise", as in the following example from our written corpus: "Could you lend me some money? *I promise to pay you back as soon as we get to the hotel*".

Furthermore, when this reference to a formulaic promise is not included, the key difference between these two external sub-types of modifiers mainly lies on the fact that what is promised in *cost-minimizers* is not

rewarding the requestee whatsoever, but just bothering him/her as little as possible, or compensating for having to ask to bother him/her. Hence, our decision as to embed *cost-minimizing* peripheral elements within the broader category of *disarmers*, instead of *promise of a reward*. This option was taken even though those authors, such as Schauer (2007: 202), who, theoretically speaking, make a distinction between *imposition-minimizer* and *promise of a reward*, do mistake the first category for the second, as illustrated in the following example of a *cost-minimizer* classified as a *promise of a reward*: "*I would fill in yours* [the questionnaire] *as well, if you need one, one day*".

According to Warga (2005b: 75), *promises of a reward* —along with *option-givers* and *expanders* — would be closer to the last sub-type added in the taxonomy proposed in table 2.2, namely, *appreciation tokens*, rather than to the disarmer-subtype of *cost-minimizers*. This is so, because these four external request modifiers (i.e. *option-givers*, *expanders*, but especially, *promises of a reward* and *appreciation tokens*) can be regarded as request-closing strategies.

In Warga's view (2005b: 76), expressing gratitude before the request has been fulfilled "is a means by which the requester tries to increase the probability of the hearer's compliance with the request". The same can be ascertained of *promises of a reward* in that they also increase the likelihood

of the requestee's compliance, in addition to the fact that, as noted by Warga (2005b: 80), "reward strategies […] serve an important interpersonal function, showing that requesting is not just a matter of taking but also of giving". Nevertheless, while Austrian learners of French in Warga's (2005b) research tend to compensate their lack of formulaic knowledge concerning *appreciation tokens* by resorting to utter individual creatively varieties of *promises of a reward*, our EFL learners' production of *appreciation tokens* mainly consists of the use of "thanks" or "thank you". However, despite the high frequency of occurrences of the commonest realization of this sub-type of external modifier, namely, "thanks" or "thank you", and its clear links to other external request modifying sub-types as request-closing devices, so far *appreciation tokens* have been absent from the most widely accepted taxonomies of request modification.

Finally, the taxonomy presented in table 2.2 has resituated and further subdivided two categories widely included in previous classifications of request modifiers. We refer to *attention-getters* and "please", which appear under the label of multifunctional modification, the three main type of request modifiers in the classification of these linguistic devices proposed in our study. This is so because, both request modifiers share their doubtful classification as either internal of external modifiers, but, above all, it is our contention that they also have in common the

multifunctionality that authors, such as Safont (2005a), have identified in the case of "please" in order to justify its treatment as a sole entity.

Beginning with *attention-getters*, they have been sometimes classified among internal modifying devices, like in Alcón *et al.*'s 2005 taxonomy, but also along with other sub-types of external modification categories, as recently done by Schauer (2007: 202), who, under the name of *alerters*, includes this sub-type as the first item in her coding of requesting external modifiers. In spite of any remaining doubt about their belonging to internal request modifiers in the sense of being among other embedded modification types, however, these address terms always precede the core of the request.

Furthermore, the first four sub-types included in our proposed taxonomy have been previously considered in other typologies. We refer to (i) *apologetic attention-getters* or formulaic entreaties, like "Excuse me!"; (ii) *terms of endearment*, such as "Dear", or "Sweetie"; (iii) formulaic *greetings*, from "Hello!", or "Hey!" to "Good morning!"; and, (iii) *alerters* realized through imperatives of the kind of "Look!", "Listen!", or "Wait a minute!". Generally speaking, *attention-getters* seek to alert the hearer before uttering the request head act but, according to Achiba (2003), they may also aggravate its impositive force, especially in the case of the sub-type we have specifically named as *alerters*.

As far as *attention-getters with acknowledgement of interlocutor* are concerned, authors like Hassall (2001) has given account of them by highlighting the existence of *kinship* terms (e.g. "mother", "father"), as well as the resort to the requestee's name, whenever it conveys the kind of social link existing between the interlocutors ("Tom" *versus* "Mr. Edwards"). Precisely, this last observation is the one which led us to further divide this sub-type of *attention getters* into, firstly, *low social distance* (henceforth SD) addressees, including family and friends; secondly, *medium SD* addresses, considering acquaintances like neighbours as well as work colleagues and superiors; and, thirdly, *high SD* addresses, or strangers.

In so doing, we put the basis to test Wolfson's "bulge-theory", as reported by Nikula (1996: 26), according to which *medium SD* addressees would be the ones who would demand a higher frequency of use of politeness strategies in the form of mitigators. The relevance of including these *attention-getters with acknowledgement of interlocutors* derives from their main virtue as pragmatic modifiers with a great potential to mark the kind of relationship existing between interlocutors, either in terms of dominance/power or social distance. It is in this respect that the category of attention-getters as a whole can be regarded as multifunctional, as it is able to convey not only politeness but also the social position of the requester in relation to the requestee.

Turning to “please”, this request modifier, although included at the end of the external modification section in Alcón *et al.*’s 2005 typology, will be dealt with separately in our proposal, more specifically under the label of multifunctional modification. As pinpointed earlier, “please” can appear in initial, embedded position or as a final addition to the request core. In fact, many scholars, such as House and Kasper (1981), Trosborg (1995), or Achiba (2003), have numbered it among internal modifiers, whereas Sifianou (1999) has insisted on regarding it as another external modifying device. Such debate seems to us a false dilemma, since the changing position of “please” has been widely documented in different studies, specially those developmental ones whose findings we will report next.

Moreover, what really matters about “please” is, apart from its different positions and the fact of being the most frequently employed request modifier, its multifunctionality. Such versatility has already been stated by authors like Achiba (2003), inasmuch as “please” can be regarded as (i) *mitigator* of commands, for example when it accompanies Chinese imperatives like in Hong’s (1999) study; as (ii) request *marker* in conventionally-indirect requests which, otherwise, according to some authors (e.g. Martínez-Flor, 2009) might not be recognized as such; or/and as (iii) *emphasizer*.

In fact, a recent study by Wichmann (2005), focusing on different intonations of "please" in data taken from the *International Corpus of British English*, has corroborated Achiba's (2003) analysis by showing that "please" is a pragmatic marker whose range of meaning in context goes from the conveyance of "courtesy" (i.e. politeness) to the expression of "appeal" (e.g. emphatic requests like pleas), and emotions (from distress to anger). Wichmann's (2005: 249) contention, in the sense that "like other markers, 'please' clearly has a pragmatic, interpersonal function rather than a propositional one" which can only be interpreted by drawing on "a variety of different types of evidence: lexical, discoursal, contextual", reminds us of the main contribution of Alcón *et al.*'s (2005) suggested typology. In their attempt to depart from traditional form-focused taxonomies in order to develop a socio-pragmatic perspective, Alcón *et al.*'s proposal aims at giving, in the authors' own words (2005: 29-30), "a more complete picture of learners' full requesting behaviour".

Precisely, in order to do so, we have subdivided the multifunctional modifying device of "please" into five categories. The first three ones, coined by Sato (2008) when analysing "please" in American and New Zealand Englishes, correspond with the three main positions in which this multifunctional request modifier can be placed with respect to the request head act. Apart from coinciding with initial, medial, and final positions of

"please", however, the so-called *manipulative*, *prescriptive/face-saving* and *contract based* "please" convey, in Sato's view (2008: 1272-1275), the following meanings:

> (i) initial or *manipulative* "please" becomes forceful since it marks the requestee's firm disposition to fulfil his/her face needs and to achieve his/her immediate interactional goal in pursuit of his/her own benefit, "where the politeness effects tend to be largely manipulated" (Sato, 2008: 1275);
>
> (ii) medial or *prescriptive/face-oriented* "please" is the only actual marker of courtesy as the politeness it expresses is used "to mitigate face-threats […] for the sake of preserving the face of others" (Sato, 2008: 1274), and;
>
> (iii) final or *contract-based* "please" is interpreted as social distancing and negative-politeness oriented because it is regarded by Sato (2008: 1274) "as a matter of etiquette and social appropriateness rather than a politeness strategy".

According to Martínez-Flor (2009: 44-46), the vast majority of EFL learners in her oral corpus of requestive behaviour, employed "please" in final position and as a mitigator of the illocutionary force of the request uttered —a function fulfilled by medial please in Sato's classification. As far as the function of initial or *manipulative* "please" is concerned, however, both Sato (2008) and Martínez-Flor (2009) *do* agree in its emotional loading, which in Sato's view (2008: 1275) can be assessed "as 'expressive' and

'enthusiastic' on the one hand, and 'insistent' and 'aggressive' on the other". In that respect, a link between initial or *manipulative* "please" can be established with the final category embraced by the multifunctional sub-type "please", namely, that of *pleading*. Both *manipulative* "please" and *pleading* are among the affective/emotional meanings of "please" highlighted by Wichmann (2005); while elliptical request "please" is counted whenever "please" can be interpreted as substituting a whole requestive act, which has already appeared in advance.

Having explained the typology of request modifiers which will be applied to our corpus in the chapter devoted to the present study, the pages that follow present the findings of previous literature. Although following different taxonomies, the studies that will be reported next have also taken into account, as the main concern of the investigation carried out, the analysis of their participants' perception and use of request modifiers.

2.5 Studies on request modifiers

As stated by Hassall (2001) and as shown previously in section 2.3 above, most research to date has focused on forms related to the request head act, while modifiers have received far less attention on the part of ILP scholars. Nonetheless, here we will offer an overview of those studies which, to the best of our knowledge, have dealt with this second constituent of the speech act of requesting. In order to do so, we will start by focusing on

production of request modifying devices, before dealing with issues related to awareness of these pragmatic force markers.

First of all, it should be said that general outcomes concerning the type of modifiers used by learners are not conclusive. It seems undeniable that, when compared with native speakers, learners tend to underuse internal modifiers, with the exception of *hesitators* (e.g. Kasper, 1981), and to overuse external modifiers, especially *grounders* and "please" (e.g. Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1986; House & Kasper, 1987). However, these findings could have been due to the different data collection instruments employed. In fact, role plays and other oral data elicitation methods seem more likely to have fostered the resort to internal modification sub-types like *hesitators*; while, conversely, written DCTs might have resulted in longer answers (i.e. verbosity) full of external kind of modifiers like *grounders* and "please".

Nevertheless, there were at least three exceptions to the aforementioned two trends. Firstly, Trosborg's (1995) piece of research has stated that her Danish learners of English underused both internal and external modifiers in comparison with native-speakers' production; secondly, Faerch and Kasper's (1989) analysis has demonstrated that both Danish learners and German and English native-speakers preferred internal over external modifiers; and, thirdly, Hassall (2001) seems to have proven that his

Australian adult learners of Indonesian opted for using more external modifiers than internal ones, when performing a role-play, probably because the *grounders* employed might have reproduced the information provided in the role-play cue.

In addition to the different research designs, there was no coincidence among the different samples of investigation between learners' L1 and the target language they were acquiring. For example, participants were German learners in Kasper's (1981) study, German and Danish learners in House and Kasper's (1987), Danish learners in Faerch and Kasper's (1989), and Trosborg's (1995); and, Australian learners in Hassall's (1997, 2001, 2003). Concerning the target language, we find it was English in most of the studies (Kasper, 1981; House & Kasper, 1987; and, Trosborg, 1995), followed by English and German (Faerch & Kasper, 1989), and by Hebrew (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1986) or Indonesian (Hassall, 1997, 2001, 2003).

None of the research reviewed up to this point had Spanish as L1 in comparison with English as L2, and, however, our study focuses on the perception of request modifiers by Spanish adult university students learning English in a foreign context. Consequently, findings from two contrastive pieces of research by Márquez-Reiter (2000) and by Díaz Pérez (2003) seem particularly relevant. They have compared Uruguayan Spanish and English, on the one hand, and peninsular Spanish (the

southern variety spoken by students of English Philology at the University of Jaén in Andalusia) and British English (students majoring at the universities of Leeds and Stirling), on the other hand.

First of all, it should be said that Márquez Reiter's and Díaz Perez' studies have corroborated Trosborg's (1995) outcomes in the sense that Danish learners of English and Spanish learners of English appear to underuse both internal and external modifiers in comparison with British English native speakers. Nevertheless, this lower frequency is more significant in the case of internal modification sub-types. More specifically, "Uruguayans' use of internal modifiers was much lower than that of the British, thus making Uruguayan requests less tentative" (Márquez-Reiter, 2000: 141). In fact, 27% of Uruguayan requests were internally modified in comparison with 90% of British English ones. As regards external modifiers, Britons outperformed Uruguayans, who resorted to the following sub-types in decreasing order: *grounders*, *preparators* and *disarmers* (Márquez-Reiter, 2000: 129). Besides, *disarmers* not only appeared less in Uruguayan production but they did so particularly in high imposition situations with marked social status difference, a factor that did not seem to motivate British requestive behaviour.

Regarding, Díaz Pérez' (2003) findings on peninsular Spanish performance of requesting modifying devices by high educated users of one of the

southern varieties spoken in Andalusia, the author does not find such a great distance between Spanish EFL learners' resort to English internal modifiers and British university students' production. In fact, both populations of learners show (Díaz Pérez, 2003: 287), respectively, 70.8%, and 78.0% of internally modified requests; in contrast with the 54.3% detected among the Spanish native-speakers control group. Regarding the use of external modifiers, the author (2003: 297) presents the three groups deploying more similar percentages with, 65.1% of externally modified requests produced by British native speakers, 61.4% by Spanish EFL learners; and, 59% by Spanish native-speakers.

Up to this point, we have reported findings from cross-cultural studies which compare and contrast production of modifying devices by native speakers and non-native with both different linguistic backgrounds and L2 target languages. Yet, as explained previously in section 1.5, from an acquisitional perspective which began in the mid-nineties, well-known pragmaticians (e.g. Kasper, 1996; Kasper & Rose, 1999, 2002) have advocated for analyzing those individual variables which may have learning effects, among which proficiency level, length of stay or input exposure, linguistic background and gender are numbered. Whenever individual variables influencing learners' production of speech acts have been tackled, proficiency level as an indicator of grammatical or linguistic

competence has been dealt with (e.g. Hill, 1997; Takahashi & DuFon, 1989). To date, however, scholars have not reached an agreement on how and to what extent grammatical and pragmatic competences are interrelated (Kasper & Rose, 2002; Kasper & Roever, 2005).

In fact, whereas some research findings (e.g. House, 1989; Hoffman-Hicks, 1992; Bergman & Kasper, 1993; Takahashi, 1996) show a mismatch between grammatical and pragmatic competence, since even advanced students may have problems regarding appropriateness leading to pragmatic failure; other scholars hold that both competences go hand in hand because pragmatic competence develops in line with proficiency level (see Scarcella, 1979; Bardovi-Harlig, 1999; or Martí, 2008a). Hence, further research would be needed to ascertain whether grammatical competence should precede pragmatic competence, both in terms of production and awareness, or not.

Beginning with studies focused on the production of modifying devices, previous research (e.g. Bardovi-Harlig, 1996) seems to agree in the fact that internal modifiers, like the underused *downtoner* sub-type, may call for more complex syntactic knowledge; while the use of "please" in its external position, either preceding or following the request head act, does not necessarily imply knowledge on subordination or on complex syntactic structures. Precisely, in that vein, two developmental studies on

EFL Japanese learners, Hill's in 1997 and Kobayashi and Rinnert's in 2003 have further explored the relationship between grammatical and pragmatic competence.

On the one hand, Hill's (1997) written DCTs implemented in three different groups with three different proficiency levels have shown that *downtoners* are not only underused but they do not evolve in line with higher proficiency level attained. Conversely, the most frequent external modifiers found are "please", *grounders* and *preparators*, with the first two of them developing to achieve target-language levels in terms of the position of "please" (from external to embedded position at the core of the request), and with respect to the equal frequency of use regarding "please" and *grounders*, when compared with native-speakers' performance (i.e. from overuse and verbosity to target-like normal presence).

On the other hand, Kobayashi and Rinnert's (2003: 169) experiment, based on two role plays performed by low *versus* high proficient EFL Japanese learners in comparison with two control groups of English and Japanese native speakers, has corroborated Hill's (1997) previous study in the sense that the more proficient learners display a greater number and variety of supportive moves, than their less proficient counterparts, particularly when finding themselves before high imposing situations.

However, only high proficient learners produced particular external modifying sub-types such as *disarmers* and *cost-minimizers*, whereas *preparators* and *grounders* were more equally distributed among the two groups at different proficiency levels. This high frequency of *disarmers* and *cost-minimizers* resulted in longer pre-request sequences found in the higher proficiency learners' role-plays, what led the authors to interpret this difference in terms of a developmental stage. In so doing, they shed a new and more positive light concerning the phenomenon of verbosity, which had been traditionally linked to a low command of the target language; or, which is still considered as inappropriate requestive behaviour in, for instance, Hassall's (2001) research that has Indonesian as its interlanguage.

Kobayashi and Rinnert's (2003) reference to a developmental stage seems to call for an analysis of longitudinal studies which, unlike the research reviewed so far, involve not university and adult learners but children's pragmatic development in request modification. Ellis's (1992) research of two immigrants low proficient learners of English (aged 10 and 11), studying in Great Britain, was conducted in a classroom setting. At the beginning of their instruction, both participants produced mainly unmitigated direct requests with the addition of "please" and a few *grounders*, along with the resort to some repetition. Over time, the two

subjects increased the use of conventionally indirect requests in detriment of the presence of direct requests. Similar patterns of behaviour have been reported by Rose's (2000) cross-sectional study in which pre-adolescent Cantonese EFL learners' use of direct requests diminished in line with the increasing amount of conventionally indirect strategies accompanied by a minimal resort to supportive moves, which mainly consisted of *grounders*.

Turning to other well-known longitudinal studies, Achiba (2003) observed the same trend from direct to conventionally indirect requestive behaviour in her seven-year-old daughter when learning English during their seventeen-month stay in Australia. However, this author provides us with a more detailed account concerning the use of modifying devices, by distinguishing four phases of development. At the very beginning of her stay, Tao mitigated direct requests, mainly imperatives, by adding "please" as a request marker, repeating her demands and resorting to *attention-getters* and very few *grounders*. In phase two, the girl produce more *grounders* and some *toners*, being "maybe" more difficult to acquire than "just". Conventionally indirect request head acts appeared later on, at the third stage, accompanied by "please" as a polite maker and by the external modifier called *option-giver*, which could be equated, as previously explained, with a modality of *disarmer*. Finally, *preparators*, that

is, pre-request external moves, were found in the last phase of development.

Recent longitudinal studies, such as Barron's (2003) and Schauer's (2004, 2007, 2009) have focused on adult populations of learners studying abroad. The former deals with a group of Irish learners of German, living and studying in Germany for a year, and employes written free discourse completion tasks (henceforth FDCTs); whereas the latter focuses on a group of German learners of English spending an academic year at a British University and analyses oral data obtained by means of an innovative Multimedia Elicitation Task (henceforth MET).

In spite of the differences, both Barron and Schauer have found an initial underuse of internal modifiers, along with an overuse of external modifiers. Yet, whereas Barron's population underused *downtoners* and overused "bitte" (i.e. "please"), German learners in Schauer's research made a more target-like use of internal modifiers from the beginning of their stay abroad (with the exception of *tag questions* and *negation*) but deployed an excessive amount of supportive moves, other than "please". This high frequency of external modifiers occurrences with the consequent "verbosity" effect, was ascribed to learners' perception of the elicitation task as an exam situation in which elaborated answers were supposed to be expected.

Although with a cross-sectional design, Economidou-Kogetsidis' (2008) research also focuses on the extent to which Greek ESL learners living in the UK produce internal and external mitigation in interlanguage request production that deviates from that of British English native speakers. The difference from the target-language use in terms of Greek ESL learners underusing mitigators such as *openers* or "please", however, is explained in this study abroad context by L1 (i.e. Greek) pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic transfer, along with the different politeness orientation of the ESL learners and the native speakers of British English used as control group.

In fact, Greek ESL participants associate formulaic expressions like "please", "thank you" and "sorry" with formality rather than politeness as such (Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2008: 125). As a positive politeness oriented culture, Greek society favours, in the author's view (2008: 126), "informality, directness, spontaneity, solidarity and in-group membership" over the British culture preference for tact, individual values and freedom from others' impositions. Hence, the Greek ESL learners' production of more positively-oriented kind of external modifiers such as *disarmers*.

Additionally, Economidou-Kogetsidis (2008: 128-130) also observes a different perception concerning the definition of in-group relations on the

part of the Greek participants. In Greece, there is a social tendency towards collectivism which would widen the concept of who belongs to one's in-group. This is so to the extent of including in the aforementioned in-groups not only relatives and friends, but also people who show concern for the speaker, such as the lecturer to whom the subjects in this author's study have to ask for a deadline extension.

That is, power differences would be compatible with solidarity, as shown in the case of the lecturer, or would be assessed as lower in the example of the bank manager to whom students have to ask for a loan, inasmuch as, in similar situations, Greeks are more prone to depend on family and personal connections (e.g. a bank manager closer to one's family or friends), rather than on impersonal institutions like banks as such. In sum, a different cultural-bound perception of social power, one of Brown and Levinson's (1987 [1978]) factors affecting calculations of facework, would be at play in the Greek ESL learners' particular production of both internal and external request modifiers in apparently power-asymmetrical social situations.

Given the specific features of the participants in our study, Spanish EFL university learners studying different degrees including English Philology, a developmental approach of the kind of "study abroad context" seems to be out of question. Still, learning environment along

with proficiency level arouse as key variables as far as pragmatic development is concerned in a seminal work by Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei (1998). This study compared grammatical and pragmatic awareness concerning the speech acts of apologies, refusals, requests and suggestions in the case of a group of Hungarian EFL learners in comparison with a group of ESL students in the United States, having a population of Italian EFL learners as control group. It took as a point of departure previous findings according to which, apparently, pragmatic competence appeared to lag behind grammatical knowledge (e.g. Olshtain & Blum-Kulka, 1985). Focusing on pragmatic awareness in the sense of noticing and rating the severity of both grammatical errors and pragmatic infelicities, a video-and-questionnaire instrument was implemented, to find that high-proficient EFL Hungarian learners perceived grammatical errors as much more relevant than pragmatic errors, whereas the trend among ESL students was just the opposite one (Bardovi-Harlig & Dörnyei, 1998: 250).

That is, in light of those outcomes reported in the original study by Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei (1998) and its subsequent replications (Niezgoda & Röver, 2001; Yuan, 2001; Bardovi-Harlig & Griffin, 2005; Schauer, 2006) it appears that not only proficiency level but also learning environment (mainly ESL *versus* EFL) may influence the degree of

pragmatic awareness, to the extent of affirming that EFL contexts would trigger grammatical competence in detriment of pragmatic one, whereas ESL settings would produce the opposite effect. In fact, the need to consider the type of input which learners are exposed to as a variable which might have a positive effect on pragmatic development was ascertained by Kasper and Schmidt (1996: 159-160), prior to Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei's (1998) original study, when they pointed to the superiority of second language contexts, when compared to foreign language ones, in terms of providing learners with richer and more diverse and frequent input.

Nevertheless, according to Niezgoda and Röver (2001), this ESL advantages regarding the acquisition of pragmatic competence in terms of awareness cannot be equated to the impossibility to improve this competence in EFL settings. This is so because, in terms of input-exposure "not all FL and SL classes are equal, nor are student ability and motivation" (Niezgoda & Röver, 2001: 68). In fact, these authors' EFL Czech subjects, who were studying to become primary and secondary English teachers in their country, did better than the ESL group when identifying the errors and their severity rating included in both grammatical and pragmatic items.

Furthermore, a recent replication of Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei's (1998) study, carried out by Schauer (2006), who has compared pragmatic awareness shown by German learners of English studying different subjects at a British university with a German population learning English translation studies in Germany, concludes, in line with Matsumura (2003), that "the findings suggested that proficiency only had an indirect effect on pragmatic development when interlinked with exposure to the L2" (Schauer, 2006: 281).

Although, unlike Niezgoda & Röver's exceptional group of Czech teacher trainers, Schauer's (2006: 284) "professional language learners" did worse than their German counterparts studying abroad, these contradictory findings call for further research. More studies are needed with a particular focus on the amount of exposure to English input in relation to students' proficiency level, even though the examination of pragmatic issues be carried out, not within a study abroad design, but in experiments, as it is ours, in which participants are university undergraduate students learning English in their home country.

Apart from level of proficiency or effects of length of stay-abroad, learners' linguistic background has been also tackled, when English is the participants' third language (henceforth L3), among the main variables guiding ILP studies. In that line, the role of bilingualism in Catalan as L1

and Castilian as L2 was taken into account in Safont's (2005a) research on the use and awareness of request modifying devices by English as a third language learners. In fact, subjects in the aforementioned study were students majoring at the same university based on the Valencian community in Spain (i.e. Universitat Jaume I, henceforth UJI), in which our written data have been collected by means of written DCTs. On that account, participants' degree of bilingual competence was measured by means of a bilingualism test, designed on the basis of previous research (Wei, 2000); whereas a level placement test was distributed to the subjects and their performance was assessed on the basis of the ACTFL proficiency guidelines, in order to ascertain the possible target language-level effects in the use of request modifying devices. Data for the analysis were gathered by implementing both an open discourse completion test and a role-play task.

Interestingly, results from the experiment pointed to differences between bilinguals' and monolinguals' use of peripheral modification devices. More specifically, Safont's (2005a) has shown that: (i) L3 learners of English employed request modifiers more frequently and appropriately than their L2 counterparts, (ii) intermediate learners performed better than beginners both in the oral and written tasks; and (iii) the written task allowed for a wider use of peripheral modification devices, although

findings also reported that internal modification devices were highly employed in the oral task.

In comparison with the sample of literature presented above and devoted to clarify the effect on pragmatic development of aspects like proficiency level, length of stay abroad, or linguistic background; it seems that the role of gender may be counted among those individual factors which has received less attention on the part of researchers working within the discipline of second language acquisition and, more specifically, by those interested in the field of interlanguage pragmatics. This lack of research is especially true as far as the analysis of request modification items is concerned.

A pilot study conducted by Martí in 2007, however, found that, in a group of UJI undergraduates made up of 81 subjects —58 female and 23 male participants—, young women outperformed men in the production of internal and external modifiers, with a slight preference for external over internal ones. More specifically, gender as an individual variable proved to be relevant in the production of *openers* and *intensifiers* (among internal modifying devices), *preparators* and *grounders* (in the case of requesting external modification), and *attention-getters* and "please" (classified in the taxonomy proposed here, in section 2.4, as multifunctional modifiers).

These outcomes (Martí, 2007: 143-147) were interpreted as the result of female participants' (i) higher command on more complex pragmalinguistic structures (e.g. *openers* realized through subordinate clauses), (ii) stronger pragmatic sensitivity before situations demanding the resort to negative-face politeness strategies (e.g. lower use of *intensifiers versus* higher use of *preparators* and *grounders*), (iii) preference for other-oriented modifying items, such as *attention-getters* as mainly social indexing markers; and, (iv) overt expression of appealing and emotive nuances conveyed by some realizations of "please", other than its main function as transparent polite marker.

The unbalanced sample of the population engaged, with women clearly outnumbering men, along with other limitations of this prior study, which made it a highly exploratory in nature piece of research, led us to carry out a second experiment. This second research project, the present one, demands, first and foremost, that the third and final theoretical chapter of this work be devoted to introducing the relevance and the feasibility of investigating the role of gender as a variable in the perception of request modifying devices by EFL learners.

Chapter 3

The effect of gender on the development of pragmatic competence

As shown at the end of Chapter 2, a number of individual variables have been analysed in order to ascertain the extent to which they might have a facilitative effect in acquiring pragmatic competence. Given the fact that factors such as proficiency level or length of stay abroad have been extensively assessed in previous research, our study will focus on one of the aspects most neglected so far, namely, the influence of gender on the perception of request modifiers by Spanish EFL undergraduate students. In fact, before the lack of studies concerning this individual variable in particular, authors such as Kasper and Rose (2002: 283) have stated that they are "looking forward to much future work on these issues".

As we will find throughout this chapter, the field of language and gender is a highly interdisciplinary one (see Sunderland & Litosseliti, 2008). The need to take as a point of departure a working definition of gender urges us to begin with a review of studies from the perspective of developmental psychology, an area of knowledge that considers gender from biological, socialization and cognitive views. Having established the origin(s) of differences between males and females with respect to language use by dealing whit their cognitive (e.g. verbal skills) and social behaviour (e.g. empathy), we will deal with the discipline of applied

linguistics. Although, to date, the consideration of the effects of gender as a variable has been rather limited in the field of second and/or foreign language acquisition as far as pragmatic competence is concerned, the condition of EFL learners of the population of university undergraduates —on whom our study is focused— calls for analyzing which components of the construct of communicative competence have been mostly worked on from the point of view of gender and language use.

Finally, we will turn to the findings reported within the applied linguistics subfield of sociolinguistics. In so doing, we will present the results of research more closely connected with the area of interest of pragmatics, albeit, as it will be evident, the role of gender has been analysed mostly in relation to English and within the framework of first language studies, that is, within the realm of L1 pragmatics. Interestingly, when authors like Coates (1993: 106-140) refer to gender differences in communicative competence, they concentrate on analysing features of English native speakers' conversational interaction, such as those related to gender and conversational style. That is, when sociolinguists analyses gender and communicative competence, they do not tend, as we will see in section 3.4, to refer to the pedagogically oriented construct we described in Chapter 1 (e.g. Celce-Murcia's 2007), but to all the linguistic devices linked to the development of conversationalist competence.

3.1 A working definition of gender

The definition of gender itself is a highly contested issue. Generally speaking, the idea that it is socialization rather than biology what determines the existence of a gender dichotomy is a feminist one (Coates, 1993: 310). Saying so is equated to claiming that women's inferior condition can be reversed, because social change is regarded as feasible in comparison with biological one.

Over time, such general conception has been enriched by feminist linguists since the end of the 1980s (see West & Zimmermann's below), and subscribed by international organizations in the late 1990s, like FAO did in 1997 (see http://www.fao.org/docrep/007/y5608e/y5608e01.htm):

> Sex, we told students, was what was ascribed by biology: anatomy, hormones, and physiology. Gender, we said, was an achieved status: that which is constructed through *psychological*, *cultural*, and *social* means. [...] Reconceptualizing gender not as a simple property of individuals but as an integral dynamic of social orders implies a new perspective on the entire network of gender relations. [...] Gender is a powerful ideological device, which produces, reproduces, and legitimates the choices and limits that are predicated on sex category. (West & Zimmerman, 1987: 125, 147, italics added).

> Gender is defined by FAO as 'the relations between men and women, both *perceptual* and material. Gender is not determined biologically, as a result of sexual characteristics of either women or men, but is constructed socially. It is a central organizing principle of societies, and often governs the processes of production and reproduction, consumption and distribution' (FAO, 1997, italics added)

Despite, this apparent consensus, however, the binomial sex (=biological) *versus* gender (=psychological, social, and cultural) does not correspond

with two clear-cut categories. In Cresswell's (2003) view, demarcating gender from sex is difficult since nature and nurture/culture cannot be so easily distinguished. Moreover, (i) according to Butler (1990: 11), "sex itself is a gendered category", and (ii) as held by Kessler and McKenna (1978: 163), "biological, psychological, and social differences do not lead to our seeing two genders. Our seeing two genders leads to the 'discovery' of biological, psychological, and social differences".

As a result, before exploring how gender can be described as a variable, susceptible of being employed as a tool of analysis when conducting an interlanguage pragmatic study of the kind we have presented here; we take as a point of departure, as working definitions, on the one hand, the one suggested by Gal in 1991, as reported by Pavlenko (2001: 218), according to which gender is "a system of culturally constructed relations of power, produced and reproduced in interaction between and among men and women"; and, on the other, Sunderland's 1998 definition of gender in relation to language use, which we present below:

> I am using 'gender' here to refer to 'culturally shaped' attributes of males and females (Maggie Humm, 1989), the 'shapers' including schools, families and the media as well as a range of other institutions, and their linguistic and non-linguistic practices. *Gender* thus contrasts with *sex*, which refers to *biological* differences. Further, rather than seeing gender as fixed, and language use simply as a reflection of gender, I am assuming a continual 'mutual shaping' of linguistic practices and gender identities, that a person's gender identity is an ever-changing one (Chris Weedon, 1987), and that gender itself is a matter of tendencies rather than absolutes. (Sunderland, 1998: 49, her emphasis).

3.2 Gender and developmental psychology

In the second section of this third chapter, we will draw on a number of papers on sex differences in cognition and emotions or prosocial behaviour, but their findings will be supplemented by mainly following the structure and the content of a recent state-of-the-art publication, *Gender Development* (2009), written by Blakemore, Berenbaum and Liben. As pinpointed by these three authors (2009: 7), the latest research literature on gender development —elaborated from the second half of the 20th century to the beginning of the 21st one— presents two innovative focuses.

On the one hand, it has a stronger theoretical focus which, similar to the one elaborated by the third wave of feminist linguistics (see sub-section 3.4.1), does not only address the differences between men and women, but also highlights the overlapping in the distribution of characteristics, skills or abilities contrasting females and males' cognition or behaviour. A statistical procedure called "meta-analysis" —which allows researchers to combine the findings of many studies quantitatively— has been enormously helpful to measure the exact impact of differences or similarities in research on gender. In fact, Blakemore *et al.* (2009: 70) fully subscribe two common assumptions regarded as "dangerous" ones by Caplan and Caplan (1999). This twofold caveat holds that (i) detecting sex differences in some behaviour does not mean that there is a unique male

and/or female category within which all individual males and females behave one way or another, and (ii) it is wrong to equate sex differences with biological-based behaviour or, furthermore, to think that when a biological influence exists, the behaviour that results from it is unchangeable.

On the other hand, there is an increasing need to elucidate the causes along with the implications of the existing differences, rather than only describing the differences themselves. In that respect, both proximal (e.g. genes, hormones, and brain structure) and distal reasons (i.e. evolutionary psychology), aimed at explaining gender differences, have been identified. This has been done, however, without loosing sight of the fact that in Blakemore *et al.*'s words (2009: 17), "there is no reason to think that biological, social, and cognitive factors are not all involved in the process of children's gender development". In the three following subsections, biological, social and cognitive factors will be explored, as far as they *might* or *do* affect the relation between gender and language use.

3.2.1 Gender and its biological bases

Since the first scientific research on sex differences was released (see for, example, the seminal books by Maccoby, 1966; and/or, by Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974), it has been widely acknowledged that whereas girls display better verbal skills, boys outperform them in visuo-spatial and

mathematical abilities. Over the years, it seems that this general assumption has been maintained and further detailed. For example, according to Blakemore *et al.* (2009: 94), both girls and women tend to have shown *slightly* better verbal skills than boys and men, although "in some verbal areas such as verbal fluency, phonological processing, and writing skills, the differences are larger".

Nevertheless, feminist linguists such as Cameron (2008: 22-30) have insisted on the fact that (i) the depiction of women as "the linguistically superior sex" is quite recent —from the 1960s and the 1970s onwards; and, (ii) it is not sustained by findings of several meta-analysis collected and reported by psychologists like Hyde (2005), according to whom the similarities between men and women may outperform their differences. Cameron (2008) not only highlights the fact that the overlap between men and women concerning linguistic abilities is about 99.75%, but she also shows the degree of similar findings by presenting them in a table we reproduce below. In order to better understand the effect size of the differences or similarities concerning gender, it should be born in mind that, firstly, if males scores are higher, the *d* value is positive; whereas a negative *d* will appear in case females scores are the higher ones; and, secondly, the fact that a *d* value around 0.20 indicates a small effect; a *d*

around 0.50, a moderate effect; and, finally, a *d* equal or superior to 0.80, a large effect (see Cohen, 1969).

FOCUS OF RESEARCH	*No. of studies analysed*	*Value of **d***	*Effect size*
Reading comprehension	23	– 0.06	Close to zero
Vocabulary	44	– 0.02-+ 0.06	Close to zero
Spelling	5*	– 0.45	Moderate
Verbal reasoning	5*	– 0.02	Close to zero
Speech production	12	– 0.33	Small
Conversational interruption	70	– 0.15-+ 0.33	Small
Talkativeness	73	– 0.11	Small
Assertive speech	75	+ 0.11	Small
Affiliative speech	46	– 0.26	Small
Self disclosure	205	– 0.18	Small
Smiling	418	– 0.40	Moderate

Table 3.1 Findings of meta-analysis for studies of gender differences in verbal/communicative behaviour (presented in Cameron, 2008: 43, who adapted them from Hyde, 2005)

*asterisks indicate cases where the small number of studies analysed is compensated for by the very large controlled samples in which they were conducted.

Apart from having been recently challenged, the reasons which would explain these widely acknowledged female verbal superior skills have been also modified. Thus, some authors have mainly focused on biological factors to give account of this array of differences. For example, Christiansen and Knussmann (1987) deal with hormonal variations and verbal abilities. For them, higher levels of testosterone in males appear to result in better spatial skills and poorer verbal ones. Conversely, as reported by Blakemore *et al.* (2009: 167), higher levels of estrogens would

enhance verbal fluency and memory, starting at least in adolescence. Unfortunately, the statistical power associated with this research on the connection between hormones and cognitive differences in men and women is low due to the relative small sample sizes analysed.

More recently, a 2009 study by Isman and Gundogan has established a relationship between prenatal testosterone exposure and gender differences in learning style preferences. According to these authors (2009: 426), unimodal learning styles are more frequent among males and multimodal ones among females. This is so because the former tend to be visual and kinaesthetic learners, whereas the latter are more prone to be read/write or auditory learners, due to the fact that female brains are better equipped to respond more sensitively to multiple sensory input.

Still within the biological realm, the exploration of the brain structure in relation to sex differences in cognition has drawn the attention of researchers for years. Several studies on brain structure and functions have been prone to justify females' superior verbal skills by identifying those sides and areas mostly devoted to the processing and production of language. In that respect, the less lateralization or the fact that women use both the left and the right hemispheres to process language tasks, while men only used the left, has been highlighted as one of the possible reasons to explain sex differences in verbal skills.

In addition, according to Schaepfer's 1995 study as reported by Schiffler (2001: 328), Brocca's area —responsible for the recognition and articulation of vocal sounds— and Wernicke's area —in which logical processing of language takes place— are respectively 20% and nearer 30% larger in women than in men. However, to date, these connections between brain distribution and sex differences in verbal ability have not been proven.

On the one hand, because, as reported by Blakemore *et al.* (2009: 171), the sex difference in lateralization seems smaller than the disparities between males and females regarding cognition and, therefore, "that lateralitzation cannot be the sole reason for the cognitive differences". On the other hand, there is little direct scientific evidence to demonstrate the link between brain specialization and cognitive differences, and, even though it existed, the brain should be still regarded as "the place where biology and culture come together" (Blakemore *et al.*, 2009: 169). In other words, according to the same authors, at this point, it is difficult to know whether the brain is the cause or the result of the impact of sex differences in verbal abilities. No wonder, then, that authors, such as Casey (1996: 39) or Halpern (1996: 77-78), have advocated from the mid-1990s onwards to consider "the interrelationship between biological and environmental factors" or the fact that "nature and nurture cannot be separated".

Besides, more recent studies have also challenged the attribution of superior verbal skills to women and higher visuo-spatial and mathematical abilities to men, by questioning the reliability of some of the formats of tests implemented to measure females and males' performance concerning such skills. For example, whereas Moreno and Mayer (1999) have highlighted the difficulty of female students when dealing with open-ended questions which clash with their feminine stereotypes of the culture to which they belong; Prieto and Delgado (1999) have demonstrated the negative effects of female subjects' higher caution in guessing answers, and the feasible interference of this upper threshold for certainty detected in women when measuring vocabulary and mental rotation in multiple-choice tests.

Moreover, articles such as that by Halpern and Wright (1996) have pinpointed that females' superiority in verbal skills and males' better performance in quantitative abilities present some exceptions like verbal analogies tasks, which are better performed by males; *versus* arithmetic tasks, which are better solved by females. This is so, due to the fact that women excel on tasks that imply rapid access to and retrieval from long-term memory, while men do the same when short-term memory is involved. Vecchi and Girelli's (1998) study also holds that male superiority concerning visuo-spatial skills is only evident when the subjects perform

active processing tasks in contrast with passive ones. Both pieces of research by Halpern and Wright (1996) and Vecchi and Girelli (1998) have led us to suggest the need to distinguish among different facets existing within the scope of verbal, spatial and mathematical skills, as well as the convenience of focusing on the different cognitive processes these skills or abilities trigger.

In fact, it seems that some of the latest studies on verbal, numerical or visuo-spatial intelligence explain women's higher or lower achievement by providing exclusively psychological reasons. A study conducted by Furnham (2004: 166), to give account of the finding that males rate their general and specific intelligences —verbal and numerical abilities— higher than females do, claims to have demonstrated "the well-established finding of the male hubris and the female humility effect". In the same vein, Burkley *et al.* (2010) note that the reasons that make women more vulnerable to math disengagement have to do with, either some negative feedback received after a poor performance, or with the lack of a sense of identification with the mathematical domain. This lack of identification is detected especially among a subgroup of women participating in the experiment who appear to be more vulnerable before social pressure, and, consequently, end up thinking that their math ability cannot be changed or enhanced.

Similarly, Spinath *et al.* (2010) also connect their participants' school achievement, measured by means of final grades in math and languages —German and English—, with their subjects' self-perceived ability and interest linked to gender-stereotypic abilities in different domains, in a study carried out with a sample of 1353 Austrian thirteen-year-old students. In addition, it seems that only girls benefit more than boys from higher levels of verbal intelligence, extraversion and conscientiousness. The effect of both extraversion and conscientiousness on school achievement leads these authors to find girls' personality and motivation more suitable to succeed in the school context, to the extent of concluding that "over and beyond intelligence, personality and motivation play important roles in school achievement" (Spinath *et al.*, 2010: 485).

In the same vein, a recent study by Matthews *et al.* (2009) points to girls' superior behavioural self-regulation (i.e. more self-discipline and higher attention) in kindergarten, as a better predictor of later academic achievement in their school trajectory rather than to the effect of females' supposedly innate superior verbal skills or social abilities reported in previous literature. What is more, these gender differences in self-regulation benefit girls, in the long run, concerning multiple areas like applied problems (math), general knowledge, letter-word reading, expressive vocabulary and sound awareness (Matthews *et al.*, 2009: 698).

3.2.2 Gender and the social/relational/emotional domain

As can be gathered from the studies by Furnham (2004), Matthews *et al.* (2009), Burkley *et al.* (2010), and Spinath *et al.* (2010), summarized at the end of subsection 3.2.1 above, gender differences in personality and affective attributes appear to explain the slight variation in knowledge related to the verbal or numeric domains shown by males and females, as well as girls' superior academic achievement, rather than biologically-based differences in verbal skills or general intelligence themselves. In that regard, personality traits such as "humility", extraversion, conscientiousness, and self-regulation; or, affective attributes, like higher vulnerability before negative feedback; were pointed by these authors to explain the reasons for females' degree of success or failure in academic achievement.

Furthermore, a recent developmental study on "gender reality" by Chen *et al.* (2010) —i.e. in Lippa's 2006 view, "gender reality" would embrace both gender differences and similarities—, which explores cognitive and affective tests in relation to school performance in four groups of Taiwanese children, aged 6-8, 9-11, 12-14, and 15-17; reveals that "gender differences in affective attributes may be enduring and built-in" (Chen *et al.*, 2010: 477).

A number of affective features has been also presented by Ackerman *et al.* (2001) as traits with the potential of determining gender differences in

knowledge across physical sciences/technology, biology/psychology, humanities and civics domains. According to this study, female university students, apart from reporting only marginally higher self-estimates of their verbal ability in comparison with men, see themselves as possessing higher significant levels of broad extroversion-related traits (including social closeness/femininity), and traditionalism/worry/emotionality; in contrast with only marginally significant higher levels of social potency/enterprising (Ackerman *et al.*, 2001: 811, 813). There is no doubt, then, that, at the level of self-report and, hence, awareness (see, for example, Barrett *et al.*'s 2000 study in which women are depicted as more emotionally expressive than men), it is found a clear difference concerning the display of personality and affective traits on the part of females.

Nevertheless, research conducted on the effect of gender on foreign language anxiety does not seem to identify higher levels of communicative anxiety which might hinder women's linguistic performance in comparison with men's. This is what has been stated in two studies involving a group of EFL Chinese learners in Shangai (Yan & Horwitz, 2008), and a sample of ESL multilingual learners in London (Dewaele, 2007). In fact, whereas the group of international female students in London only report higher levels of communicative anxiety in L1 public speech (Dewaele, 2007: 401); Chinese EFL business majors in a

university in Shangai regard gender as a "remote source" which does not account for foreign language anxiety, whereas they *do* consider gender as directly influencing variables such as comparison with peers and learning strategies (for a review on the effect of gender on learning strategies, see sub-section 3.3.2).

In light of these findings, it seems convenient to explore whether this self-reported array of personality and affective traits in the case of women has a direct correspondence, not only at the level of awareness, but also in actual performance. In other words, are women more socially/relationally/emotionally oriented than males to the extent that, in Ning *et al.*'s words (2010: 129), "for most women, language is mainly helpful to establish harmonious interpersonal relationships"?

If this is so, it might be inferred that female EFL learners would be in advantage to their male counterparts, with respect to their process of acquisition of pragmatic competence. In fact, since, as seen in Chapter 1, the performance of high FTAs like the speech act of requests has to attend not only to the speaker's, but also to the hearer's needs in terms of preservation of their positive (desire to be liked) and negative faces (wish to keep their actions unimpeded); a higher orientation towards others' needs would favour female students' pragmatic development in detriment of male ones.

Having discarded sex differences in the response of amygdala before emotional stimuli (for further information on this brain region responsible for processing emotion, which is more strongly lateralized in men, see Wager *et al.*, 2003), we will select and summarize sex differences in social behaviours resulting from a number of meta-analysis studies, as reported by Blakemore *et al.* (2009). Our selection includes those items susceptible to have some effect on female and male students' acquisition of communicative competence with a special focus on pragmatic competence. We should recall that (i) whenever males scores are higher, the *d* value is positive; whereas a negative *d* will appear in case females scores are the higher ones; and (ii) a *d* value around 0.20 indicates a small effect; a *d* around 0.50, a moderate effect; and, finally, a *d* equal or superior to 0.80, a large effect.

BEHAVIOUR		*EFFECT SIZE (**d=**)*
Behaviours with higher scores in girls and women		
PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOUR (children)	Observational studies	– 0.26
	Laboratory studies	– 0.14
	Being kind and considerate	– 0.42 (almost moderate)
	Comforting	– 0.17
	Giving help	– 0.14
	Sharing or donating	– 0.13
SYMPATHY & EMPATHY (children and adults)	Self-report measures	– 0.60 (moderate)
	Observational measures	– 0.29
EMPATHIC ACCURACY (adults)	Self-report	– 0.56 (moderate)
	Observational studies	– 0.04
Overall decoding of nonverbal cues		– 0.40 (almost moderate)

MORAL ORIENTATION centering on CARE	Overall		– 0.28
	Childhood		– 0.08
	Adolescents		– 0.53 (moderate)
	College students		– 0.18
	Young adults		– 0.33
TEMPERAMENT	Effortful control		– 1.01 (large)
PERSONALITY	Anxiety		– 0.28 to – 0.31
	Gregariousness		– 0.15
	Trust		– 0.25
	Tender-mindedness		– 0.97 (large)
	Neuroticism		– 0.51 (moderate)
	Agreeableness		– 0.59 (moderate)
	Extroversion		– 0.29
Behaviours with higher scores in boys and men			
ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR			0.25
TEMPERAMENT	Surgency		0.50 (moderate)
Helping (adults, public assistance, specially to strangers)			0.34
MORAL ORIENTATION centering on JUSTICE	Overall		0.19
	Children		Not known
	Adolescents		0.22
	College students		0.00
	Young adults		0.40 (almost moderate)
PERSONALITY	Assertiveness		0.50 (moderate)
	Self-esteem	Global	0.14-0.21
		Age 5-10	0-016
		Age 11-13/14	0.12-0.13
		Age 14/15-18	0.04-0.33
		Adulthood	0.07-018
		Older adulthood	0
	Body image		0.50 (moderate)
RISK TAKING	Intellectual risk taking		0.40 (almost moderate)

Table 3.2 Sex differences in social behaviours (adapted from Blakemore *et al.*, 2009: 99-101)

Albeit items concerning emotional expression have not been included in table 3.2, according to Blakemore *et al.* (2009: 96-102), it seems that both

women and men tend to express those emotions which better fit with their positions in society. In other words, there is a clear effect of stereotypes about emotions in correspondence with traditionally assigned gender roles. In that regard, it has been reported the fact that, in individualistic Western cultures, males tend to avoid those emotions —e.g. fear, sadness— "that pose a threat to their status as independent males who are (or should be) in control of the situation" (Fisher & Manstead, 2000: 90).

Hence, the two genders tend to show or hide different emotions. Interestingly, as shown in an experiment known as the "disappointing gift", where children's reactions before an undesired present were videotaped, girls hide their disappointment according to the social demands of politeness which expect from them to "act nice". Instead, according to Davis (1995), boys are likely to have more practice hiding emotions that can present them as vulnerable, rather than those that might signal rudeness or impoliteness. Thus, although crying and smiling are two expressions of emotion more correlated with and easily seen in females, while anger is more readily express by males; when emotions are measured psychologically, there is no evidence of girls and women being more emotional than men and boys. Interestingly, emotional behaviour in some non-Western countries seems to be culturally determined. For example, as reported by Ekstrand (1980: 250), "Iranian men are expected

to show emotions in order to be regarded as normal and dependable". All in all, then, the overemotional woman appears to be one of those persistent Western gender stereotypes we will deal with in the next subsection.

Turning to the rest of the personality traits included in table 3.2 (i.e. neuroticism, extroversion, openness to experience, agreeableness and conscientiousness), it is worth noting how the personality traits in which females score "moderately" higher than men provide us with a portrait very much in tune with the widespread stereotype of the caring woman. It is true that women score highly on neuroticism, that is, they tend to feel more anxious and depressed than males.

Nevertheless, according to the figures of *d* or effect size which have a moderate and/or a large significance, girls and women can be regarded as displaying more "effortful control" (with a large effect size on dimensions such as attention and task persistence), and by being more "sympathetic", "empathic" and "empathy accurate" —although *d* values in that respect are moderately high, only under self-reporting conditions—, "kind and considerate", "oriented to care" as far as adolescents' morality is concerned, "tender-minded" (with a large score in effect size), "agreeable" (i.e. trustworthy and altruist); and, although with a lower *d*

value of – 0.29, "extroverted", an item that consists in being loving, sociable, submissive, cautious, and cheerful.

Conversely, boys and men are characterized by their "surgency" in temperament (a term including personality traits like being more active, impulsive and high-intensity pleasure oriented), their "assertiveness", and their interest in "body image". If *d* values of 0.40 are also taken into account inasmuch as they approach an almost moderate score, young male adults' sense of morality will be centred on the concept of justice; and, finally, boys and men would act as individuals characterised by being more intellectually risk-taking than women, a feature which, according to Graham (1997) *does* favour their learning of a foreign language by increasing their engagement in class oral work (see Powell & Batters, 1985: 21; and Maubach & Morgan, 2001: 44-46); and, in "out of school" situations (Baker & MacIntyre, 2000: 332).

In light of these findings reported in a number of meta-analysis studies, added to findings from self-concept features (see Blakemore *et al.*, 2009: 124-125), it is difficult to deny that the final picture of the social/relational/emotional behaviour concerning girls and women would be built on interpersonal aspects of the self, whereas boys and men would be characterized by their independent self identity. Self concept and self identity are strongly correlated to self esteem. As ascertained by

Major *et al.* (1999: 223), while the possession of masculine attributes mentioned above results in higher self-esteem, the reverse is true for girls and women. In fact, as can be gathered from table 3.2, males have higher-self-esteem than females (see also the meta-analysis by Kling *et al.*, 1999; and, Sahlstein & Allen, 2002), and the results are consistent across ages. This difference, however, is too small to underpin the extended belief that girls have much lower self-esteem than boys.

Nevertheless, the existence of no significantly appreciable difference in terms of effect size between the global-self esteem of men and women, does not prevent authors such as Chen *et al.* (2010: 479) from explaining the lower self-esteem of girls, aged 15-17, in terms of their neuroticism (i.e. their tendency to feel more depressed and anxious), along with the fact that being more people-oriented and attentive to others' feelings make female adolescents "less confident at heart, viewing and judging themselves through others' eyes".

Visser (2002) agrees with Chen *et al.* (2010: 537) in that girls' self-esteem begins to drop after puberty but warns against the danger of generalising a global estimation of women's lower self-esteem beyond the group of White women. For her, White women's self-esteem is mainly undermined by their appreciable concern with outward appearance (a finding contradicted in table 3.2, in which boys and men's attention to body image

is higher than girls and women). Most importantly, however, this author notes that Black women present higher self-esteem than White ones. This is so, because, apart from being more satisfied with their appearance and weight, Black women have a more egalitarian perception of status differences between the sexes and show "a highly developed sense of group consciousness" (Visser, 2002: 537).

All in all, then, what remains to be elucidated is whether a lower —although not statistically significant— self-esteem is the direct consequence of women's main personality traits themselves, or, instead, this lack of self-esteem derives from the unequal social appreciation of females and males' personality. An unequal treatment which would concede higher status to the male independent self-concept in detriment of female interpersonal self-concept, and a trend that, according to Major *et al.* (1999) as reported by Visser (2002: 537), is absent in groups like the ones made up by Black men and women.

In order to give a response, we turn to the next sub-section in which the extent to which the different social/relational/emotional portrait depicted so far results from boys and men and girls and women's tendency to fulfil social expectancies regarding their socio-culturally constructed gendered self-identity.

3.2.3 Gender and Western contemporary stereotyping

This third subsection, as we advanced before, will be devoted to ascertain how gender differences in the linguistic and psychological behaviours of females and males —dealt with in previous sub-sections 3.2.1 and 3.2.2— might be related to socio-cultural processes such as stereotyping and expectancy confirmation. In order to do so, behaviourist/environmental/cognitive and social role approaches to gender development will be taken into account.

According to Blakemore *et al.* (2009: 180-185), the behaviourist school of psychology, founded by Watson in 1913 and highly influential during the first half of the 20th century, focuses on the effects of reinforcement, extinction, and punishment on the behaviour of boys and girls. Both reinforcement and punishment, understood as forms of attention, enhanced the frequency of children's behaviour even when this is undesirable. As a way of illustration, it is shown how boys' aggressive and antisocial behaviour is triggered when they are scolded on that account.

This psychological behaviourist approach also states the importance of the role of imitation and modelling, identifying the latter with the learning of rules used to create new behaviours, similar to the ones imitated; but which have not been previously observed in adults. As reported by Blakemore *et al.* (2009: 181) being male or female is so pervasive in social life that "almost every aspect of children's lives as they grow up attached

meaning to gender”. Generally speaking, children are more likely to imitate same-sex models, provided they show a great deal of power. Besides, if some discrepancy is detected, the gender appropriateness of the behaviour is more powerful than the sex of the model. As a result, boys tend to imitate male models and avoid imitating gender-atypical behaviour; and, what is more, as noted by Blakemore *et al.* (2009: 184), “adult males are probably more likely to influence children to become more flexible in their gendered behaviour that are adult females”.

These three authors (2009: 243) have acknowledged that the difference between gender correlations —qualities and behaviours statistically associated with gender— and gender stereotypes —cognitive structures that contain “the perceiver’s knowledge, beliefs, and expectancies about some human group” (Hamilton & Trolier, 1986: 133)— is too narrow. As a result, an umbrella term, that of “gender correlates”, had to be coined to refer to cognitions about gendered qualities “irrespective of whether they are founded on a statistical association or are founded on the conventional wisdom of the surrounding culture” (Blakemore *et al.*, 2009: 243).

Having done so, they also reported several studies and experiments showing that (i) even preverbal children, with girls outperforming boys, show knowledge of gender correlates; (ii) verbal children’s knowledge of gender correlates increases with age and is more effective before items

concerning adults' possessions and tasks than those gendered differences linked to children's toys; (iii) both boys and girls tend to remember better their own-gender in detriment of other-gender related items; (iv) it is the traditional *versus* non-traditional gendered stories, pictures and events, the ones that are easily recalled by children, who show more difficulties in remembering male characters that perform traditionally assigned feminine behaviours and traits.

In sum, gender stereotypes appear to affect both the amount of information recalled and the accuracy of what is recalled, with non-traditional information being more difficulty to be remembered, especially on the part of subjects who endorse stronger stereotypes concerning the role of gender. In the same vein, but from the perspective of social role theory, proposed by Eagly in 1987 (for an update, see Eagly *et al.*, 2000; and, Wood & Eagly, 2002), it is worth noting the extent to which gender stereotypes are rather accurate with respect to the social/relational/emotional traits or gender correlations we analysed in the subsection 3.2.2. In that respect, Eagly and her colleagues have stated that gender stereotypes end up affecting males and females' ways of behaving. These authors have proposed that the roles men and women play in society lead to stereotypes; stereotypes, to expectancies;

expectancies, to distinct social treatment; and, treatment, to behaviour "in a never-ending cycle" (Blakemore *et al.*, 2009: 186).

In order to support their argument, Eagly and her associates have distinguished between the role of "homemaker" ascribed to women, and whose main characteristics would be communal and expressive (i.e. kind, considerate, helpful, nurturant and caring); and the role of "economic provider", linked to men, and whose leading features would be instrumental or agentic (i.e. competent, independent, assertive, and having leadership qualities).

The acceptance of the definition of gendered roles in these terms draws, first of all, some support of the subfield of evolutionary psychology, which Cameron —as we will see in subsection 3.4.1— has firmly contested under the label of "the new biologism" (see Cameron, 2009); secondly, although women in the role of "homemaker" are socially valued and even admired, according to Eagly *et al.* (2000), this role has lower status in comparison with the men's one which confers them more public power than women have; lastly and more importantly, these highly accepted psychological traits are relevant for our study, insofar as, in Cameron's view (2008: 23), they are also applied to the way men and women's use of language is described.

In order to explain how these gender roles are reproduced, Eagly and co. have coined the terms "expectancy confirmation" and "self-regulation". As Blakemore *et al.* (2009: 186-187) report, "stereotypes are confirmed as people act out these expectancies in social interaction". That is, both women and men display the behavioural characteristics corresponding to their roles of "homemaker" and "economic provider", because others will applaud these features, with the welcome addition, in the case of males, that, in so doing, they acquire more power. Albeit unconsciously, people have expectations for their own behaviour, and, these are affected, in turn, by others' expectations.

Nevertheless, Eagly and her colleagues have pinpointed that "people's attitudes about gender norms have become more flexible [and] women's characteristics are now seen as being more similar to men's" (Blakemore *et al.*, 2009: 187). The extent to which gender roles based on "the economic provider" and "the homemaker" have changed can be ascertained in a recent article by Visser (2002). In order to do so, she has implemented a test categorization of gender among Dutch first year undergraduates majoring in English twice, in 1995 and in 1999.

In the two tests, the prototypical attributes of both men and women do not appreciably change. The feminine category is represented by core characteristics such as "critical of one's own appearance", "concerned with

outward appearance”, “emotional”, “creative”, “nurturing”, ”family-oriented”, “sympathetic”; and, “gentle”. The only significant change concerns a higher rating of social status within the feminine category in the sense that, in the 1999 survey, their social status is conceived as not being so dependent on that of one’s partner. In turn, the masculine category is headed by features such as “career-oriented”, “independent”, “strong”, “dominant”, “interested in technology”, “finding pleasure in control”; and, “commanding respect”. Such features remain stable over the 5-year period tested.

Visser (2002: 535) has interpreted these findings thus: on the one hand, the category masculine is linked to notions underpinning power, whereas the category feminine appears marked by attention to outward appearance and social surveillance, in that feminine identity is “dependent for its sense of social acceptance and personal well-being on external, socially and culturally established factors”. On the other hand, according to this author (Visser: 2002: 536), the aforementioned gendered attributes give support to the traditional gender roles of “the economic provider”/”the breadwinner” *versus* “the homemaker”/”the housewife”.

Consequently, Williams (2000) —as reported by Visser, 2002: 536-537— pinpoints the fact that in spite of 40 years of feminist challenge, the ideology of domesticity (whose rise has been analysed by Davidoff and

Hall's; and, by Armstrong's 1987 studies about England from the 1780s to the Victorian age) has remained almost unchallenged, insofar as young Dutch university students at the end of the 1990s still identify men with career-oriented individuals and women with family-oriented ones. Visser concludes that only deeper societal changes can lead to changes in gender markedly stereotyped conceptions. Such changes should involve, in this author's view (Visser, 2002: 538), "a greater emphasis on gender equality, in personal, social, and professional respects".

3.3 Gender and applied linguistics

Contrary to the feminist post-modern notion of gender which understands it, not as a given, but as a potential meaningfully dimension in behavioural studies —see section 3.4—; psychologists like Halpern (1996) have held that sex is a way of classifying studied populations into two subgroups which is difficult to deny. In fact, recent studies on gender differences in vocabulary, like the one carried out by Agustín Llach (2009), take as a point of departure the belief that, when analyzing individual variables within second language acquisition, gender is "a clear cut category for grouping learners, and therefore it has become one of the most conspicuous and most frequent factors to classify learners" (Agustín Llach, 2009: 13). Consequently, it is stated that the terms sex/gender can be used interchangeably.

Irrespective of being a diffuse and unreliable or a clear-cut tool of analysis, the truth is that, in comparison with the amount of gender-oriented research topics in the field of first language use and variation, which will be reviewed in section 3.4, the investigation on gender with respect to language acquisition seems sparse. No wonder, then, that Piller and Pavlenko (2001: 3) have claimed that mainstream SLA suffers from "a widespread gender-blindness […] which assumes a generic language user and disregards inter-individual variation as 'noise'".

That is what can be inferred from three facts. Firstly, the marginal position occupied by the factor sex/gender when analyzing applied linguistics handbooks and journals (for an illuminating ten-year survey on several handbooks and seventeen SLA journals, see Jiménez Catalán, 2002). Secondly, an essentialist and secondary treatment of gender appears to be shared, according to Block (2002: 58-60), by SLA first-rate authors like Ellis (1994) –who devotes just three pages to the variable "sex" in a chapter of his *The study of second language acquisition*– and a number of scholars such as Cook, 1993; Lightbown and Spada, 1999 [1993]; Gass and Selinker, 2001 [1994]; Towell and Hawkins, 1994; and Mitchell and Myles, 1998; in whose SLA texts the variable sex/gender is wanting. Thirdly, little attention has been paid —according to Haneda (2006), Savignon (2006); and, Zuengler and Miller (2006)— to issues of language identity and power, with the

exceptions of language acquisitional studies conducted by authors like Jones (1993), Sunderland (1995), Romaine (1999), Norton (2000), Pavlenko (2001), Pavlenko *et al.* (2001), Norton and Toohey (2004); and, Paechter (2006).

According to Ekstrand (1980: 211), one of the reasons that might explain the fact that gender differences in SLA have not been more deeply studied would be the fact that the differences in favour of females in the native language, which we reported in section 3.2.1, have been "taken for granted, and it has been tacitly assumed that female superiority should also be natural in second languages".

Be that as it may, despite the existence of some pieces of research, like Itakura's remarkable contribution (2001) on the reassessment of the quantifiable dimensions of conversational dominance with a population of Japanese L1 and English L2 students at Kanda University of Foreign Languages in Tokyo; as Chavez (2000) rightly points out, gender as a variable has been virtually absent from studies on foreign and second language productive skills, especially from research focusing on speaking in classroom settings.

3.3.1 Gender and the ESL/EFL classroom

In Sunderland's (1992, 1994) view, there are three areas in which gender is relevant in the ESL/EFL classroom, namely, (i) the English language, (ii)

materials —grammars, textbooks, dictionaries, and teacher's guides; and (iii) processes —e.g. learning styles and strategies along with teacher-learner and learner-learner interaction. Whereas the first two areas have been dealt with by focusing on tracing the effects of sexism or by analysing the invisibility of women and gender stereotyping in textbooks and other reading materials; the last one investigates the extent to which there might be two ways of learning a second or a foreign language according to the learner's gender.

It is undeniable the interest of exploring areas related to sexism in the use of the English language —for a contrastive English/Spanish study of semantic derogation in animal metaphor, see, for example, Fernández Fontecha & Jiménez Catalán, 2003. However, we will devote this subsection to analyse the last two areas of research suggested by Sunderland (1992, 1994). That is, the effects on learners' process of gender socialization of reading materials, on the one hand; as well as the salience of gender differences or gender "tendencies" in the process of second language acquisition analysed through classroom interaction and potentially different learning styles, on the other. For a discussion on the convenience of substituting the term gender differences by gender tendencies, see Sunderland (2010: 12).

With respect to the influence of reading materials in the process of gender tendencies when acquiring a language, it seems to be worth exploring in genres so distant as fairy tales and children's books —see Peterson & Lach (1990) for an analysis of the effect on girls' self-esteem of gender stereotypes in children's books—, or widely used dictionaries such as Longman 1992 *Dictionary of English language and culture* (see Jiménez Catalán & Ojeda Alba, 2000). The role of textbooks and literary works, however, has been widely acknowledged, as far as EFL learning contexts are concerned, insofar as the main sources of classroom input are course books and teacher talk. Regarding the potential effect of these reading publications on the acquisition of pragmatic competence, it is worth reporting the existence of three studies which have dealt with the representation of speech-acts including requestive behaviour.

Firstly, although analysing Greek course books, Poulou (1997) has put forward how women are represented in mixed-sex dialogues playing the roles of "non-experts" who ask for information and make requests; while it is men the ones who give information and perform most other directives. Secondly, Molina Plaza (1997-1998), focusing on women's contributions to formal discourse in ten dialogues of ELT texts for Spanish secondary students, highlights the fact that females have less access than men to potentially status-enhancing talk. The ten dialogues extracted from

a corpus of twenty-four ELT texts present women participating more than men in interpersonal talk in private and informal contexts and being more concerned with affective or social meaning. As a result, for Molina Plaza (1997-1998: 902), "the female ELT student is also likely to adopt this stereotyped conversational style while facing a real life conversation".

Last but not least, Barrios Espinosa (1997-1998: 430-431) offers a relevant gendered treatment of polite pragmatic devices in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. Her analysis (1997-1998: 435, her emphasis) includes mitigated requests as when Alice asks that the Caterpillar —gendered as a man of higher status— makes her taller, using markers of politeness like "only", "you know" "a little", or "if you wouldn't mind":

> C: What size do you want to be?
> A: Oh, I'm not particular as to size, only one doesn't like changing so often, you know.
> C: I *don't* know
> [Silence]
> C: Are you content now?
> A: Well, I should like to be *a little* larger, Sir, if you wouldn't mind.

Concerning the processes of acquisition of English as a second or as a foreign language in learning instructed contexts, a special emphasis will be put on four of the aspects noted by Ehrlich (1997: 435, 438), namely, gendered differences in (i) access to the target language (ii) those interactional styles that may promote or hinder second language development, (iii) attitudes toward the target language and culture; and

(iv) perceived career opportunities created by the acquisition of the target language.

That is to say, as suggested by Sunderland (2010: 3-4), we will focus, on the one hand, on teaching processes (e.g. teachers' classroom practices); and, on the other hand, on learning processes including those linked to potentially gendered learning styles and learners' attitude and motivation. In addition, the notion of "gendering" will be tackled, when noting how the choice of learning a particular foreign or second language has associations with, for example, "a more peripheral, non-hegemonic masculinity" (Sunderland, 2010: 4).

Beginning with gender tendencies in classroom interaction, we will distinguish between learner-learner interaction and teacher-learner's interaction. With respect to learner-learner interaction, the pioneering work is Gass and Varonis' (1986) study on Japanese adult learners of English performing three communication tasks. Their findings have led these authors to conclude that, in classroom interaction, "men […] produce a greater amount of comprehensible output, whereas women […] obtain a greater amount of comprehensible input" (Gass & Varonis, 1986: 349). That is, men's productive skills —i.e. speaking and writing— would be more developed, thanks to their access to more comprehensible output;

while women greater provision of comprehensible input would assist and enhance females' receptive skills —i.e. reading and listening.

Other research centred in the ESL classroom has supported Gass and Varonis' (1986) results. For example, Shehadeh (1999) agrees with them in that male learners seem to make the most of mixed-sex group activities by producing a greater amount of talk. According to Shehadeh (1999: 259), however, "same-sex dyads offered women comparatively greater opportunities to produce comprehensible output than men". In the same vein, Ross-Feldman (2007), besides confirming the fact that mixed-sex groups benefit males while more interactional opportunities are given to females in single or matched-gender contexts, calls for drawing more attention to gender's interlocutor. This is so because this author (Ross-Feldman, 2007: 76) pinpoints that both males and females appear to be advantaged when working with female interlocutors in producing more language-related episodes, insofar as "learners' opportunities to focus on form and learn from those interactions are greater when they work with a female interlocutor".

As far as studies on EFL contexts are concerned, Alcón (1994) finds that EFL Spanish boys contribute to classroom interaction by (i) producing more solicits than their female counterparts and by (ii) interrupting both girls and other boys, more than girls interrupt each other when engaged in

pairwork tasks. In the same vein, Kasanga's (1996) study on EFL undergraduates at the University of Lubumbashi in Zaïre states that it is gender, over task-type and level of proficiency, what mostly affects interactional performance between non-native students, with males outperforming females in patterns of participations such as repair moves. The author (1996: 183) explains these findings in terms of Zaïrean cultural norms predisposing female learners to perform a more passive role than their male counterparts.

Regarding teacher-learner interaction, early studies report that female language students are reluctant to participate in whole class oral work. The main reason given to explain girls' silence has to do with differential-teacher-treatment of male and female language learners (see Spender's 1982 seminal work). Such differential treatment has been documented both in second language and foreign language classrooms. Batters (1987), for example, finds English female students in foreign language classes investing more time than males in "attentive" activities (e.g. observing, listening to the teacher, their peers, the tape, or reading), while boys *do* enjoy dominating oral work. Julé's (2002, 2010) results of her one-year observation in an ESL classroom made up of Canadian boys and girls of Punjabi Sikh origin document the existence of a linguistic space dominated, mostly, by the teacher; and, secondarily, by the boys.

If we accept that language learning happens through talk, then, these silent girls would be deprived of their learning opportunities to command the target language by their teachers —in this case a Mrs Smith— being more attentive and responsive to boys' contributions. Given that Julé (2010: 177) does not interpret female students' silence in terms of their different ethnic origin, Mrs Smith's tendency to ignore, correct or dismiss these girls' classroom contributions explains how such "view of femaleness (as quiet, reserved and responsible) crosses ethnic lines".

The quiet girl image, however, has been challenged by Sunderland (1998) in a foreign language learning context by showing how, in a group of English adolescents learning German, it is the average girl the one that significantly produces more academic and non-academic solicits (i.e. utterances that require teachers' verbal responses) and volunteers more and longer answers in German. As the teacher appears to ask girls the most challenging questions —in the sense of demanding longer answers performed in the target language—, it may be put forward that female students create, on the one hand, more language-learning opportunities for themselves in terms of comprehensible output; and, on the other hand, they might also provide their male peers with more comprehensible input (Sunderland, 1998: 73-74). In that regard, this author suggests that if girls really do better at languages, it is not due to an innate verbal superiority

(that we also questioned in subsection 3.2.1), but thanks to the way they behave and work in the foreign language class.

According to both Alcón's (1994) and Sunderland's (2000) contributions on gender and language classroom discourse, boys dominating classroom discourse does not need to be disadvantageous for girls. Rather than presenting female students as victims of male dominance in the language classroom, Sunderland (2000: 161-163) notes the convenience of distinguishing between amount of teachers' attention and the nature of such attention. Hence, in line with other studies like Kelly's (1988), she puts forward the fact that (i) most of the teacher's attention that boy received adopts the form of criticism; and, (ii) being told off might hinder instead of promoting learning.

Furthermore, it appears that girls in the primary classroom take power in the classroom by assuming the role of "mother/teacher/nurturer" (Jones, 1993: 161) when acting as the teacher's helper in the classroom organization, instruction and control. In fact, teachers —as we saw above, when reporting Sunderland's 1998 study on a group of German as a foreign language teenagers— may construct girls' identities as *the* academic students par excellence, who are expected to answer the most challenging questions, and, most importantly, to do so in the target language.

Additionally, another study by the same author (Sunderland, 1995) highlights the fact that girls are resourceful enough to cross gender boundaries in the classroom. This happened, for instance, when it was girls the ones who raised up their hands and exclaimed "we're boys, miss!", in order to mean that they were willing to volunteer to read out their writing assignments, after two male peers had refused to do so. This meaningful anecdote, reported Sunderland (2000: 168), has led this author to conclude that gender identities in the classroom might be asymmetrical in favour of males but "boys' boundaries of masculinity appear more rigid [because] it is […] not OK for them to 'become' girls, even temporarily, strategically and jokily". In any case, it seems that it is language what shapes or constructs gendered identities of learners.

However, what the "we're boys, miss!" anecdote also reveals is the existence of a higher motivation among girls to study foreign languages. This stronger motivation has been documented in contexts so different as high-school and university students learning Spanish as a foreign language in the United States of America (Muchnick & Wolfe, 1982: 276; or, Bacon & Finnemann, 1992: 486), EFL Spanish secondary students (Jiménez Catalán, 2001: 395), non-immersion Canadian girls learning French (Baker & MacIntyre, 2000: 328), or high-school students learning French as a foreign language in the United Kingdom (Davies, 2004: 53).

Among the reasons put forward to explain female students' higher motivation and better grades as far as foreign language learning is concerned, we find (i) girls and women's propensity for strategic use when learning a foreign language (Bacon & Finnemann, 1992: 488-489; Jiménez Catalán, 2001: 395); (ii) the higher social-orientation of female students in terms of travel, knowledge and personal-achievement goals, as well as their stronger desire to meet and communicate with native speakers of the target language (Powell & Batters, 1985: 18; Baker & MacIntyre, 2000: 334); and, (iii) stronger peer, teacher, guidance counsellor, and parental support, especially on the part of middle-class families, who favour girls studying languages and boys pursuing science subjects (Kissau, 2007: 421; Jones, 2009: 87).

Despite some authors suggesting the need to emphasize modern foreign language learning as a source of personal enrichment beyond the current focus on its practical use (Davies, 2004: 57), along with the need to educate people on the intrinsic advantages of being bilingual (Kissau, 2007: 428); British secondary male students' underachievement has triggered a debate in favour of teaching modern foreign languages to single-sex classes, which is beyond the scope of our study (for an introduction to this ongoing issue, see Barton, 2002; and, Chambers, 2005).

What really matters to our study is to understand why female students perform better than their male counterparts in the foreign language classroom. As suggested by Erlich (1997), in this sub-section devoted to gender and the ESL/EFL classroom, we have pointed to gendered differences favouring girls and women in: firstly, the access to some pragmatic features of the target language (e.g. presence of requestive behaviour in textbooks and literary reading materials); secondly, girls and women's tendency to develop more supporting interactional styles with both teachers and peers, which provides all students with more comprehensible input and output; thirdly, a stronger motivation and a more positive attitude towards the target language and culture on the part of female students; fourthly, and finally, the perception of studying foreign languages as not only a "traditionally" female subject (MacIntyre *et al.*'s 2003: 143), but also a feminine domain unsuitable for developing hegemonic versions of masculinity (Sunderland, 2010: 4).

In that respect, it seems that pupils' perception of the so called "femininity" of modern foreign languages in the curriculum does not result, according to Powell & Batters (1985: 17; 1986: 253), either from the idea that girls are more likely to succeed at learning languages, or from the numerical dominance of women as foreign language teachers. Hence, we feel prone to support Graham's (1997: 99) contention (as reported by

Maubach & Morgan, 2001: 42) in that “the higher incidence of successful linguists among girls must therefore be attributed to such factors as socialization, attitudes and stereotyping”. In the same vein, boys’ reluctance to study modern foreign languages has also to do, at least in the British context, with stereotypical perceptions according to which French as a foreign language is only for girls who want to become French teachers (Kissau, 2007: 429).

In Kissau’s view (2007: 430, 421), “there appears to be a very narrow definition of what means to be masculine” to the extent that, for instance, while language study is regarded as feminine; athleticism would be an activity thanks to which boys, who are not willing to cross gender boundaries, especially during adolescence, would be respected and admired by their peers. No wonder then that, as reported by Pavlenko in her 2001 study of language learning memoirs, even this genre demonstrates how men and women see their second language learning experiences from very different perspectives.

As she puts it (Pavlenko, 2001: 231), “male memoirs privilege individual achievements, while female memoirs accord high importance to personal relationships, commitments, and interactions”. In other words, these female autobiographies of language learners in naturalistic settings highlight women’s stronger integrative motivation. In turn, this higher

motivation results in more noticing of all the different facets of communicative competence, possibly also including the development of pragmatic awareness, since, as one of these female narrators pinpoints, "my motivation to become more proficient in Japanese, made me very attentive to the ways people acted, moved, spoke…" (Pavlenko, 2001: 229).

3.3.2 Gender and communicative competence

As mentioned in the previous sub-section, when enumerating the three areas in which gender is relevant in the ESL/EFL classroom, Sunderland (1992, 1994), pointed to the role of learning styles and strategies, along with teacher-learner and learner-learner interaction, in order to understand processes of acquisition. In that respect, it can be ascertained that a great deal of the gender-based research in second/foreign language acquisition has mainly dealt with mostly one out of the six components present in Celce-Murcia's (2007) communicative competence construct. We refer to strategic competence, with a clear emphasis on vocabulary learning and on processing oral and written input (i.e. listening and reading comprehension).

Since research conducted by Oxford and her associates (e.g. Oxford & Nyikos, 1988, 1989; Ehrman & Oxford, 1989; Nyikos, 1990; Oxford, 1992, 1993; Oxford *et al.*, 1993; Young & Oxford, 1997; Lan & Oxford, 2003) established that gender *does* have a significant impact on students'

strategies aimed at learning a language, a number of studies have explored the effect of this variable on second or foreign language learning strategies, but without achieving conclusive results. Most authors have noted that females use more learning strategies, contributing to the development of communicative competence, both in terms of number and type. Peacock and Ho (2003), for example, focus on English for Academic Purposes students in City University of Hong Kong across eight disciplines and they report a higher use of all kinds of learning strategies (memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective, and social), with an emphasis on the memory and metacognitive categories as far as females are concerned.

The advantage of EFL female students over male ones is also suggested, with respect to EFL vocabulary learning, in two very different EFL contexts, by studies such as Gu's (2002) on Chinese EFL learners and/or Jiménez Catalán's (2003) on Spanish-speaking students learning Basque and English. According to Gu (2002), female participants not only outperform their male counterparts in both a vocabulary size test and a general proficiency test, but they also declare a higher use of almost all vocabulary learning strategies that appear to correlate with successful EFL learning. Similarly, female students in Jiménez Catalán's survey (2003) show a preference for formal rule, input elicitation, rehearsal and planning

strategies; while males mostly opt for image vocabulary learning strategies.

The superiority of female students in the use of all strategy categories is also confirmed in the case Korean junior high school students by Ok (2003), or regarding college EFL learners in Taiwan by Chang *et al.*, 2007. Nevertheless, other researchers also focusing on EFL students in non-Western countries have concluded, on the one hand, the superiority of Vietnamese and Turkish EFL male language students (Tran, 1988; Tercanlioglu, 2004); and, on the other hand, a non-significant difference regarding the role of gender, as it is illustrated by (i) Kaylani (1996), who does not find differences between successful female and male learners in Jordanian high schools, (ii) Phakiti (2003), according to whom, if we take into account learners' proficiency level, no gender differences in reading performance and use of cognitive and metacognitive strategies are detected; and, (iii) by Aliakbari and Hayatzadeh's (2008) analysis of Iranian English students' performance, who also deny statistically-significant disparities between men and women, even when the former have reported higher frequency of strategic use.

Additionally, two caveats have been pinpointed by authors analysing language learning strategy use among Eastern secondary or tertiary students. Firstly, the need to ascertain the extent to which cultural

variables may affect subjects' respondents regarding their perception of strategic competence. In that respect, Riazi's (2007: 437) study on female Arab English majors holds that affective strategies are not usual among participants at a university in Qatar, because "Arab students may not be as self-expressive of their feelings and emotions as students of other cultural groups". Secondly, Yabukoshi and Takeuchi's (2009) findings are in accordance to females' superior use of reported learning strategies, but, remarkably, no positive relationship is found between strategy use and English proficiency in the case of EFL Japanese secondary learners.

Be that as it may, whenever it is female students the ones who are reported as showing higher strategic learning competence, what both Western and Eastern pieces of research shares is the factors which explain this advantage. Drawing on psychological and socialization research we have already reported in sub-sections 3.2.2 and 3.2.3, along with findings on the conversational behaviour of learners in the ESL/EFL classroom also referred to in the previous sub-section (i.e. 3.3.1), Oxford and her colleagues tend to highlight the fact that women present a higher use of general, social and affective/emotional learning strategies because they are more empathic, more polite-oriented and display more cooperative speech styles in the classroom. These psychological features, besides, are

supposed to be due to female students' stronger motivation and greater conformity to academic and linguistic norms.

In fact, Oxford (1993) has noted that, as field dependent subjects, women tend to be more sensitive to the social context. In order to support this idea, she (Oxford, 1993: 71) cites Galloway and Labarca's 1991 work, according to which, females might be superior "in less analytic aspects of overall L2 communicative competence, such as sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence", due to their higher interpersonal and global orientation,.

Additionally, in the same article, Oxford (1993: 73) also holds that women have an affective style which favours greater concern for their interlocutors' feelings and values (that is, other people's faces), as well as more reflective and analytic learners' features, both of which result in a higher grammatical accuracy, on the one hand; and, a higher tendency "to carefully analyse sociolinguistic factors in order to produce the appropriate response", on the other hand. In sum, then, higher strategic competence deployed by women might be explained by their higher pragmatic competence, although, as we will see at the end of this sub-section, the latter has not deserved so many studies as the ones conducted to explore the former.

Moreover, the likely interplay existing between gendered strategic use and affective factors such as degree of motivation (also pinpointed by Oxford, 1993; and by Jiménez Catalán, 2003: 66) has led authors like López Rúa (2006) to advocate for an integrative approach to the effect of gender in foreign language learning. According to López Rúa's (2006: 112) network of interactive variables resulting in foreign language learning success, females benefit for being equipped with a combination of neurological, cognitive, affective, social and educational factors consisting of, among others, "a social role of modelling behaviour and supporting communication, the assumption of tasks requiring verbal interaction (teaching, child-caring), etc". In other words, the analysis of the causes which might explain female language learners' higher strategic competence seems to point to the need to test whether women's higher pragmatic competence, also based on psychological traits such as the quality of being more polite, is also an actual fact.

Before finishing with the revision of the literature on strategic competence, we would like to add that, while most of the studies reported so far have focused on learning strategies, only some scholars have recently begun to present results concerning English learners' resort to communication strategies. In that respect, authors such as Ting and Kho (2009) have found evidence that, in cross-gender dyad interactions, approximation as a

communication strategy is dispreferred by both male and female learners. In fact, while female ESL learners favour topic fronting, their male counterparts opt for lexical repetition. More interesting, however, is Ting and Kho's conclusion (2009: 104) in that, in tune with Ross-Feldman's (2007) classroom observation in mixed-sex groups' communication (see subsection 3.3.1), it is the addressee's gender, rather than non-audience factors such as topic of conversation, the key factor to which speakers *do* accommodate.

As well as strategic competence in its two facets of learning and communication strategies, linguistic competence has also deserved a great deal of scholars' attention. A recent update of several empirical studies on gender differences in terms of achievement, listening and reading comprehension, text topic familiarity and research on vocabulary learning, size, acquisition and use and number of errors has been conducted by Agustín Llach (2009: 19-25). This author's literature review points to inconclusive findings and, generally speaking, to the non-significant or smallness differences between female and male learners regarding linguistic competence. Furthermore, her study on lexical errors by primary students appears to confirm the existence of non-significant sex differences with respect to lexical errors, along with the fact that female

learners show a faster rate of foreign language acquisition (see Agustín Llach, 2009: 81-87).

In the same vein, a book on the effects of gender on vocabulary regarding acquisition and use, on the one hand, and representation and identities conveyed by gendered words, on the other (see Jiménez Catalán, 2010), notes a variation in the findings which puts the emphasis on the need to reconsider gender as a potentially relevant variable, and those studies that report no differences between male and female students as "non-regrettable" pieces of research. If despite of the studies collected in these two recent publications, Sunderland (2010: 16) still deplores the fact that "vocabulary research and research into gender and language rarely meet", what can be said of the lack of treatment of pragmatic competence with respect to gender in the ESL/EFL classroom?

On the one hand, it should be highlighted that, as we mentioned earlier, the studies on gendered strategic competence has not led to the analysis of pragmatic competence, although the latter has been regarded among the explanations of the former. On the other hand, the research focused on linguistic competence has only approached pragmatic issues in passing. This is the case of a study conducted by Padilla de Zerdán (2002) on the impact of the variable sex on the development of written argumentative competence. In this piece of research, whose population is made up of

four groups of students aged 10 and 11 years old, the author claims that girls have more access to the pragmatic level of texts. This is so because, as far as text comprehension is concerned, they discover the intentions; whereas in terms of production, they better convey their goals according to the reader and the text type (Padilla de Zerdán, 2002: 77).

To the best of our knowledge, however, few pieces of research (e.g. Martí's 2007 pilot study) have been carried out on the impact of gender on the awareness and production of speech acts within the subfield of interlanguage pragmatics, and, more specifically in the case of request modifiers by second or foreign language learners. In fact, the existing studies on gender and speech acts have been mainly conducted from an L1 pragmatic competence perspective and/or from a cross-cultural view, as we will see in the next section.

3.4 Gender and pragmatic competence

Language and gender studies first arose as a systematic subfield of inquiry within sociolinguistics in the early 1970s. In fact, as noted by Cameron (1994: 382), the study of language and gender "is more often placed under the heading of sociolinguistics than applied linguistics". Be that as it may, two general trends have been identified concerning the analysis of language and gender.

On the one hand, there is what Sunderland (2006) calls "pre-feminist" literature dealing with variationist sociolinguistics (e.g. questions concerning language loyalty, language shift and language death), within which biological sex has had the status of an independent variable. This first trend has been developed by authors such as Labov (1966, 1972a, 1972b) and Trudgill (1972); or, more recently, by Milroy (1980) and Cheshire (1982).

On the other hand, there is a feminist focus on (i) sexist language and (ii) gender differences in language use, which is the interactionalist sociolinguistic framework that has mostly marked the research agenda concerning the relationship between gender and linguistic behaviour. In the next sub-sections, we will deal with the last line of research, namely, the one concerning the effect of gender on men and women's interaction style, with a special focus on polite and speech-act realization issues, more specifically, focusing on those studies which have analysed requestive behaviour.

3.4.1 Gender and feminist linguistics

Within feminist linguistics' research on conversationalist competence, also called interactionalist sociolinguistics, the main traits of women and men's speech styles have been approached from three different views: what Cameron in *The feminist critique of language: A reader* (1998a) summarizes as

"dominance", "difference" and "performance". The *deficit/dominance* tradition was born in 1975 with Lakoff's seminal work *Language and woman's place*. In this monograph, she considered questions related to sexism in language −a line of research further pursued by Spender in her *Man made language* (1980). However, Lakoff's (1975) book is best known for having established a set of features regarding the way women talk. As reported by Julé (2008: 21-22), who adopted and adapted these features from Lakoff, females:

- use backchannel support when listening or use positive minimal responses: nodding, saying 'yeah' and 'mm hmmm';
- hedge: use phrases, such as 'sort of', 'kind of', 'it seems like';
- use (super)polite forms: 'Would you mind…', 'I'd appreciate it if…', '…if you don't mind';
- use tag questions: 'You're going to dinner, aren't you?';
- use unhelpful adjectives: such as 'lovely', 'adorable', 'nice'n and so on;
- use hypercorrect grammar and pronunciation;
- use direct quotation when quoting speech: 'She said, "You can't go."';
- have a special lexicon: use more words for things such as colours (like mauve or fuchsia);
- speak less frequently than men in public settings;
- apologize more often than men: 'I'm sorry, but I think that…';
- use modal constructions: 'can', 'would', 'should', 'ought' –as in 'Should we turn up the heat?';
- avoid coarse language or expletives;
- use indirect commands and requests: for example, 'My, isn't it cold in here?' −as a request to turn the heat on or close a window;

- use more intensifiers than men, especially ‘so’ and ‘very’: for example, ‘I am so glad you came!’;
- interrupt less often than men.

Despite her long-lasting influence, Lakoff’s 1975 pioneer work has been widely critiqued. Firstly, due to the fact that her research methodology (Lakoff, 1975: 94) was based on introspection: “I have examined my own speech, and that of my acquaintances, and have used my own intuitions in analyzing it”. Secondly, because this author attributed a unilateral and intrinsic function to the linguistic formulae analysed (e.g. “well” or “you know”) as conveying women’s insecurity when interacting (1975: 53). In so doing, she did not take into account the context of use and the participants’ interpretations −see, for example, Dubois and Crouch (1975) denying females’ higher use of tag questions, or Talbot (1992) for a reassessment of speech overlapping, not in terms of male hostile discourse but female engagement on interaction.

Last but not least, Lakoff (1975) claimed that female behaviour proved that women were subordinated to men. Such an assumption was early questioned, for instance, by O’Barr and Atkins’ (1980) study on courtroom discourse, according to which there is no direct association between masculinity, power or dominance and femininity and powerlessness. This is so because those linguistic traits identified as signals of powerlessness could be traced only in the interventions of some women present in O’Barr

and Atkins' sample and, therefore, were not caused by their gender condition but by the inferior professional status of this particular group of females in the legal setting.

Paradoxically, the flaws detected in Lakoff's (1975) contribution, far from discouraging further research on the female linguistic behaviour she identified seems to have become the standpoint for numerous studies analyzing such speech features −see as a way of illustration Rayson *et al.*'s (1997) analysis of words most characteristic of male and female speech in the British National Corpus, or Beeching (2002) study on gender, politeness, and the French pragmatic particles *c'est-à-dire*, *enfin*, *hein*, and *quoi*.

Nevertheless, Fishman's (1980, 1983) contributions on the work that women do in interaction, for example, although reinforcing Lakoff's assumption that "verbal interaction helps to construct and maintain the hierarchical relations between men and women" (1983: 89), challenged the fact that women language had to be necessarily perceived as *deficit* communication conveying "conversational insecurity". Thus, after analyzing fifty-two hours of tape-recorded conversation between three heterosexual couples, Fishman (1983) concluded that women are the "shitworkers" of routine intimate interaction (e.g. asking more questions or saying more "you know"). The same tendency towards male

interactional dominance was reported by Edelsky's (1981) and by West and Zimmermann's (1983) quantitative studies, in that their research also showed men's higher frequency of talking, interruptions or minimal responses; along with regular topic control and realization of fewer questions.

Interestingly, in Fishman's view (1983: 98), such female efforts to "do active maintenance and continuation work in conversations" did not respond to women's inferiority in comparison with men as pinpointed by Lakoff (1975), but to their desire to gain conversational influence over their male counterparts by leading topic initiation. In giving a different interpretation to what Julé (2008: 23) qualifies as "sex-preferential speaking styles", Fishman might have advanced the emergence of a new perspective in the consideration of gendered interactive patterns, namely, the so-called (cultural) difference view.

Contrary to the *deficit/dominance* tradition or the power-based theory represented by Lakoff, Spender or Fishman, to name but a few; from the 1980s onwards, the "difference" view, also known as "the two-culture" theory, has remarked the fact that gendered styles of language do not result from deficiencies, but from cultural differences (see Case, 1988). Such cultural disparities are comparable to Gumperz' (1978) notion of "interethnic communication". In fact, drawing on Gumperz' studies and

also on Hymes' (1974) ethnographic approach to communication, the anthropologists Maltz and Borker (1982: 200) have claimed that gendered miscommunication is due to the fact that girls and boys acquire their sometimes conflicting interactive styles or "sociolinguistic subcultures" in single-sex groups while growing up, to the extent that they "learn to do different things with words in a conversation".

This framework for approaching the speech differences in the case of American women and men has influenced the approach to language and gender advocated by authors so influential as Tannen (1986, 1990a/1991, 1990b, 1990c, 1995, 1998), according to whom a number of binary oppositions could be identified when analyzing mixed-sex private conversations. Such contrasts have been summarized by Julé (2008: 24) in terms of a feminine preference for support, intimacy, understanding, feeling, proposals and compromise; *versus* a masculine option for status, independence, advice, information, orders and conflict.

As retrospectively explained by Cameron (1995: 39), "dominance […] represented a particular moment […] in feminism: […] the moment of feminist outrage, of bearing witness to oppression in all aspects of women's lives"; whereas "difference was the moment of feminist celebration, reclaiming and revaluing women's distinctive cultural traditions". Nevertheless, by dealing with contrasting possibilities of

verbal expression for men and women, the authors working within the *difference* framework share with those ascribed to the *deficit/dominance* perspective two highly debatable points. On the one hand, a tendency to generalize from a prototype of femininity based on White, middle class and (English) monolingual Western women to other groups of non-Western women's linguistic behaviour. On the other hand, a binary and essentialist notion of gender correlated to sex which, in the end, might perpetuate, in Cameron's words (1992: 40), "the salience and importance of a division we are ultimately striving to end".

According to scholars such as Uchida (1992) and Freed (1995), however, apart from the weaknesses shared with the *deficit/dominance* model, the *difference* paradigm presents the following flaws: (i) it does not explain why these two "genderlects" so closely resemble those sex stereotypes *a priori* attributed to men and women's linguistic behaviour in most Western societies (Freed, 1995: 6); (ii) how it is possible to internalize such stereotypes —theoretically resulting from same-sex socialization—, when boys and girls are not completely isolated from opposite-sex peers, parents and caretakers' interaction (Uchida, 1992: 283-284); (iii) it has ignored the extent to which gender as a variable is intertwined with other social variables like ethnic origin, class, age, or sexual orientation (Uchida, 1992: 284-285); (iv) it has not taken into account, as mentioned earlier, how

men's and women's interactional patterns differ from culture to culture; and, moreover, how they vary from setting to setting within the same speech community (Freed, 1995: 8) since, as noted by Uchida (1992: 285), the *difference* approach derives from conversations between male and female viewed as friends and equals, but could not be used "in contexts where status is involved" such as the classroom, the workplace, the market, the hospital and even among unequal relatives (e.g. parents and children); what leads to the (vi) and final consideration, namely, that, in Uchida's words (1992: 281), "it is not only wrong on the part of the difference/cultural approach to underestimate the effects of power structure and dominance; it is harmful".

No wonder, then, that in the 1990s, outspoken criticism by Cameron (1992), Bing and Bergvall (1996), or Bergvall (1999), in line with that raised by Uchida (1992) and Freed (1995) seen above, opened the path to a different phase of language and gender studies labelled as "third wave", "postmodern", "postructuralist", "performance", "community of practice", or "social constructionist" perspective. Within this third paradigm, individuals are not seen any more as belonging to an a priori sex/gender category —whether male or female—, but as constructing, doing or performing their gender through their (linguistic) behaviour and in relation to other factors like age, social class or ethnic origin.

The emphasis put on diverse gendered identities deriving from the fact that each person is a "constellation of subject positions bestowed by different discourses" (Talbot, 1998: 156), that is, the focus on a given linguistic performance, assessed from a local and highly contextualized environment, has called for the abandonment of quantitative in favour of qualitative investigative methods such as discourse analysis and ethnography.

This discursive or performative turn, put forward by Butler (1988, 1990) drawing on Simone de Beauvoir's (1949) *Le deuxième sex*, and Searle's (1969) speech act theory; has led authors such as Bergvall *et al.* (1996) or Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2003) to note that the gender difference view might have overlooked the existing similarities in male and female speech. Furthermore, from this perspective, gender does not necessarily have to be a salient or stable variable in the analysis of specific linguistic practices which should be identified within a given Community of Practice (henceforth CofP) defined by Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1992: 490), according to Wenger's (1991) notion, as "an aggregate of people who come together around mutual engagement in some common endeavour".

Besides, the fact that individuals may belong to a number of CofPs in which they can partake following different norms and taking more or less dominant positions, makes it difficult to sustain dichotomous statements

in terms of women's *versus* men's language. As Goddard and Patterson (2000: 102) have noted, "rather than repeating the endless mantra 'women do this, men do that', we should be asking 'how does this group of men/women in this context enact their gender?'." Apart from this more enriching plural perspective as far as subjects are concerned, however, social constructionist theory has also widened the variety of settings or "epistemological sites" –in Sunderland's terminology (2006: 69-70)– in which language and gender research is conducted. In accordance with the twenty-first century social changes in favour of the equality of women, recent studies like Baxter (2006) have substantiated the extension of the analysis not only to the scope of CofPs, but also to the public sphere.

However, the danger of questioning generalizations that justify the existence of two well-defined genderlects in terms of female cooperative-oriented style *versus* male competitive-oriented one, may have gone so far as stating that no gender preferences regarding the shaping of utterances can be distinguished. In that respect, a debate within social constructionism has arisen between what Cameron (2005) calls "realism" *versus* "relativism". Basically, the relativist side within third-wave feminism is taken by those scholars conducting conversational analysis (henceforth CA) research, according to whom, gender is only relevant whenever it is explicitly regarded as such by participants interacting in a

locally analysed communicative event. Conversely, realists —among whom Cameron (2009: 18) counts herself— advocate for maintaining the variable gender as rooted in the remaining inequality between men and women, and as a "real" social fact which can achieve global relevance.

Apart from the political content (see Jackson's 2001 article claiming for the necessity to apply a materialist feminist approach *versus* the post-modern cultural turn), this debate has also had methodological implications. This is so because from a purely relativist social constructionist stance, quantitative methods would not find a place when studying the relationship between language and gender. In that respect, a number of scholars have warned about the danger of seeing the dissolution of the language and gender field in case a radically relativist socio-cultural constructionism were applied. In fact, there are authors, such as Hultgren (2008: 29), who not only take binary sex as a legitimate point of departure, but also rely "on quantification to identify general patterns of variation". In the same vein, other scholars like Holmes and Meyerhoff (2003: 10) have pinpointed that gender might end up as "an idiosyncratic quality that […] would be non-existent as a category across individuals".

Therefore, while the problem for feminist linguistics when developed within the frameworks of *deficit/dominance* and *cultural difference* has been how theorizing the relationship between language and gender in ways

that could avoid regarding language as a mere product of previously existing rigid stereotypical gendered natures; the relativist cultural trend within third wave feminism also has had to tackle how it would be possible to maintain the performativity of gender as a category, without destroying the potential difference existing between women and men's linguistic behaviour.

In her contribution to Johnson and Meinhof's (1997) book on language and masculinity, Cameron appears to have found a happy medium aimed at reconciling the rigid reification of gender pervading the *difference* view with the demands of performativity advocated by *social constructivism*. Cameron (1997) does so when she ascertains the polysemic, rather than the arbitrary, nature of different gender styles, by arguing that cooperativeness is not an exclusive trait of female talk but it is also present in male conversations. As we will see in sub-section 3.4.2 on gender and politeness, both cooperative and polite strategies can be regarded as enacting power or solidarity depending on the context.

Concerning the methodological facet of the debate between realists and relativists, Swann and Maybin (2008: 25-26, their emphasis) have also suggested a way of reconciling the two theoretical stands when they write:

> The focus on the local, contextualised playing out of gender plays down, and sometimes explicitly rejects, earlier assumptions about gender as a prior category —something that speakers *have*, rather than what they *do*. However, gender is clearly not done afresh in each

> interaction. Speakers necessarily bring with them a 'gendered potential' —the sedimentation of accrued prior experience, of prior genderings— and this may be drawn on (performed, renegociated, contested, subverted or of course ignored) in response to particular interactional contingencies. In this sense, gender may legitimately seen as both a prior category (something that one has) *and* as a contextualised practice (something one does, that bolsters, subverts, etc. the category).

Finally, as an alternative to the relativist cultural turn, Cameron (2005: 326) puts forward the possibility of developing a "pragmatic turn". This would consist in introducing an inference-based account of meaning (Cameron, 2005: 332) which allowed going beyond conversational data and could bring "'global' assumptions to bear on local instances". Cameron (2005: 327-328) illustrates her proposal by summarizing the content of one of her articles published in 1998. In that article (Cameron, 1998b), one of the author's friends' mother, called Vera, interprets the utterance "Is there any ketchup?" differently when it is uttered either by her husband or by her daughter.

The husband's "Is there any ketchup, Vera?" is regarded as an indirect request, whereas the daughter's identical one is seen, by being decoded literally, as a request for information. In that sense, Cameron (2005: 328) remarks how societal and family beliefs about gender, such as the rights and obligations of a woman in her role of wife *versus* in her role as a mother, come into play when any speech act is realized. Before focusing on gender and speech-acts, and more specifically with requests of the type

of “Is there any ketchup, Vera?”, however, we will clarify the relationship between gender and politeness in the next subsection.

3.4.2 Gender and politeness

Gender is not found among the three social variables (i.e. power, social distance and ranking of imposition) considered by Brown and Levinson (1987 [1978]) when calculating the amount of facework involved in the maintenance of polite interaction. Furthermore, according to these authors (1987: 30), “gender is just one of the relevant parameters in any situation, and is indeed potentially irrelevant in a particular situation”. However, much scholarship working on gender issues from Lakoff (1975) to Holmes (1995) has established a link between gender and politeness by ascertaining that women are more polite than men.

Such connection between gender and politeness has been direct when authors working within the *dominance* framework have held that inasmuch as women are less powerful than men, they are also more polite. One of the most influential studies on gender and politeness, Brown’s (1980) analysis on how and why Mayan women are more polite than men appears to endorse this view. In fact, Tzeltal women not only use negative politeness strategies when addressing men in public, while displaying positive politeness behaviour with other women in private; but the data also suggest that these females are more sensitive to both positive and

negative face demands regardless of their addressees' gender, because they "have a higher assessment than men of what counts as imposition" (Brown, 1980: 117). This author's study, based on a community where the social asymmetry between men and women is clearly marked, is the first of a number of empirical works which have presented women, in comparison with men, as showing a greater concern with the saving of their co-participants' positive and negative faces, especially the former.

The same conclusion is presented by Holmes' (1995) research on Pakeha (i.e. White middle class) NewZealanders English, but from a different theoretical position. Instead of explaining the effects of gender on polite behaviour only in terms of unequal social position or power, Holmes subscribes Tannen's (1990a/1991) *difference* framework, according to which men and women have opposite interactional styles which come into conflict especially in private informal contexts.

From this perspective, based on the existence of two genderlects originated in different psychological traits and socialisation experiences, politeness is defined as considering other people's feelings in interaction. More specifically, Holmes, drawing on Brown and Levinson's (1987 [1978]) politeness model, notes that she (1995: 5) uses politeness to refer to "behaviour which actively expresses positive concerns for others, as well as non-imposing distancing behaviour". In other words, politeness

consists in addressing both the hearer's positive (i.e. solidarity) and negative face (i.e. respect) demands.

Given the fact that, as seen in Chapter 1, politeness may result from the establishment of conflict-avoidance behaviour, by ascertaining that men's language is more informative and status oriented, whereas women's language is concerned with nurturing personal relationships; Holmes (1995: 2-6) goes beyond the existence of a differential use of universal politeness strategies. For her, (1995: 194) the fact that women's verbal behaviour is other-oriented means that, far from being powerless or despite being so, women are influential enough to determine "the overt and publicly recognised norms of polite verbal interaction in the community".

That is to say, the very same concept of politeness would be gendered in the sense that politeness norms seem to be in female hands. Furthermore, in her view (1995: 228-229), polite language is cognitively beneficial language since it will endow women with the following superior interactional skills (Holmes, 1995: 222):

- they are responsive, active listeners, giving support and encouragement to their conversational partners;
- they agree and conform points made by their partners, elaborating and developing their partner's points from their own experience;
- they disagree in a non-confrontational manner, using modified rather than direct disagreeing assertions;

- they ask facilitative questions which encourage others to contribute to the discussion;
- they use pragmatic particles which make others feel included;
- they compliment others and express appreciation frequently;
- they readily apologise for offences, including interruptions and talking too much;
- they attenuate or mitigate the force of potentially face-threatening acts such as directives, refusals, and criticism.

Representatives of third-wave feminist linguistics like Mills (2003: 175, 199) have shown their agreement with Holmes' (1995) perception that interactional power can be achieved not only through the use of linguistic directness stereotypically linked to "masculine/competitive/report talk attributes", but also by means of the resource to more feminine "co-operative strategies of rapport talk" in terms of Tannen's (1990a/1991) genderlects. Nonetheless, Mills' conception of politeness and the relationship between gender and politeness challenges Holmes' theoretical foundations in that Mills (2003) does not understand politeness as concern or respect for others in accordance with Brown and Levinson's (1987 [1978]) face-oriented model. For her (Mills, 2003: 73-74), "politeness is in fact a question of judgement of utterances in relation to a hypothesised appropriateness".

This definition has theoretical consequences regarding the object of the study and the method adopted to approach it. As far as the former is concerned, Mills (2003: 2) notes that gender does not consist of "a range of

stable, predictable attributes". What first and second wave feminist linguists have analysed as female *versus* male linguistic behaviour might be regarded as the product of the effect on real people of gendered stereotypes. Such stereotypes, in Eckert and McConnell-Ginet's view (2003: 86-87), deserve to be studied since (i) they are used to assess polite and/or impolite practices; and, (ii) they can be conformed to or resist against by different groups of men and women.

For Mills (2004: 178), these gendered stereotypes are socially, ethnically and locally rooted. From the perspective of class, in Western countries, both Black people and White working class men are supposed to be "direct, assertive, impolite"; whereas White middle class women appear as "polite, deferent, 'nice' to others" (Mills, 2004: 178). When setting and context are taken into account, different private and public domains also prove to be gendered (Mills, 2003: 194), depending on whether masculine or feminine speech norms "have been prevalent over a period of time". As a result, politeness is not female, as Holmes (1995) sustains, but feminine because it is not gender as a variable what determines the way politeness is used, but politeness identified with stereotypically feminine forms of deference and niceness what defines the appropriate stance from which an individual enacts his/her status, class and gender in a given community of practice.

This "more community-based discourse-level model of both gender and linguistic politeness" (Mills, 2003: 1) does not only question the existence of a direct link between gender and politeness, but it also has methodological implications. Apart from claiming for the abandonment of linguistic analysis at clause and speech-act levels, as Mills herself (2003: 79) acknowledges, the fact that it is only participants within a given CofP the ones that can judge politeness makes problematic the role of analysts when trying to classify positive or negative politeness or when attempting to identify FTAs.

In Holmes and Schnurr's (2005: 122) terms, denying linguists the feasibility to analyse others' linguistic behaviour in terms of politeness or impoliteness is "like shooting oneself in the foot". In that respect, these authors have joined the social constructionist framework in its application of the CofP qualitative approach to the analysis of politeness and gender in domains such as the workplace. In so doing, however, they have pinpointed the need to maintain a place for quantitative methods, in order to generalize or to identify patterns of linguistic behaviour, since "identifying linguistic devices used to express concepts such as politeness is surely exactly what we can and should be doing" (Holmes & Schnurr, 2005: 122).

The negotiation of stereotypically gendered norms in specific CofPs has been the focus of a number of studies on gender and politeness in the workplace which show how fruitful some of the social constructionist premises might be, when dealing with the complex relationship existing between gender and politeness. Holmes and Schnurr's (2005: 134) study on the role of humour in the workplace takes as a point of departure Fletcher's (1998) notion of relational practice, according to which politeness would be "women's work".

The fact that the norms of behaviour in most workplaces have been usually equated with masculine norms does not mean that female managers are constrained to adopt an authoritative and combative male speech style. By analysing the use of humour by two female managers in two different companies, Holmes and Schnurr (2005: 136) have demonstrated that humour "might create solidarity or facilitate abuse depending on the CofP". Both female managers in this piece of research, despite constructing the opposite personae of the good (masculine) joker and the incompetent (feminine) one, exploit humour to construct team solidarity whether the team is headed by a demanding "taskmaster" like Gin or by a gentle subrogated "mother" like Jill.

A similar interactional power is distilled by another form of stereotypically feminine polite device, namely, the use of small talk.

Mullany's (2006: 64) ethnographic study on small talk, as produced by female managers in the business meetings of two UK companies, views it "as a very effective way to disguise power relations." As Mullany (2006: 70) notes, (i) the women in this CofP are capable of doing power by performing stereotypical masculine or feminine identities (e.g. the mother role), depending on the CofP they are partaking in; and (ii) these "girls on tour" use small talk simultaneously to maintain solidarity within their teams as a whole, and to create social distance between them and their male colleagues. In sum, this research would show "how, despite being a stigmatized, stereotypical form of feminized discourse, small talk should not be equated with powerlessness, affective talk or the private sphere" (Mullany, 2006: 72).

The same extension of stereotypically feminine positive polite traits to the public sphere is observed by Lakoff (2005) in a recent reflexion on what she calls "the politics of nice". In this contribution, Lakoff explains how American politicians, especially presidents, are expected to be "nice", that is, positively polite, in a way that seems to blur the distinction between the private and the public domains. Although acknowledging a shift of politeness expectations for both genders toward a unisex standard, Lakoff (2005: 184) still defines opposite concepts of niceness female and niceness male to the extent of establishing a clear differentiation between the

"putting self down", "deferential", "non-authoritative", and, therefore, "weak" female niceness *versus* the "egalitarian", "informative", "authoritative", and, consequently, "strong" male niceness.

In so doing, Lakoff (2005: 178) maintains that the social demands on men and women in terms of their expected and accepted polite behaviour are far from being uniform in that "women are expected to be polite under more circumstances, and to more kinds of people, than men" and "women's politeness is apt to be more deferential and more indirect". For her (2005: 178), politeness is much more than a set of conflict-avoidance strategies, since, among other functions, politeness is "a tool by which societies maximize and legitimize gender distinctions and define appropriate gender rules and roles". Contrary to the previous studies on gender in the workplace, thus, there seems to be no room for women to adopt new and more powerful roles when enacting politeness in the ralm of politics.

Lakoff's (2005) unchanged premises in terms of women's powerlessness, as reported above, illustrate the extent to which the relation between gender, politeness and power is still problematic within the field of feminist sociolinguistics. Research seems to fluctuate between confirming a priori assumptions of men's dominance *versus* women's subordination, on the one hand; and locally exploring how feminine strategies may

become powerful in some communities of practice, particularly those based in workplaces, on the other hand. In our opinion, Cameron's (1998b) study on gender, power, and, pragmatics, would summarize the best of the approaches discussed so far. This is so because, without denying the unequal social positioning of men and women, Cameron takes as a point of departure the current competition between both genders to achieve power and status and, therefore, she (1998b: 445) suggests the need to explore the degree of conflict and/or consensus existing in Western middle-class communities, about the roles, rights and obligations of different groups of men and women.

It is the acceptance or the resistance before the dominant or subordinate positions socially assigned to them, what makes men and women behave differently as far as politeness is concerned. Such distinct behaviour results from the fact that men and women assign different values to those universal non-gendered pragmatic values (i.e. power, social distance and ranking of imposition) considered by Brown and Levinson (1987 [1978]) when calculating the degree of face-threat inherent in a given speech act (Cameron, 1998b: 444).

3.4.3 Gender and speech acts

As shown in Cameron's (1998b) proposal on gender and pragmatics, a considerable number of studies about linguistic politeness have focused

on the analysis of different speech acts. Holmes' (1995) collection of naturally-occurring New Zealand English compliments and apologies, as examples of positive and negative politeness strategies, has proved to be a pioneering and influential piece of research. Conducted within the second-wave feminist framework of *difference*, this author concludes that men and women behave according to distinct socio-pragmatic rules, which she later referred to as "sociolinguistic universals" (see Holmes, 1998).

Regarding compliments, Holmes (1995: 143-144) notes that men perceive them either as informative evaluative pronouncements or as patronising face-threatening acts, whereas women tend to see them as solidarity tokens. It is this different gendered perception what influences (i) compliments' frequency of use, which is higher between women; (ii) linguistic realizations of this speech act, whose strength is upgraded by women and downgraded by men; (iii) topics, as when women compliment each other on appearance; while men do on possessions; (iv) addressees, including higher status women than men; and, (v) compliment responses, which tend to be evasive in the case of men.

With respect to apologies, Holmes (1995: 184-187) ascertains that they are also interpreted differently according to one's gender. Similarly to complimenting behaviour, women are more prone to maintain a positive polite conception of this speech act. This is so because by addressing their

apologies especially to female acquaintances and casual friends, New Zealand female subjects reveal an other-oriented perception of apologies as signals of concern for and solidarity with others. Men, in turn, understand apologies as self-orientated face threatening acts which should be avoided whenever possible. In accordance with this gendered notion of apologies, either as caring (in women's view), or humiliating speech acts (in men's view); females (i) apologize more frequently than males, (ii) try to attend to the offended person's claims instead of focusing in their own loss of face, (iii) are more sensitive to space and talk offences while men prioritize time offences, (iv) respond to light offenses contrary to men's higher sensitivity before serious ones; and, (v) accept more apologies than men do.

Drawing on Holmes' (1995) contribution, a number of studies conducted within the field of cross-cultural pragmatics and based on DCT data have dealt with the speech acts of complimenting and apologizing. For instance, Lorenzo-Dus (2001) focuses on a corpus of compliment responses by British and Spanish male and female university students to detect both cross-cultural and cross-gender similarities and differences. Endorsing Tannen's (1990a/1991) hypothesis on the existence of two different genderlects —one more positively oriented for women and another more negatively oriented for men—, Lorenzo-Dus (2001: 117-118) points to the

use of ironic upgrades (e.g. "Lo sé nena, soy una máquina"/"I know, babe, I'm invincible") as the preferred response to compliments by male Spanish respondents. The author explains this finding by highlighting, on the one hand, the inclination of Spanish and other Mediterranean cultures towards the enhancement of involvement strategies; and by suggesting, on the other hand, that Spanish female respondents do not equate their male counterparts in that respect, not because of a lack of self-confidence or the existence of a submissive feeling, but due to "a conscious decision to maintain […] traditional gender attitudes regarding the male dominant role in complimenting" (Lorenzo-Dus, 2001: 118).

A similar male preference for solidarity oriented upgrading is found among Lombok Indonesians when apologizing. Wouk's (2006) cross-cultural pragmatic study on the language of apologizing in the Indonesian island of Lombok reports a significant higher use of intensifiers with explanations by male participants in examples like (2006: 1477) "Gee. Many apologies, yes, I couldn't come yesterday. The thing is I had something very important to do. Again forgiveness, ok"; or, "Forgiveness, pal, for giving it to you with my left hand. The thing is, I was holding a bag", with a higher presence of more intimate terms of address. In view of these apologies, she (2006: 1477) claims that the fact that male participants seem more prone than females to use strategies oriented to reinforce

solidarity seems to contradict previous literature on gender linguistic differences which holds that women's interactional style is more cooperative than men's. Since most of the authors quoted by Wouk (2006), such as Fishman (1983), Holmes (1983, 1984a, 1986) or Coates (1988), worked with English data, it would be feasible to attribute this different behaviour to cross-cultural reasons.

With the aim of providing a basis for a comparison between the use of apology strategies in English and Jordanian Arabic, Bataineh and Bataineh (2005) began by testing the *difference* approach to gender and politeness with a population of a hundred 17/24-year old American undergraduates at Indiana University in Pennsylvania. Their processing of a corpus of data collected by means of DCTs seems to corroborate previous findings in line with Tannen's two-culture paradigm in that, contrary to men, women appear to perceive the act of apologizing more as a signal of concern for others than as a threat to one's face and status.

In fact, female respondents in Bataineh and Bataineh (2005) differ from male ones because, first of all, they apologize more overtly than men as the wider presence of the statement of remorse strategy in women's answers indicates; secondly, they show greater eagerness to cancel the harm done by resorting to more reparation and compensation strategies; thirdly, they opt for thanking the offended subject in an attempt to

facilitate the acceptance of their apology; fourthly, they never avoid the offended person, the discussion of the offense or the apology as such; and, lastly, they use slightly fewer non-apology strategies such as blaming or offending the victim and belittling or laughing the incident off.

A second study conducted by Bataineh and Bataineh in 2006 about the apology strategies produced by a hundred 19/22-year-old undergraduates majoring English at two universities in the northern region of Jordan also reports differences between male and female respondents. First of all, the statement of remorse appears more frequently among the primary apology strategies used by female students, a result interpreted by the authors (2006: 1921), in line with Holmes (1995), as corroborating the fact that "females are trained from childhood to apologize more for their mistakes not only to females but also to males".

Besides, male and female subjects differ in the (higher) intensity and order of the primary apology strategies used, with men presenting 27.4% of accounts, 14,8% of compensation, 7.8% of reparation, 5.2% of showing lack of intent to do harm, and 1.2% of promising not to repeat the offense; in comparison with women displaying 27.8% of accounts, 20.6% of promise not to repeat the offense, 18% of compensation, 13.6% of reparation, and 4% of showing lack of intent to do harm. Additionally, female subjects prefer non-apology strategies aimed at avoiding the discussion of offense,

while male respondents opt for blaming the victim. In so doing, Jordanian female students, contrary to American ones who do not dare to suppress the apology, prove more audacious than the latter in the authors' 2005 analysis, but less audacious than their male Jordanian counterparts who make the choice of attacking the offended.

Precisely, the most recent study by Bataineh and Bataineh (2008) has focused on a cross-cultural comparison of apologies produced in English and in Arabic by a sample of two hundred of 17/24-year old American and Jordanian university students (with a hundred respondents each). According to the cross-cultural analysis conducted by the authors (2008: 815-816), Jordanian participants tend to upgrade their apologies and opt for proverbs and sayings in an attempt to gain the victim's understanding and to pacify him/her. At the same time, however, Jordanian respondents use more non-apology strategies, a move which can be seen as elusive in terms of acceptance of responsibility and need to compensate the offended person for the harm done; whereas American students only show negative assessment of responsibility by blaming others for what happened.

A focus on the differences between the two genders in each group reveals that the gap between Jordanian male and female respondents is bigger than between American male and female participants, a finding that according to Bataineh and Bataineh (2008: 792) can be explained by the

greater similarity existing between how the two genders are raised in the USA in comparison with how they are raised in Jordan. The explanatory power of socialization will be explored in the next sub-section but with respect to the mitigation of directives, the speech act which is the focus of our study.

3.4.4 Gender and requests

There are two main contexts in which the topic of gender and the speech act of requesting has been explored. On the one hand, children's use of directives in playgrounds; and, on the other hand, professional women's use of mitigated/unmitigated requests in traditionally masculine workplace domains. The first line of research tries to ascertain the extent to which Tannen's (1986, 1990a/1991) *two-cultures* construct and Maltz and Borker's (1982) so-called "separate world hypothesis" are right when stating that two opposite gendered subcultures characterized by cooperation *versus* competition are acquired by girls and boys in single-sex groups during their childhood. The second line of enquiry takes as a point of departure Lakoff's (1975: 57) assertion that "the more one compounds a request, the more characteristic it is of women's speech, the less of men's" interpreted in terms of powerless *versus* powerful language. At first sight, this equation between women as powerless speakers and men as powerful ones appears to put in danger the leading position of professional women at their workplaces.

As far as children's alternative ways of speaking are concerned, the gender segregation view has been already challenged (for a review of such research, see Goodwin, 2003: 231-234). In the case of African American working-class children, one of the studies in which Maltz and Borker (1980) draw on to posit their "separate world hypothesis", it is true that boys resorted to commands, when making sling shots in their single-sex group; while girls displayed a range of mitigated requests, when addressing other girls in making rings from bottle rims.

However, this does not mean that girls cannot be competent in the use of aggravated forms of directives. In fact, according to Goodwin (1980: 170-172), girls use unmitigated imperatives when (i) responding to prior offenses of both male and female age-mates, (ii) making requests to younger siblings, (iii) role-playing as mothers or teachers at home or at school; and, (iv) ridiculing ostracized girls. Task expertise rather than gender differences seems to provide an explanation for girls' and boys' different use of directives during the game of jump-rope at a progressive elementary school attended by pupils of mixed social classes and ethnicities, as reported by the same author in 2001. In sum, as Goodwin claims (2003: 243), there is a need for more ethnographically grounded studies of children's pragmatic socialization which "look beyond middle-

class White groups and study the diverse social and ethnic groups which compose our society".

Turning to career women's interactional style, West (1990) focused on the use of very different forms of directives by women and men physicians. The author analysed the data obtained from 21 videotaped encounters between physicians and patients in a family practice clinic in the southern United States, seventeen of which involved White men physicians and four of which concerned White women doctors, all of them in their late twenties and early thirties.

Similar to Goodwin's findings (1980, 2001, 2003) reported above, the "lady doctors" employed mitigated directives to address patients (e.g. inclusive "let's" or "we", indirect requests with modal verbs like "can" and "could", and other mitigators such as "maybe"), whereas their male counterparts used aggravated forms. While the latter constructed hierarchical physician-patient relationships, the former minimized status differences between doctor and patients. Contrary to Lakoff's (1975) assertion, however, women physicians did not sound powerless in comparison with their colleagues. According to West (1990: 350), "not only were aggravated forms less likely to elicit compliant responses, but women physicians elicited such responses more often than men did".

Apart from their effectiveness, the use of mitigated requests was not the only linguistic formulae employed within these lady doctors' speech repertoire. In other words, these female professionals displayed a stereotyped feminine conversational style in getting patients to disrobe, while they showed a preference for a stereotyped masculine conversational style, spotted with aggravated directives, whenever the situation called for it, as for example before a conflict with patients.

Obviously, it might be argued that these four subjects' linguistic behaviour could have been predicted, in that clinics or hospitals are not a novelty as workplaces accessible to female workers. It is also true, though, that until recently it has been mainly women in their posts as nurses the ones who treated and still deal with patients, in one of those few jobs which were regarded as a useful and socially accepted extension of women's "natural" roles as carers.

According to Kendall (2004: 60), women's linguistic behaviour or, in Goffman's (1967) terms "demeanour", draws researchers' interest especially when they are in a position of authority into professions more traditionally held by men. In that respect, a differential use of directives is observed by Case (1988) when comparing male and female managers interaction styles over a 15-week period at a management school. Whereas the former created status distinctions by giving direct commands even

when dealing with other managers, the latter minimize social hierarchies by using indirect requests with modals "would" and "can", instead of bold imperatives.

In the case study conducted by Kendall (2004), this author analyses the encounters between a female technical director of a radio news-and-talk program called Carol and Ron, her equal-ranking colleague as the technical director of the master control room; as well as between Carol and Harold, the lower ranking substitute soundboard operator. Following the methodology of interactional sociolinguistics, Kendall notes how when interacting with Ron and Harold, Carol tries to save the faces of self and other by creating two frames of mutual problem-solving in the case of Ron and mutual expertise in the case of Harold.

Nevertheless, whereas Ron, her equal within the radio network, responds her by claiming exclusive expertise rejecting Carol's face-saving work and threatening his colleague's face; Harold, her subordinate, to whom she addresses as an equally knowledgeable technician through linguistic strategies such as mitigating requests like "Probably ((pause)) we will want to re-cue the switch" (Kendall, 2004: 72, her emphasis), ends up devaluating Carol's face-saving style too. As both her equal and her subordinate belittle her position of authority by interpreting her

interactional style as a sign of insecurity and incompetence, Carol's position as technical director of the radio show is not renewed.

Linguistic power of Japanese professional women in charge is re-examined by Takano (2005) through the strategic display of directives. Drawing on previous research on the resort to directive speech in Japan, Takano analyses nine female executives' uses of directive speech in order to ascertain the extent to which both negative and positive polite strategies are employed in an effective way without rejecting the feminine personas of Japanese women beyond the workplace.

Contrary to the case of Carol, the Western technical director of the radio show (Kendall, 2004), the nine Japanese professional women in charge's resort to both negative and positive politeness traits results in them being perceived as powerful speakers and "skilful negotiators of a complex sociolinguistic repertoire" (Takano, 2005: 637). The comparison of the recorded conversations of the nine female executives at their workplaces (a publishing company, an ophthalmic clinic, a clothing store, a foundation, a printing company, a hospital, a language school, and an assembly hall) with the speech of male presidents of successful companies on different TV programmes yields the following conclusions: women's directives are conventionally indirect acts, more frequently speaker/agent-oriented (e.g. "Then, I ask you to come and see me again in

December") or impersonal (e.g. "I think it is necessary to have students practice a lot"); and, the so-called motherese strategy is used only with same age or younger in-group members.

At this point of the research, the author (2005: 646) wonders how it is possible for these Japanese executives "to direct their subordinates efficiently without explicitly masculine power markers in their speech". The answer is provided by the analysis of what Takano denominates *supportive moves* and we have come to know as request modifiers. It is the female subjects' statistical significant higher use of these peripheral units beyond the request head acts (women: 45% and men: 19%) what differentiates the kind of directive speech displayed by female and male executives.

Having classified *grounders* and *preparators* as positive polite supportive moves and *imposition minimizers* (i.e. *cost-minimizers* in our taxonomy) and *apologetics* (i.e. *disarmers* in our typology) as negative polite supportive moves, Takano concludes that positive-polite functions of supportive moves clearly surpass negative polite roles in both gender groups. Given the fact that this author only recognizes a mitigating function for the negative polite devices, whereas the positive polite modifiers are identified with the contextualization or framing of the requestive behaviour; it is pointed out that this use of supportive moves contradicts

the prototypical negative-face of Japanese culture, with a special emphasis on women's negatively oriented polite "social personality".

In addition, the use of contextualizing supportive moves co-occurring with hints by female executives appeals to "positive-polite elements such as common needs and knowledge or in-groupness between the directive-giver and the recipient" (Takano, 2005: 649). Similarly, the gendered-different resort to what Takano classifies as *attention-getters* (i.e. internal modifiers in our taxonomy) –including *contextualizers* (e.g. "then"/"and"/"so"), *downgraders* (e.g. well/um/see/excuse me) and *intensifiers* (e.g. "now"/"OK"/"all right")– shows male professionals preference for *intensifiers* which reinforce the illocutionary force of requests. Female professionals, on the contrary, opt for using a few tokens of *intensifiers* such as "now" to make the illocutionary force of their utterances more transparent, rather than more forceful, particularly in the cases where the head act is more opaque as in the case of hints.

Finally, *terms of address* (e.g. last name, first name, title and second person pronouns), equal to the sub-type multifunctional request modifiers called *attention-getters* in our taxonomy, are also differentially employed by male and female subjects. Whereas men use mostly the pronoun "you", women display a wider range of *terms of address* which are sensitive to the recipients' identities in terms of age, gender, and position in the company,

in order "to measure social distance and rapport between the interactants as if the very context of talk were symmetrical" (Takano, 2005: 651).

In sum, as Takano (2005: 653) puts it, polite language can be regarded as a "linguistic weapon". Instead of identifying indirectness of the request head act and use of supportive moves with powerless linguistic markers, Takano shows that, on the one hand, by using negative politeness strategies, these nine Japanese female executives highlight their prestige and power when showing deference and respect before their subordinates; and, on the other hand, these PWC (i.e. powerful women in charge) display positive politeness strategies as markers of solidarity and rapport, with the aim of reducing social distance and create a working atmosphere of co-operation and empathy resulting in their subordinates' support.

As far as contrastive studies are concerned, Márquez-Reiter (2000) briefly refers to different patterns of gender behaviour in her study about Uruguayan and British requests. Both British and Uruguayan women's pragmatic behaviour does not seem to be motivated either by considerations of social distance or social status. What is more, contrary to the stereotype according to which women are more indirect than men, it is British males the ones who show a slight preference for non-conventional indirectness when compared to females.

Whereas Márquez-Reiter's (2000) analysis only touches gender difference in passing, Lorenzo-Dus and Bou-Franch's (2003) study on Spanish and British undergraduates' perception of appropriate requests focuses on the analysis of 793 requests elicited by means of DCTs. In order to do so, the authors, following Blum-Kulka *et al.*'s (1989) taxonomy, distinguish between *alerters* –i.e. (in)formal attention getters and greetings, naming strategies and terms of endearment –, *head acts* and *supportive moves*.

Concerning the use of *alerters*, the Peninsular Spanish corpus shows cross-gender similarities in the preference to use (i) no alerters at all, (ii) formal attention getters; and, (iii) terms of endearment. Generally speaking, though, women use both more *alerters* and more informal ones than men do. In fact, when analysing percentages of use, male students (36%) make more requests with no *alerters* than female students (29.66%); both genders avoid naming strategies, and women opt for T forms more frequently (20%) than men, who display more V forms; male undergraduates favour formal *attention getters* like "disculpe", "perdone" (i.e. "excuse me"); while female undergraduates resort to "por favor" (i.e. "please); and, finally, informal *attention getters* and nicknames like "hey nano" (i.e. "Hey, dude") are only present in the male corpus; with female subjects using first names, endearment terms and informal greetings. In light of this distinct use depending on what the specific situation is, Lorenzo-Dus and Bou-

Franch (2003: 7) hold that the findings reveal that "irrespective of gender, participants frequently used involvement strategies, possibly confirming that Spanish is a positively politeness-oriented culture".

In turn, the British English corpus shows a greater sensitivity on the part of female subjects before powerful hearers, with whom they use more formal *attention getters*; whereas men display a more frequent and higher range of terms of endearment (e.g. 4% of "mate", 5% of beautiful/byt, 10% of dude/chief) than women (e.g. 10% of "mate", 5% of "sweetie" and 7% of "babes"). Besides, male undergraduates do so irrespective of the existence of more or less social distance between interlocutors. That is why men's speech regarding terms of endearment is interpreted by the authors, not as power-asserting or patronising move, but as a positive polite strategy. In similar situations, however, women opt for the politeness marker "please", instead of resorting to terms of endearment.

Turning to the consideration of the requests head acts, the Peninsular Spanish corpus indicates a clear preference of women for direct strategies, even in situations when the hearer is a more powerful and social distant subject. When supportive moves accompanying the head acts are considered, female undergraduates opt for either using no supportive moves at all or to use more than one for request. The authors, however, are reluctant to equate the use of more supportive moves as an indicator of

a stronger politeness tendency. All in all, Lorenzo-Dus and Bou-Franch interpret the presence of an appreciation and/or thanking token in female requests as women fitting "the stereotype of being more prone to showing deference by going on record as incurring a debt" (2003: 11).

Women in the British corpus, on the contrary, are more indirect than Spanish female subjects as far as the request head act is concerned but, similar to their Spanish counterparts, use twice as many mitigating supportive moves than men. An opener such as "I was wondering if" is displayed both by male and female students; but, in the case of the latter, it is often accompanied by two more supportive moves.

The authors identify these British female undergraduates' super-polite requestive moves as women adjusting to the gender-marked stereotype of "niceness", rather than as a female display of powerless language. As a conclusion, Lorenzo-Dus and Bou-Franch (2003: 12) assert that, in line with other authors like Mills (2002), we should not identify masculinity with impoliteness and femininity with politeness. All in all, both gender groups in this contrastive study are polite-oriented, only that they show similarities and differences when perceptions linked to the expression of solidarity and deference come into play.

3.5 Concluding remarks

In view of all the literature review done so far, and as seen throughout Chapter 2, we are before ILP studies on request modifiers in which, on the one hand, Peninsular Spanish as the mother tongue and English as the target language have been only recently conducted (see, as a way of illustration, the volumes edited by Alcón Soler & Safont Jordà in 2007, and by Alcón Soler in 2008), and, on the one hand; whose main focus of interest, regardless of the languages involved, has been mainly put on individual variables other than gender, such as effects on pragmatic development of bilingualism (e.g. Safont Jordà, 2003b, 2005a, 2005b), proficiency level (e.g. Hill, 1997; Hassall, 2001; Achiba, 2003; Kobayashi & Rinnert, 2003; Martí, 2008a), and study abroad context (e.g. Barron, 2003; Schauer, 2004, 2007, 2009; Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2008).

When gender has been explored in relation with request modifiers (Martí, 2007), however, it has proved to be a relevant variable concerning female EFL learners' comparatively higher production of request modifying items of the type of *openers, preparators*, *grounders*, *attention-getters* and "please", *versus* a lower or zero occurrences of aggravating devices like *intensifiers*. Interpreted in terms of women showing a better command on more complex pragmalinguistic structures like *openers*, a stronger pragmatic sensitivity when dealing with high imposing situations (e.g. scant presence of *intensifiers*), and/or a female preference for other-oriented and

affective/emotional kind of communication, shown by the resort to *attention-getters* or "please"; this pilot study seemed to call for further research.

This is so because, in addition to the outcomes resulting from this previous exploration in the effects of gender as a variable affecting pragmatic acquisition, there appear to be enough signs from different fields of enquiry, such as developmental psychology, applied linguistics and L1 pragmatics along with cross-cultural pragmatic studies (e.g. Lorenzo-Dus & Bou-Franch, 2003) highlighting the potential relevance of gender as far as the acquisition of this component of communicative competence is concerned.

In fact, the clear tendency revealed by the analysis of women's personality and affective attributes pointing to their stronger commitment to politeness, empathy; and/or their higher display of emotionality or conscientiousness (e.g. Barret *et al.*, 2000; Ackerman *et al.*, 2001; Blakemore *et al.*, 2009) have been found to bear a correlation (i) with the existence of more attentive and supporting linguistic interactional styles, detected in the ESL/EFL classroom (e.g. Batters, 1987; Erlich, 1997; Ross-Feldman, 2007; Sunderland, 2010); (ii) with female students' preference for affective and social learning styles and strategies, used to improve language acquisition in both ESL and EFL contexts (e.g. Oxford, 1993); as well as (iii)

with the remarkable production of feminist linguistics regarding L1 gendered realization of speech acts (e.g. Holmes, 1995), including requestive behaviour, conducted in the case of both children (Goodwin, 1980, 2001, 2003) and adults; and embracing the private sphere (Lakoff, 1975) and the professional/public ones (e.g. West, 1990; Kendall, 2004; Takano, 2005).

If we consider that even the theoretical framework on the definition of politeness itself points to the possibility that, the very same notion of politeness might have been established by women's behaviour in their speech communities (see Holmes, 1995; and Mills, 2002, 2004), it may be regarded as evident that the link between gender and the acquisition of politeness by EFL undergraduate learners with respect to speech acts such as the one of requesting, with a particular interest on modifying particles, deserves to be further explored.

After having subscribed working definitions of gender in which the role of gendered social inequalities and differential understanding of power is taken into account (see section 3.1) and after having shown the possibility and the convenience of applying quantitative methods to the task in hand (see Hultgren, 2008), the pages that follow will present our study in the effect of gender on EFL learners' offline pragmatic knowledge and perception of request modification devices.

PART II: LEARNERS' PERCEPTION OF REQUEST MODIFIERS

Chapter 4
The study

This study deals with the effect of gender on the perception of request modifying devices by EFL Spanish learners. What follows is a report of the main outcomes of our research in which we shall start by formulating the four hypotheses conducting the study. Afterwards, we will tackle methodological issues, among which the participants' identity and traits, as well as data collection procedures and decisions taken in the analysis of the data will be described. Then, a discussion of the findings attained, will be presented. We will finish this fourth and final chapter with a subsection of concluding remarks, in which an identification of the study limits, aspects for further research and some of its pedagogical implications will be included.

4.1 Hypotheses

The present research was guided by the following four hypotheses:

1) *Female EFL participants would outperform male ones in the number and variety of request modification items produced* (Lakoff, 1975: 57; Brown, 1980: 17; Oxford, 1993: 71, 73; Holmes, 1995: 2-6, 222; Nikula, 1996: 19; Barrios Espinosa 1997-1998: 430-431; Molina Plaza, 1997-1998: 902; Cameron, 1998a: 444; Lakoff, 2005: 178; Martí, 2007; Cameron, 2008: 23; Blakemore *et al.*, 2009; Ning *et al.,* 2010: 19).

2) *Female subjects would produce more internal request modifiers than their male counterparts, with a special emphasis on the ones realizing negative politeness (e.g. openers) and more tentative and positively polite in nature (e.g. hedges and fillers), while fewer request reinforcers or aggravators (e.g. intensifiers) will occur* (Lakoff, 1975: 53; Holmes, 1995: 222; Barrios Espinosa 1997-1998: 434-435; Martí, 2007).

3) *Female subjects will produce more external request modifiers sub-types than male ones, when these mitigators are thought to compensate the requestee for providing a good or a service, whose degree of imposition cannot be lessened by the requester* (Brown, 1980: 117; Cameron 1998: 444; Martí, 2007).

4*) Female subjects will produce more multifunctional request modifiers sub-types than male ones, whenever these modifiers mark the kind of relationship in terms of power and/or social distance between requester and requestee, as well as whenever they convey the expression of added nuances of appealing and emotive meanings* (Davis, 1995; Barrios Espinosa 1997-1998: 433-434, Barrett *et al.*, 2000; Fisher & Manstead, 2000: 90; Ackerman *et al*., 2001: 811; Wichmann, 2005; Martí, 2007).

4.2 Participants

Participants comprised 100 tertiary students, 50 male subjects and 50 female ones studying different Bachelor's degrees at Universitat Jaume I (UJI) based in Castelló de la Plana, Spain. The sample is well-balanced if

we take into account the two main individual variables which are thought to affect the subjects' perception of request modifiers, namely, gender of participants and their proficiency level, as can be seen in the contingency table 4.1:

Contingency Table				
		PROFICIENCY LEVEL		
GENDER		*Elementary*	*Intermediate*	Total
	Male	25	25	50
	Female	25	25	50
Total		50	50	100

Table 4.1 Distribution of participants according to gender and proficiency level

In order to classify learners according to their proficiency level, a *Quick placement test* elaborated by University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (henceforth UCLES) in 2001 was administered concerning those parts assessing lexical and syntactic written knowledge, but without including listening and speaking skills. The UCLES proficiency test classified the participants into two different groups according to their grammatical level: elementary (including both beginners and elementary students) and intermediate (comprising both lower and upper intermediate learners). Participants' ages ranged from 18 to 32 years, as far a male students are concerned, and from 18 to 26 for female students. Most subjects' ages are assembled into the age range between 18 and 22 years:

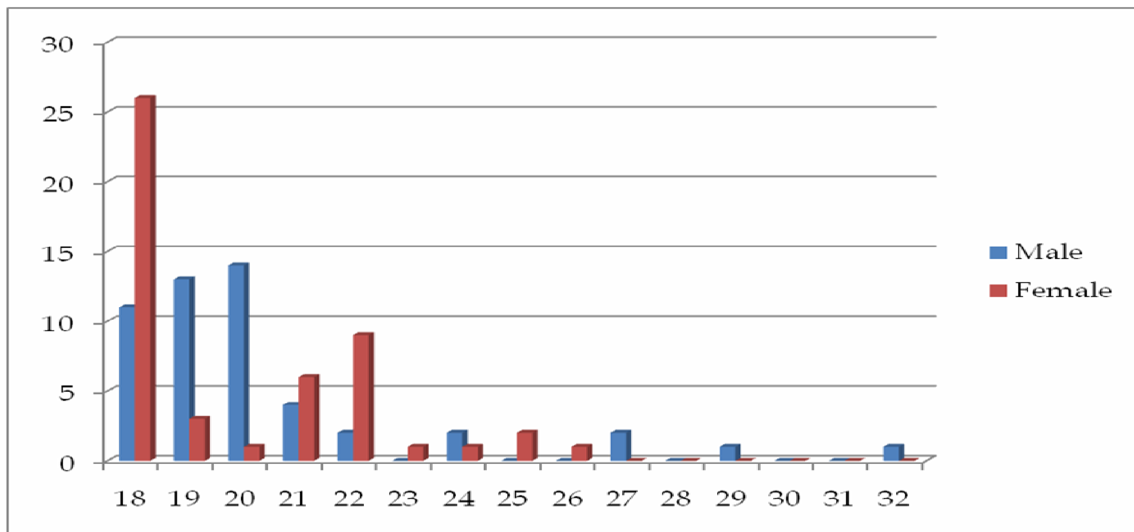

Figure 4.1 Distribution of participants according to age

Besides, the distribution of participants' ages in the four main groups resulting from the combination of gender and proficiency level is remarkably homogeneous, including means raging from 19.72 years (intermediate female students) to 20.64 (intermediate male students), with a very similar standard deviation in every case. Therefore, with a common mean of 20.08 years for both male and female students, it can be ascertained that concerning age the four population groups (i.e. elementary males, intermediate males, elementary females; and, intermediate females) are fairly homogeneous.

The proficiency level test and the task designed to elicit the population's offline production of request modifiers were implemented in six intact classes. The classes belonged to different knowledge domains —from more humanistic-oriented to more scientific-based—, available in the three main UJI faculties, namely, the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, the

Faculty of Law and Economics; and, the Higher School of Technology and Experimental Sciences:

UNIVERSITAT JAUME I	**FACULTY**	**DEGREE**	**NUMBER OF STUDENTS**
	Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences	*English Philology*	16
		Psychology	13
		Teacher training	29
	Faculty of Law and Economics	*Law*	5
	Higher School of Technology and Experimental Sciences	*Industrial Engineering*	11
		Computering	26
		TOTAL	**100**

Table 4.2 Distribution of participants according to university degree

Apart from the English Philology majors, whose program is mainly taught by using the English language as vehicle for instruction and communication, the rest of the degrees at UJI have English for specific purposes (i.e. ESP) as a compulsory subject for at least one semester during the undergraduates' first and/or second year spent at this tertiary level institution. Hence, the population sample is made up of mainly freshmen and, to a lesser extent, sophomore students.

With respect to participants' L1 background, the Valencian Community is, along with Catalonia, the Basque Country; or, Galicia, one of the bilingual communities within the Spanish state in which the minority language (i.e. Catalan/Valencian) has the same official status as the majority one Castilian/Spanish. Additionally, in the case of the province of Castelló,

where UJI is the only state university, around 10% of the area inhabitants are immigrants coming from Romania. Although this migratory phenomenon is decreasing due to the current recession, with a considerable percentage of Romanian families returning their country in the last two years, a highest maximum of 50,000 persons living and working in the area but mostly in the capital city of Castelló de la Plana explains why this Valencian province is popularly known as "Little Romania". Be that as it may, both Castilian-Catalan bilingual and Castilian-Romanian bilingual undergraduates were discarded as part of our study population.

This is so, because seminal works in the field of bi- and multilingualism (see, as a way of illustration, Baker, 1996; Cenoz & Jessner, 2000; ÓLaoire, 2004, 2005; De Angelis, 2007; ÓLaoire & Singleton, 2009; Aronin & Hufeisen, 2009; Aronin & ÓLaoire, 2011) have acknowledged the beneficial and facilitative cognitive effects of being bilingual when acquiring third or more languages and, more specifically, as far as the production and awareness of request modifiers are concerned —see Safont Jordà, 2003a, 2003b, 2005a, 2005b, 2007. Thus, the information regarding participants' condition as monolinguals (only Castilian users) and bilinguals (Catalan/Castilian users) was obtained by heading the written production test (see appendix) with the following three questions:

Example (1)

F. Mother tongue (First Language): ___________________________________

G. What language do you use?

	Catalan/Valencian	Castilian/Spanish	Others: ....
With your parents/ at home			
With your friends			
When you go shopping			
In class			
With your teachers			

E. In your opinion, which is your proficiency level in these languages?

	Catalan/Valencian	Castilian/Spanish	English	Others:	Others: ....
Bad (no idea)					
A little					
Good					
Excellent					

According to Safont's (2003a) criterion adapted from Baker (1996) and Wei (2000), whenever participants ticked Catalan/Valencian (or Romanian) as being used in at least three of the environments included in question G and, additionally, they perceived their proficiency level in both languages as good or excellent, they were considered bilingual speakers and English was regarded as their L3. Those students who may be considered as bilinguals, according to this self-perception test, were not included in our study sample. The same process of discarding subjects from the original sample of population was done regarding those participants who had spent some period studying abroad in an English-speaking country. This

was decided in an attempt to control the advantages derived from having acquired the target language in an ESL context.

In sum, although we are aware of the difficulty of isolating gender from other variables, we would like to highlight the fact that, after controlling the effects of proficiency level, the resulting sample population is made up of a relatively homogeneous group. Subjects participating in the research are Caucasian, young adults, well-educated university students, for whom differences in terms of social class and/or sex orientation might be overridden by their common identity as mainly heterosexual undergraduates in a state University like UJI, where different socio-economic origins (from working to middle-class families) are not wide enough to be acknowledged.

4.3 Data collection procedure

The data-gathering tool was designed to elicit participants' offline knowledge on request modifying devices. This research instrument consists of a written production test (see appendix), which comprises sixteen cues or scenarios which differ according to Scollon and Scollon's (1995) theoretical proposal both in terms of politeness system (i.e. *solidarity*, *deference* and *hierarchical*) and rank of imposition (*weak* versus *strong*). As shown in Chapter 1, Scollon and Scollon's (1995) politeness theory draws on the two social variables highlighted by Brown and

Levinson (1987 [1978]), namely, *power* (i.e. P) and *social distance* (i.e. D). These two variables, in turn, define three distinct politeness systems (Scollon & Scollon, 1995: 33-49): a *deference* one (-P, +D) between equals but distant interlocutors, a *solidarity* one (-P, -D) between equals and close participants; and, a *hierarchical* one (+P) between superiors and inferiors.

Taking into consideration Scollon and Scollon's (1995) three politeness systems, the written test includes (i) five situations belonging to a *deference* politeness system (i.e. cues number 2, 3, 5, 12, and 14), (ii) seven situations prompting *solidarity* among the requester and the requestee (i.e. cues number 1, 4, 7, 8, 11, 15, and 16); and, (iii) four situations linked to *hierarchical* courtesy encounters (i.e. cues number 6, 9, 10, and 13). Regardless the kind of politeness system at work, the sixteen scenarios were designed by varying the rank of imposition, which is considered to be *weak* when asking for small favours and *strong* when requesting big ones. In example 2 below, we offer a sample of six cues illustrating Scollon and Scollon's (1995) three different politeness systems along with the two different degrees or rank of imposition:

Example (2)

Situation 2: A couple is having dinner in a restaurant. The waiter is speaking very quickly and they cannot understand the menu. The woman asks the waiter:

POLITENESS SYSTEM: deference

RANK OF IMPOSITION: – (weak)

Situation 3: A father and his daughter are on a bus. The driver is driving very quickly and the daughter is scared. The father asks the driver:

POLITENESS SYSTEM: deference

RANK OF IMPOSITION: + (strong)

Situation 1: You and a friend arrive in Dublin and go to your hotel. You left your credit card at home and you don't have enough money to pay for the hotel. You ask your friend:

POLITENESS SYSTEM: solidarity

RANK OF IMPOSITION: + (strong)

Situation 4: You are going to a party. You've broken the heel on your favourite shoes. Your sister wears the same size. You ask her:

POLITENESS SYSTEM: solidarity

RANK OF IMPOSITION: – (weak)

Situation 6: You have your first oral presentation tomorrow. You need some advice. You ask a teacher:

POLITENESS SYSTEM: hierarchical

RANK OF IMPOSITION: – (weak)

Situation 13: In an office a boss needs 40 copies of a report. Her secretary is about to go home. She asks her secretary:

POLITENESS SYSTEM: hierarchical

RANK OF IMPOSITION: + (strong)

These sixteen scenarios and their modulation in terms of politeness system and rank of imposition resulted from a pilot study conducted by LAELA (**L**ingüística **A**plicada a l'**E**nsenyament de la **L**lengua **A**nglesa/Linguistics applied to English teaching) research group, supervised by Alcón since 1999. In this previous study, the production test included in the appendix

was distributed to a group of native-speakers studying at Queen Mary University in London. Unfortunately, gender as a variable was not controlled among native speakers, what would cause variation in the evaluation of the item “rank of imposition”, as we will see later on.

In view of UJI participants’ answers, it might be said that the sixteen situations implemented have been proved to be quite effective in eliciting requestive behaviour in our EFL university setting. Either due to the familiarity with the contexts exposed (which range from academic and working settings to everyday brief requestive encounters) or because of the resort to the verb “ask” instead of “say”; the truth is that we have identified only 35 non-requestive speech-act replies out of a total of 1,600 samples (100 subjects × 16 scenarios).

In other words, this presence of a mere 2.1% of speech-acts other than requests shows the validity of the production test designed, in terms of eliciting the targeted speech act. This effectiveness is even clearer if we take into consideration that (i) the non-targeted speech acts are produced by only 24 participants; and, that (ii) 71.4% of the 35 different speech-act occurrences reveal a confusion concerning the identity of the speech-act addressee, as it is the case in the following replies given to eight different prompts (i.e. half of the total 16 scenarios):

Example (3)

Situation 4: You are going to a party. You've broken the heel on your favourite shoes. Your sister wears the same size. You ask her:

COMPLAINING: "Because of your fault, my shoes are broken" (S58: male, intermediate, Computering).

APOLOGIZING: "Sorry sister! The shoes are broken because I don't go [sic] with attention. Take the [sic] maind [i.e. mine]" (S77: female, elementary, Teacher training).

Situation 7: Your neighbour always walks his/her dog inside the building. You are not happy with that. You ask him/her:

INSULTING/SCOLDING: "You are a bad and stupid dog, the most on [sic] other dogs in the world" (S23: male, elementary, Industrial Engineering).

Situation 8: Your friend is coming to visit. You need a place to stay and you want to borrow your uncle's apartment. You ask him:

INVITING: "Do you want to stay at my uncle's apartment?" (S5: male, elementary, English Philology).

INVITING: "Do you want [sic] stay during your visit in my uncle's apartment?" (S7: male, intermediate, English Philology).

INVITING: "My uncle's apartment will be perfect for you, are you OK?" (S9: male, elementary, English Philology).

Situation 11: Your brother has failed all subjects this year. He does not want to tell your parents. He wants you to tell them. He asks you:

SCOLDING/REFUSAL (addressee as addresser): "But why didn't you study often the class? And tell you because you are [sic] failed and I am not" (S23: male, elementary, Industrial Engineering).

SCOLDING/REFUSAL (addressee as addresser): "You didn't study and this is your consequence. Be an adult and tell mum and dad your notes [i.e. marks]"(S43: male, elementary, Psychology).

SCOLDING (addressee as addresser): "The [sic] next year you have to study more" (S48: male, elementary, Computering).

REFUSAL/SCOLDING (addressee as addresser): "You must tell this problem to our parents and you must to [sic] study harder" (S56: male, intermediate, Computering).

REFUSAL (addressee as addresser): "You must tell our parents about your subjects" (S58: male, intermediate, Computering).

REFUSAL/THREAT (addressee as addresser): "You know, you should tell it [sic] them. If you won't [sic], I says [sic] them where will [sic] you go next week really" (S72: female, elementary, Teacher training).

EXPLAINING (requestee talking to the final addressees): "I haven't got any explication [i.e. explanation] but my brother has failed all subjects this year. I only can say that this year he have [sic] a girlfriend" (S38: female, elementary, Psychology).

EXPLAINING (requestee talking to the final addressees): "Mum, my brother has failed the exams, but he had studied hard and he is working too" (S41: female, elementary, Psychology).

EXPLAINING (requestee talking to the final addressees): "Mum and dad, Pedro has fail [sic] all subjects. You have patient [sic] with him" (S98: female, elementary, Teacher training).

Situation 12: You work at the information desk in Heathrow airport. A passenger wants to go to central London. He/she asks you:

ASKING FOR INFORMATION: "Well, what is your name?...OK where you go to the travel [sic]?" (S23: male, elementary, Industrial Engineering).

GIVING DIRECTIONS: "Hello, can I help you? Oh! The central London is near the supermarket, it's in front of the bookshop" (S43: male, elementary, Psychology).

GIVING DIRECTIONS: "You only have to follow that sign" (S56: male, intermediate, Computering).

GIVING DIRECTIONS: "Go out of the airport for the first door and take a taxi" (S69: male, elementary, Computering).

GIVING DIRECTIONS: "Hellow! [sic] For [sic] to go to central London you have that [i.e. to] take the avión [i.e. plane] number two" (S80: female, elementary, teacher training).

APOLOGIZING: "Oh sorry! I don't have this information. I'm beginner in this work [sic]" (S45: male, elementary, Computering).

Situation 14: You work at a pub at the bar. A very drunk person just walked in. Your contract says you cannot allow drunken people in the bar. You ask him/her:

APOLOGY (addressee as addresser): "OK, I'm sorry" (S37: male, elementary, Psychology).

Situation 15: Your friend is going away for a month. S/he needs someone to water his plants. S/he asks you:

REFUSAL (addressee as addresser): "I can't because I haven't water" (S23: male, elementary, Industrial Engineering).

Situation 16: You are going away for a week. You need your neighbour to look after your three cats. He/she doesn't like cats. You ask your neighbour:

REFUSAL (addressee as addresser): "Can you kill your cats?" (S23: male, elementary, Industrial Engineering).

Sometimes, there was also a confusion of turns between the addresser and the addressee, which, gave place to a request, but also resulted in a shift of roles between the requester and the requestee. In fact, some of the following misunderstandings might have been due to the unsolved ambiguity derived from the wrong understanding of some deictic devices (e.g. the personal pronouns before or after the verb "ask", when there is a coincidence in the requester's and in the requestee's gender)

Example (4)

Situation 8: Your friend is coming to visit. **You need a place to stay** and you want to borrow your uncle's apartment. **You** ask **him**:

REQUEST (with different addressee): "I haven't any place to stay in here. Please, can you say to your uncle's [sic] that if he can borrow [i.e. lend] me his apartment for a few days?" (S88: female, intermediate, Teacher training).

Situation 13: In an office a boss needs 40 copies of a report. Her secretary is about to go home. **She** asks **her** secretary:

Personal pronoun "She" understood as referring to the secretary, not to the female boss: "Can I go home?" (S5: male, elementary, English Philology).

Finally, there are three particularly sensitive situations, in which the targeted requests turned into commands, bans, complaints, or even threats. We refer to situations 3, 7, and 14, in which, interestingly, most of the speech acts other than requests were produced by male students:

Example (5)

Situation 3: A father and his daughter are on a bus. The driver is driving very quickly and the daughter is scared. The father asks the driver:

COMPLAINING: "Excuse my [sic], you drive very bad [sic]" (S37: male, elementary, Psychology).

Situation 7: Your neighbour always walks his/her dog inside the building. You are not happy with that. You ask him/her:

COMPLAINING: "ggg!! You always walks [sic] with your dog inside the building!!" (S48: male, elementary, Computering).

COMPLAINING/SCOLDING: "Why [sic] you always walk your dog inside the building? You are a rude neighbour!" (S62: male, elementary, Computering).

THREAT: "If your dog continues walking in this building, we will kill him" (S58: male, intermediate, Computering).

COMPLAINING/THREAT/SCOLDING: "I'm not according [i.e. I don't agree] with you. If you continue walking your dog inside the building, I will call the police. It's very impolite for your part!" (S90: female, intermediate, Teacher training).

Situation 14: You work at a pub at the bar. A very drunk person just walked in. Your contract says you cannot allow drunken people in the bar. You ask him/her:

COMMAND: "You! Go out of this pub!!!" (S58: male, intermediate, Computering).

REFUSAL: "My boss prohited [i.e. prohibited] me allow drink in the bar. Bye, bye!" (S21: male, elementary, Industrial Engineering).

REFUSAL: "I don't give you alcohol because you have been drunk [i.e. drinking] very much" (S23: male, elementary, Industrial Engineering).

BANNING: "Sir/Mr, drunken people can't enter at [sic] pub" (S26, male elementary, Industrial Engineering).

BANNING: "You don't come into the bar because you are drunk" (S71, female elementary, teacher training).

All the scenarios considered above clearly belong to the kind of production questionnaires known as open-ended discourse-completion tests. Unlike closed DCTs, the production written task selected in the present study did not guide participants towards producing the required pragmatic item by means of rejoining or adjoining devices. That is, instead of providing subjects with their interlocutor's reply to the request speech-act they are expected to produce, open DCTs do not resort to such dialogue constructions. In opting for the open DCT sub-type, it was sought to elicit a free response and, thus, to avoid, as far as possible, the artificiality and test-like nature pinpointed by some scholars when testing DCTs as suitable elicitation procedures (e.g. Kasper and Dahl, 1991; Rose, 1992).

Such artificiality is levelled among the criticism to written DCTs which would make oral procedures (from role plays to field notes and natural

conversations) a more desirable data-gathering tool. Results from studies comparing written and oral tasks in terms of length, variety of request strategies use and interaction features (e.g. Rintell and Mitchell, 1989) seem to give precedence to the latter over the former. However, when comparative research, such as Sasaki's (1998), on written production questionnaires *versus* role plays has focused on EFL learners and has analysed data obtained for the same participants, the former have been presented as a still valid procedure.

This is so because, on the one hand, written DCTs are more easily implemented and processed (e.g. no transcription is needed) and, thus, they are the least time-consuming method to obtain a significant amount of data. On the other hand, written DCT prompts can provide respondents not only with social and contextual information targeted in a given study, but also with more time to notice and process it, to the point that, as Billmyer and Varghese's (2000) study has proved, enhanced (i.e. longer and further detailed) written cues do elicit richer requesting behaviour.

Besides, among the advantages of implementing written DCTs, it is also noteworthy that, as shown by Sasaki (1998), they produce different types of both request head acts and modifying strategies, what leads this author to claim that written DCTs cannot be completely replaced

by role plays, since both data-gathering methods are complementary. In a recent contribution, Félix-Brasdefer (2010: 54) has also advocated for (i) complementing simulated data from DCTs and role plays with verbal reports, either concurrent or retrospective, "to increase the level of trustworthiness of the results", a procedure he himself follows in a 2008 study on perceptions of refusals to invitations; and, in addition, (ii) he has suggested (2010: 46-47) the convenience of refining written DCTs by providing visual context of each situation (e.g. cartoon oral production task, COPT; or computer-based multimedia elicitation task, MET) by means of which the data are recorded orally.

Albeit resorting to traditional written discourse completion tests (henceforth WDCTs) without any complementary visual or oral device, some of our study replies show that the written format of the procedure employed have not prevented respondents from identifying themselves with the roles they were expected to play. In fact, interactive features —exclamations, mild expletives, fillers, emoticons, and even respondents' interventions longer than one turn reply— are not completely absent from the samples obtained as gathered from example 6 below:

Example (6)

- "Could you please push up the accelerator**!?** There are children in here**!!!**" (S8: male, intermediate, English Philology).

- “Teacher, can you tell me any advice? I’m really nervious [sic], because tomorrow is my first presentation. **PLEASE HELP MEEE!!!**” (S83: female, elementary, teacher training).
- “Can you put out your cigarette? **Well,** I know this is not polite but I have some problems to breath [sic]. Thanks”. (S32: male, intermediate, Psychology).
- “**Oh!** Uncle, my friend come [sic] to Paris and he need [sic] sleep in my house but there isn’t any free bedroom. Can you borrow [i.e. lend] your apartment?” (S43: male, elementary, Psychology).
- “**Oh!** Please! You can speak more slowly? We don’t understand the menu”. (S84, female, elementary, Teacher training).
- “**Oh god** [sic]! The heels of my shoes has [sic] been broken. Please, can you lend me some of your shoes?” (S67: male, intermediate, Computering).
- “**Oh my god** [sic]! I left my credit card. **I’m an idiot!** Can you pay the hotel, please?” (S35: male, elementary, Psychology).
- “**Oh my good** [sic]! I don’t have enough money to pay. Do you have any money to pay the hotel?” (S75, female, elementary, Teacher training).
- “**Oh my God! That’s terrible!** I’ll take your shoes, if you don’t mind.” (S47: male, intermediate, Computering).
- “**Oh no!** What are we going to do? Could you lend me some money?” (S62: male, elementary, Computering).
- “**Oh no!** I left my credit card at home. I don’t have any money. Can you give me any money to pay the hotel and then I’ll returned [sic] you, please?” (S69: male, elementary, Computering).
- “**Oh, sick** [i.e. shit]! Can you lend me your shoes?” (S45: male, elementary, Computering).
- “**Uff!** I won’t have time to organise the party. Could you do it for me, please?” (S55: male, intermediate, Computering).
- “**Uf!** Would you help me to open the door?” (S72: female, elementary, Teacher training).
- “**Buff!** I hate the smoke…I can’t enjoy my dinner. Put it out, please. Thanks”. (S96: female, intermediate, Teacher training).
- **Ahhh!!!** My heel of one of my favourite shoes is broken. Please, lend me yours. I don’t have any adequated [i.e. suitable] shoes. (S90: female, intermediate, Teacher training).
- **Oh,** my favourite sister! What about telling you to mum and dad that I’ve failed? Isn’t it a great idea? ☺ [use of emoticons to emphasize the previous message] (S86: female, intermediate, Teacher training).

- Can you repeat more slowly, please? If you repeat it more slowly, I will understand you. **OK, I** [sic] **like meat and chips**. (S79: female, intermediate, Teacher training).
- Teta [i.e. term of endearment meaning dear sister/cousin], I have failed all subjects this year. Please, please, can you tell it to mum? I will do your house tasks one month! **OK, two months! Well…I will tell it…I'M STUPID!** (S79: female, intermediate, Teacher training).
- Marta, I think that you don't like cats. But I'm going away for a week, er…I need that you look after my cats…**emm**…**eeh**…**Thanks**. (S79: female, intermediate, Teacher training).

Apart from the potential in terms of triggering interactional features, the formulation of the sixteen scenarios in the production WDCT with respect to the gender of the characters has proven effective to reveal the persistence of gender stereotypes among our subjects, concerning professions and socially sanctioned behaviours. Seven out of the sixteen situations included in the data-elicitation task specified the gender of either the requester or the requestee, being a woman in the restaurant context, a father in the bus, a sister asking for her sister's shoes, the male or female respondent borrowing his/her uncle's apartment, the male or female respondent asking for a policeman's help, a brother asking his sibling to deliver the bad news of his failed subjects to their parents; and, a female boss asking her secretary (either man or woman) to make 40 copies of a report.

Care was taken, however, to leave open the issue of gender in the case, among others, of the driver, the smoking person in the restaurant, the teacher, the neighbour with his/her dog, the boss in the shop, the

passenger and the person working at Heathrow airport information desk, the secretary —who is asked to wait for making 40 copies of a report—, the very drunk person at the pub, and the neighbour who hates cats. Interestingly enough, both male and female students, but especially the latter —since they are the ones who produce more vocatives as *attention-getters*—, have depicted the driver as a man, the boss in the shop as a man, the secretary making the 40 copies as a woman, the information desk person as a woman, with an exception produce by S57 (male, intermediate, Computering); and, finally, the teacher as a woman, using mostly the first name of their actual lecturers, saving S16 (female, intermediate, English Philology). In sum, then, as we will see in the following examples, our group of university students still reproduce traditional gender roles, as far as the professional domain is concerned, similarly to what was observed in the case of Dutch first year undergraduates majoring in English by Visser (2002):

Example (7)

- Excuse me ***sir***, my daughter is very young and she is scared of speed. Could you slow down a bit, please? (S16: female, intermediate, English Philology)
- Sorry ***sir***! My daughter is scare [sic] because you are driving very quickly. Can you drive slower, please? (S69: male, elementary, Computering).
- ***Sir***, my mother is ill, so I should need some days off. Do you mind if I take some days off? (S12: female, intermediate, English Philology)
- ***Sir***, could I leave the work for two days? My mother is ill. (S42: male, elementary, Psychology)

- ***Mary***, please, can you make 40 copies of this report? I will pay you an [sic] extra money (S58: male, intermediate, Computering)
- Excuse me ***Ana***, can you make 40 copies of a report, please? I really need it. Tomorrow you can arrive a [sic] hour late. (S73: female, intermediate, Teacher training).
- Good morning, ***madam***. I would like to go to Central London, but I don't know how to do it, could you indicate me how to go? (S16: female, intermediate, English Philology).
- Excuse me ***sir***, what I have to do to go to central London, please? (S57: male, intermediate, Computering).
- Please, ***Ms***, give me one [sic] advice, because tomorrow I have an oral presentation and don't know what to say. (S17: female, elementary, Law).
- Excuse me ***Mr. Cooper***, I have an oral presentation tomorrow, and I was wondering if you could give me some advice about some parts of the presentation. (S16: female, intermediate, English Philology).

Furthermore, in the case of two of the clerical posts, assumed to be typically held by women, (namely, the secretary and the information desk person), both male and female students conveyed a sense of flirting on the part of the boss —who, incidentally, and according to the prompt in situation 13, was supposed to be a woman— and/or the passenger asking for directions. Hence, in addition to traditional gendered profession roles, some participants in the study could not avoid showing the extent to which some women have to put up with a sexist treatment (sometimes closer to sexual harassment behaviours) when carrying out their jobs:

Example (8)

- Boss addressing "her" secretary: **"*Darling***, you know I'm no good with this machine. Would you mind making this [sic] copies for me? May I invite you to a drink while waiting?" (S68: male, intermediate, Computering).

- Passenger addressing the information desk person: "Hello ***baby***!! I want to go to central London. Help me now and, if you want, you go with me, eh!!!!" (S95: female, intermediate, Teacher training).

Similarly, the task of feeding one's cats was seen as a favour that the participants in our study tended to ask to their male neighbours, but that they thought that, in the end, would be carried out by their wives, as it can be gathered from the following example:

Example (9)

- ***Jose*** (male neighbour), I know you hate cats but I'll go out this week and someone have [sic] to give eat [i.e. feed] my beautiful cats. Can you do it? Or **your wife**, please? (S96: female, intermediate, Teacher training).

Remarkably, those requestees, whose behaviour is reproached in terms of rude or impolite, were presented as men by both female and male participants. We found the only exception of student 16 (female, intermediate, English Philology), who portrayed the smoking person as a woman: "Excuse me ***madam***, I would appreciate [sic] if you could stop smoking. I'm still having my dinner". The rest of rule-breakers, as can be gathered from example 10 below, were depicted as men:

Example (10)

- Addressing the smoking person: "I'm sorry ***gentlman*** [sic], I hates [sic] the smoke when I'm having a dinner. Can you stop smoking, please?" (S4: female, elementary, English Philology).
- Addressing the neighbour with the dog: "Good morning ***sir***. As I have seen you are always walking with your dog inside the building, would you mind going outside?" (S16: female, intermediate, English Philology)

- Addressing the very drunk person at the pub: "Please, can you left [sic] the bar, because I couldn't serve more drink"…if ***he*** isn't comprehensible [i.e. understanding] → "Get off, ***bastard***!!" (S49: male, intermediate, Computering).
- Addressing the very drunk person at the pub: "Excuse me ***sir***, I have to ask you to walk out. Stablishment [sic] rules". (S68: male, intermediate, Computering).
- Addressing the very drunk person at the pub**: "*Sir***, I'm sorry but you can't stay here. I cannot allow drunken people to be in [sic] the bar. Do you mind going out, please?" (S12: female, intermediate, English Philology).

The two tests previously mentioned (i.e. the UCLES Quick Placement test and the paper-and-pencil production test or WDCT) were administered during the month of February 2006. The sequence was as follows: firstly, the proficiency level test, and secondly, the production test. The researcher of this study did not participate in the data collection stage. This was carried out by those lecturers in charge of the different subject matters, most of whom were and are currently members of LAELA research group.

In that way, students were not informed beforehand that they were collaborating in a research project. It was made clear, however, that their task performance would not affect whatsoever the final grades obtained after having completed each course, and they would not be published. Furthermore, since the tasks were implemented at the beginning of the second semester, the completion of the WDCTs were not so closely linked to an exam-like situation, since tests would not be sat for until the month of June. The instructions were explained in the respondents' mother

tongue(s), when needed, and translation of key words included in the cues were also given when requested. Logically, this kind of aid was not provided by the lecturers in charge of the WDCTs implementation in the replying phase to the different situations designed to elicit request speech acts.

Finally, the targeted items found in the collected questionnaires were identified and classified according to the adapted version of Alcón *et. al.*'s (2005) typology of peripheral modification devices in requests (see table 2.2) and processed by means of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS 15.0.1). 25% of the data were coded by an independent rater, until the supervisor and the researcher were certain that both the latter and the independent rater had agreed in a 95% of the cases when classifying the elicited request modifying items. This coincidence in the application of the taxonomy was considered sufficiently high for the supervisor to allow the research to independently code the remainder of the data.

4.4 Methodological Decisions Taken in the Analysis of the Data

As the production test was aimed at eliciting request modification items, regardless their correctness in terms of grammar, we counted, as shown in table 4.3, all the grammatically mistaken modifying devices, unless the

errors detected might or did affect the intelligibility of the provided answer, as in:

Example (11)

- (In the pub situation) "Sorry, I'm working. ***Can't you walk withmix*** [sic]?" (S34: male, elementary, Psychology).
- (Sister's reply to brother's request to tell their parents that he has failed all subjects) "***I don't have this***. You must speak with them" (S37: male, elementary, Psychology)
- (Asking one's neighbour to take care of his/her cats by going away) "If you can look the cats ***I was very pleasent***" (S25: male, elementary, Industrial Engineering). ***I was very pleasent*** has not been counted as an *opener* equivalent to expressions such as "I would really appreciate it" or "I would be very grateful", because it is difficult to identify where the request head act as such is conveyed.

Conversely, in table 4.3 below, we offer a sample of the kind of grammatical errors altering the form but not the content of some linguistic formulae used, which did not prevent us from identifying the targeted items (i.e. both request head acts and request modification devices) as valid devices from a socio-pragmatic perspective:

ERROR-TYPE	Examples:
Misspellings with change of meaning	■ Can you give me other shoes? My shoes' ***hell*** [i.e. heel] is broken (S20: female, elementary, Law) ■ I'm going away a week and my cats are going to stay alone, and nobody is going to feed them, so they would ***dye*** [i.e. die]. You are going to look after them, aren't you? (S81: female, intermediate, Teacher training).

Word coinage resulting from L1 transfer	■ Could it be possible to take two days off with my ***correspondent*** [i.e. corresponding] holidays? I asked you because my mum is ill and I need to care about her? (S10: female, intermediate, English Philology.). ■ Cristina, say the ***notice*** [i.e. news] to the [sic] parents, please, because if I were in a similar situation, I would do the same. (S17: female, elementary, Law) ■ My mother is very ill and I have to take care of her, so I need two days off but I haven't holidays left. I will ***recuper*** [i.e. make up for] it doing more hours. (S3: female, Intermediate, English Philology). ■ Have you enough money to ***prest*** [i.e. lend] me? I forgot my credit card at home. (S18: female, elementary, Law).
Mistaken grammatical units other than verbs	■ My mother is ill. Can you give me ***additionals*** [i.e. additional] holidays, please? (S35: male, elementary, Psychology). ■ I need ***down*** [i.e. to get off] here. Can you open the train door? (S34: male, elementary, Psychology).
Low command of verbal system	■ I'm sorry gentlman, I ***hates*** [i.e. hate] the smoke when I'm having a dinner. Can you stop smoking please? (S5: female, elementary, English Philology). ■ Could you walk your dog out the building? You should ***to*** [sic] be more responsible [sic]. (S33: female, intermediate, Psychology).
Non-conventional use of modifying devices	■ ***If it doesn't mind you***, could you stop smoking until I finish my meal please? (S3: female, intermediate, English Philology). ■ ***Could you be so kind*** [sic] and stop smoking, please? Your smoke is annoying me. (S9: male, elementary, English Philology). ■ Please, ***would you be so amabile*** [i.e. kind] to exit to [sic] the pub? You shouldn't drink more. (S33: female, intermediate, Psychology).

Table 4.3 Type of (pragma)linguistic mistakes processed as valid data

4.5 Results and discussion

This section presents the findings obtained with respect to each of the four hypotheses introduced in section 4.1. The processing of the data involved

an option for a statistical model which could verify our hypotheses, in order to ascertain the extent to which the variable gender was relevant to understand EFL learners' perception of request modifiers. In other words, it was looked for both the differences and/or similarities between male and female students, when producing request modifiers that affected the illocutionary force of the request head acts. In order to do so, we needed to control the effects on the findings resulting from the influence of the participants' proficiency level. A two-way ANOVA test was implemented to measure the role played by these two dichotomyc variables at play, namely, gender (male *versus* female) and proficiency (elementary *versus* intermediate). Moreover, an extra variable correlating the two aforementioned ones was added. Since the main factors were dichotomyc, four different groups appeared with three degrees of freedom in the definition of the model. Supposing the existence of an additive model, the following formula resulted:

$$\mathbf{y} = c + \alpha + \beta + \alpha\beta + \varepsilon$$

In the above formula:

- **y** stands for any of the variables in focus (i.e. request modifiers) studied by means of the research, along with those calculated in view of the observations carried out.
- *c* represents a constant term specified through the mean value of a request modifier, to which a value concerning each subject's factors will be added or eliminated.

- α represents the effect of the variable gender on the final figure of the request modifier, in the presence of the proficiency factor also considered in the model.
- β means the effect of the proficiency level factor on the gender variable, in the presence of the other factor considered in the model.
- $\alpha\beta$ stands for the correlation existing between the main variables or factors (i.e. gender and proficiency level). This cannot be expressed as the individual effect of gender or proficiency, without affecting each other.
- ε is a residual term. It embraces the influence of the two variables or their effects which are not contemplated by the model. More specifically, it refers to those effects concerning the subject's own identity, along with a random component which usually appears in a research of this kind and cannot be explained by any measurable factor.

By selecting the kind of lineal model presented above, our aim was to ascertain the extent to which gender and proficiency level took an active part in the explanation of the occurrence of request modifiers. As a result, the goodness-of-fit test of the model, R^2 had a secondary relevance in this statistical analysis.

All request modifiers were considered counts of utterances. In other words, in order to elucidate the effect of gender on the use of request modifiers, we took into account the number of times in which each subject produced a specific type or sub-type of request modifier throughout the sixteen scenarios that made up the production test (see the appendix). Consequently, it was assumed that modifiers as the targeted linguistic devices could be classified as belonging to the Poisson type.

INTERNAL REQUEST MODIFIERS						
	Minimum	**Maximum**	**Mean**	**Standard Deviation**	**Asimmetry**	**Kurtosis**
openers	0	7	0.8	1.49	2.16	4.62
hesitators	0	1	0.03	0.17	5.59	29.90
appealers	0	3	0.05	0.33	7.89	67.32
cajolers	0	1	0.01	0.10	10.00	100.00
understatements	0	3	0.2	0.49	3.01	11.19
downtoners	0	2	0.03	0.22	7.98	66.48
hedges	0	0	0	0.00	.	.
intensifiers	0	2	0.22	0.48	2.15	4.01

Table 4.4 Descriptive statistics concerning *internal request modifiers*

Concerning the production of *internal* request modifiers (see table 2.2), all the occurrences of these request modifiers type ranged from the value zero to very low figures. The only exception had to do with the case of *openers*, which presented a maximum of seven occurrences per production WDCT completed. As the mean was very low in all cases, it might be inferred that there were a great number of zeros or non-occurrences of this type of modifiers in the production WDCTs. More specifically, the type *hedges* were marked with a figure of zero in all its values. The results of implementing a Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, which was used to be certain that the *internal* request modifiers under consideration adjusted to a variable of the Poisson type, are presented in table 4.5. As can be gathered from this table, most of this type of request modifying devices *did* behave in accordance to Poisson-type variables, saving the case of the internal modification sub-type of *openers*.

INTERNAL REQUEST MODIFIERS:
Kolmogorov – Smirnov Test for Poisson distribution

	Poisson parameter	Extreme differences			Kolmogorov-Smirnov's Z	*p*-value (bilateral)
	Mean	Absolute	Positive	Negative		
openers	0,8	0,24	0,24	-0,08	2,41	0,000
hesitators	0,03	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	1,000
appealers	0,05	0,02	0,02	-0,01	0,19	1,000
cajolers	0,01	0,00	0,00	0,00	0,00	1,000
understatements	0,2	0,01	0,01	-0,01	0,11	1,000
downtoners	0,03	0,01	0,01	-0,01	0,10	1,000
intensifiers	0,22	0,01	0,01	-0,01	0,09	1,000

Table 4.5 Results of Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for Poisson distribution concerning *internal request modifiers*

Turning to the production of *external* request modifiers (see table 2.2), all the occurrences also ranged from zero to very low figures, with tho exceptions. We refer to the external modifying sub-tyope of *reasons*, which amounted to 17 occurrences in individual production WDCTs, along with *appreciation tokens* (e.g. "Thanks") which amounted to 12.

The mean was also very low in all cases, although to a lesser extent of what we saw concerning *internal* request modifiers. This difference between these two main types of request modifiers, namely, *internal* and *external* request modifiers, is due to the occurrence of a smaller amount of zeros in the elicited data belonging to each sub-type of *external* modifying devices, as it is shown in table 4.6 below.

EXTERNAL REQUEST MODIFIERS						
	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation	Asimmetry	Kurtosis
preparators	0	3	0.57	0.86	1.46	1.30
non-intruders	0	4	0.83	0.92	0.90	0.28
cost-minimizers	0	5	0.7	0.99	1.79	3.78
sweeteners	0	5	0.42	0.96	2.61	7.09
option-givers	0	2	0.1	0.36	3.90	15.59
rewards	0	2	0.31	0.53	1.46	1.23
reasons	0	17	7.28	4.18	-0.01	-0.94
threats	0	2	0.1	0.33	3.51	12.81
expanders	0	4	0.86	1.10	1.30	0.84
appreciation tokens	0	12	0.61	1.48	5.12	35.74

Table 4.6 Descriptive statistics concerning *external request modifiers*

In the following table (i.e. 4.7), it was also ascertained whether all the different types of *external* request modifiers could be regarded as belonging to the Poisson type.

EXTERNAL REQUEST MODIFIERS:
Kolmogorov – Smirnov Test for Poisson distribution

	Poisson parameter	Extreme differences			Kolmogorov-Smirnov's Z	*p*-value (bilateral)
	Mean	Absolute	Positive	Negative		
preparators	0.570	0.054	0.054	-0.030	0.545	0.928
non-intruders	0.830	0.038	0.024	-0.038	0.380	0.999
cost-minimizers	0.700	0.053	0.053	-0.026	0.534	0.938
sweeteners	0.420	0.133	0.133	-0.063	1.330	0.058
option-givers	0.100	0.015	0.015	-0.015	0.153	1.000
rewards	0.310	0.013	0.009	-0.013	0.134	1.000
reasons	7.280	0.172	0.172	-0.141	1.717	0.005
threats	0.100	0.005	0.005	-0.005	0.053	1.000
expanders	0.860	0.074	0.067	-0.074	0.736	0.651
appreciation tokens	0.610	0.167	0.167	0.056	1.666	0.008

Table 4.7 Results of Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for Poisson distribution concerning *external request modifiers*

As can be gathered from table 4.7 below, saving the cases of *reasons* and *appreciation tokens*, the remaining external request modifiers presented a behaviour adjusted to a variable of the Poisson type.

With respect to the third and final main type of request modifiers, namely, those corresponding to *multi-functional* modification (see table 2.2), we also found occurrences ranging from zero to very low figures, with the exception of the following three sub-types of multifunctional request modifiers: *apologetic attention-getters* (e.g. "Excuse me"), with a maximum value of 10 occurrences per WDCT; *manipulative please* (i.e. initial please), with a maximum value of 13 occurrences; and, *contract-based please* (i.e. final please), with a highest value of 15 occurrences per WDCT. The mean values, which were slightly higher than in the case of *internal* modifiers, indicated that, in this case, the presence of zero values was not so overwhelming.

MULTIFUNCTIONAL REQUEST MODIFIERS

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation	Asymmetry	Kurtosis
apologetic	0	10	2.020	2.030	1.207	1.566
endearment	0	1	0.040	0.197	4.767	21.144
greetings	0	3	0.150	0.458	3.794	17.172
alerters	0	2	0.150	0.411	2.833	7.859
family	0	3	0.910	0.996	0.810	-0.451
friends	0	1	0.170	0.378	1.784	1.206
acquaintances	0	2	0.120	0.409	3.596	12.669
strangers	0	5	0.580	1.075	2.254	5.368
work	0	3	0.390	0.709	1.700	1.892

manipulative	0	13	2.590	2.782	1.397	2.163
prescriptive	0	6	0.270	1.043	4.013	15.822
contract-based	0	15	4.850	3.973	0.675	-0.724
elliptical	0	4	0.200	0.586	3.933	19.131
pleading	0	2	0.120	0.433	3.701	12.903

Table 4.8 Descriptive statistics concerning *multifunctional request modifiers*

As we did in the case of both *internal* and *external* request modifiers, we tested whether the different sub-types of *multifunctional* request modifiers described a behaviour corresponding to a Poisson type of distribution. This was also accomplished by means of the implementation of a Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, whose results are reported in table 4.9 below:

MULTIFUNCTIONAL REQUEST MODIFIERS:
Kolmogorov – Smirnov Test for Poisson distribution

	Poisson Parameter	Extreme differences			Kolmogorov-Smirnov's Z	*p*-value (bilateral)
	Mean	Absolute	Positive	Negative		
apologetic	2.020	0.147	0.147	-0.076	1.473	0.026
endearment	0.040	0.001	0.001	-0.001	0.008	1.000
greetings	0.150	0.019	0.019	-0.010	0.193	1.000
alerters	0.150	0.010	0.009	-0.010	0.098	1.000
family	0.910	0.037	0.037	-0.035	0.375	0.999
friends	0.170	0.014	0.013	-0.014	0.137	1.000
acquaintances	0.120	0.023	0.023	-0.023	0.234	1.000
strangers	0.580	0.130	0.130	-0.045	1.301	0.068
work	0.390	0.053	0.053	-0.051	0.529	0.942
manipulative	2.590	0.221	0.221	-0.082	2.207	0.000
prescriptive	0.270	0.167	0.167	-0.057	1.666	0.008
contract-based	4.850	0.242	0.242	-0.161	2.421	0,000
elliptical	0.200	0.041	0.041	-0.022	0.413	0.996
pleading	0.120	0.033	0.033	-0.033	0.334	1.000

Table 4.9 Results of Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for Poisson distribution concerning *multifunctional request modifiers*

In view of table 4.9, it can be noted that most *multifunctional request modifiers* presented a behaviour typical of a Poisson distribution, saving the following request modifiers sub-types: *apologetic attention-getters* (e.g. "Excuse me"), *manipulative* "please" (i.e. "please" in initial position), *prescriptive* or *face-saving* "please" (i.e. "please" in medial position); and, *contract-based* "please" (i.e. "please" in final position). In fact, the *contract-based* "please" did not adjust to any of the four main distributions tested here. However, this *multi-functional* request modifying device sub-type approached both a normal and an exponential kind of distributions.

Prior to the implementation of the Two-way ANOVA test, and similarly to what was done with both *internal* and *external* request modifiers, it seemed advisable to aggregate the values of those *multifunctional* modifying sub-types whose occurrences were very low or equal to zero. In so doing, it was thought that the obtaining of futile outcomes, due to the lower occurrence of some individual *multifunctional* modifying devices, would be avoided. Hence, the group of *multi-functional* request modifiers, same as happened with their two counterparts (i.e. *internal* and *external* request modifiers), was sub-divided into the following auxiliary and aggregated categories: (i) *low SD addressees attention-getters* —i.e. family and friends—, (ii) *medium SD addressees attention-getters* —i.e. acquaintances and work colleagues and superiors—, (iii) *high SD addressees attention-getters* —i.e.

strangers—, (iv) “please” —i.e. *manipulative, prescriptive/face-saving, contract-based, elliptical request*, and *pleading*—; and, (v) *multifunctional* request modifiers as a whole—i.e. *apologetic* expressions as attention-getters, *terms of endearment* as attention-getters, *greetings* as attention-getters, *alerters* as attention-getters, and *addressees with acknowledgement of interlocutor* and different *SD* as attention-getters, along with distinct sub-types of “please”. In addition, an aggregated category of request modifiers embraced their three main types, namely, *internal*, *external*, and *multifunctional*. This redistribution of *multifunctional* request modifiers is presented in table 4.10 below:

AGGREGATED MULTIFUNCTIONAL REQUEST MODIFIERS & AGGREGATED GLOBAL REQUEST MODIFICATION						
	Minimum	**Maximum**	**Mean**	**Standard Deviation**	**Asymmetry**	**Kurtosis**
low SD addressees	0	4	1.080	1.203	0.837	-0.405
medium SD addressees	0	5	0.510	1.020	2.391	5.706
high SD addressees	0	5	0.580	1.075	2.254	5.368
sub-types of “please”	1	16	8.030	3.691	-0.207	-0.785
multifunctional modifiers	1	30	12.560	6.125	0.175	-0.120
global request modification	2	53	25.680	11.572	0.103	-0.402

Table 4.10 Descriptive statistics concerning aggregated *multifunctional request modifiers* and aggregated global request modification (i.e. internal, external, and multifunctional modification)

Same as it was observed when assembling different sub-types of *external* request modifiers, *multifunctional* modifying devices also presented more varied values, which are conveyed in table 4.10 above through their greater width (i.e. higher difference between maximum and minimum figures), their mean ranks and their standard deviation. Besides, these aforementioned differences increased when more sub-types of *multifunctional* and/or *global* request modifiers were aggregated.

Concerning the distribution followed by these aggregated categories, given their condition of added modifiers describing distinct distributions, it appeared as unpredictable. As a result, a Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was implemented, even though with respect to *low SD addressee attention-getters* and *medium SD addressee attention-getters*, the final distribution was expected to adjust to a Poisson one, since these categories had resulted from the addition of Poisson distributed *multifunctional* request modifiers sub-types.

KOLMOGOROV TEST FOR *LOW AND MEDIUM SD ADDRESSEE ATTENTION-GETTERS*					
		***Low SD* (i.e. family and friends)**			
		Normal	**Poisson**	**Uniform**	**Exponential**
Parameter		1.080	1.080	0.000	1.930
		1.203		4.000	
Extreme differences	**Absolute**	0.255	0.100	0.440	0.925
	Positive	0.255	0.100	0.440	0.925
	Negative	-0.185	-0.064	-0.040	0.000
Kolmogorov-Smirnov's Z		2.553	1.004	4.400	6.925
***p*-value (bilateral)**		0.000	0.266	0.000	0.000

		Medium SD (e.g. acquaintances)			
Parameter		0.510	0.510	0.000	1.820
		1.020		5.000	
Extreme differences	**Absolute**	0.411	0.120	0.720	2.720
	Positive	0.411	0.120	0.720	2.720
	Negative	-0.309	-0.055	-0.010	0.000
Kolmogorov-Smirnov's Z		4.115	1.195	7.200	14.395
***p*-value (bilateral)**		0.000	0.115	0.000	0.000

Table 4.11 Results of Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for normal, Poisson, uniform and exponential distributions concerning *low & medium SD addressees*

The remaining *high SD addressee attention-getters* sub-type corresponded with the category strangers, and, thus, the results of implementing the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test will be omitted here. According to the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test applied to the different sub-types of "please", this *multifunctional* request modifier as a whole might come from a Poisson distribution, or more probably, from a normal one, as can be gathered from table 4.12 below:

KOLMOGOROV TEST FOR *PLEASE*					
		Normal	**Poisson**	**Uniform**	**Exponential**
Parameter		8.030	8.030	1.000	8.030
		3.691		16.000	
Extreme differences	**Absolute**	0.103	0.128	0.180	0.273
	Positive	0.084	0.128	0.180	0.178
	Negative	-0.103	-0.113	-0.077	-0.273
Kolmogorov-Smirnov's Z		1.032	1.285	1.800	2.735
***p*-value (bilateral)**		0.237	0.074	0.003	0.000

Table 4.12 Results of Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for normal, Poisson, uniform and exponential distributions concerning "please"

In sum, both *multifunctional* request modifiers and *request modification* as a whole resulted from having added a mixture of Poisson and normally distributed individual request modifying sub-types. Nevertheless, given the fact that the normally distributed request modifiers had more weight than the Poisson ones, thanks to their higher rank, means and standard deviations; the global distribution of the *multifunctional* and *request modification* can be said to follow a normal distribution. This final prevalence of normally-distributed results is shown in table 4.13 below:

KOLMOGOROV TEST FOR *MULTIFUNCTIONAL REQUEST MODIFIERS*					
(i.e. attention-getters & "please")					
		Normal	**Poisson**	**Uniform**	**Exponential**
Parameter		12.560	12.560	1.000	12.560
		6.125		30.000	
Extreme differences	**Absolute**	0.067	0.146	0.279	0.292
	Positive	0.067	0.146	0.279	0.123
	Negative	-0.061	-0.135	-0.056	-0.292
Kolmogorov-Smirnov's Z		0.671	1.457	2.793	2.916
***p*-value (bilateral)**		0.759	0.029	0.000	0.000
(i.e. internal, external and multifunctional request modifiers)					
		Normal	**Poisson**	**Uniform**	**Exponential**
Parameter		25.680	25.680	2.000	25.680
		11.572		53.000	
Extreme differences	**Absolute**	0.065	0.204	0.145	0.322
	Positive	0.065	0.203	0.145	0.144
	Negative	-0.058	-0.204	-0.135	-0.322
Kolmogorov-Smirnov's Z		0.648	2.039	1.449	3.224
***p*-value (bilateral)**		0.796	0.000	0.030	0.000

Table 4.13 Results of Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for normal, Poisson, uniform and exponential distributions concerning *multifunctional request modifiers*, and *request modification*

4.5.1 Effect of gender on the use of request modifiers

According to the first hypothesis formulated in our study, it was assumed that *female EFL participants would outperform male ones in the number and variety of request modification items produced* (Lakoff, 1975: 57; Brown, 1980: 17; Oxford, 1993: 71, 73; Holmes, 1995: 2-6, 222; Nikula, 1996: 19; Barrios Espinosa 1997-1998: 430-431; Molina Plaza, 1997-1998: 902; Cameron, 1998a: 444; Lakoff, 2005: 178; Martí, 2007; Cameron, 2008: 23; Blakemore *et al.*, 2009; Ning *et al.*, 2010: 19).

As can be gathered from table 4.14, the variable gender is the most influential one in the production of request modifying devices, with a remarkable difference between means: **31.60** for women (henceforth remarkable females' means will appear coloured in **pink**) and **19.76** for men (henceforth remarkable men's means will appear coloured in **blue**). In turn, the subjects' proficiency level appeared, in comparison with gender, as a secondary variable, which gave place to a smaller difference between means: **22.04** (henceforth remarkable elementary students' means will appear coloured in **orange**) for both male and female elementary students, *versus* **29.32** (henceforth remarkable intermediate students' means will appear coloured in **green**) for both male and female intermediate participants. Furthermore, these findings were not influenced for any correlation existing between the variables gender and proficiency level.

REQUEST MODIFIERS

gender	*proficiency*	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
Male	Elementary	14.72	8.909	25
	Intermediate	24.80	9.438	25
	Total	**19.76**	10.413	50
Female	Elementary	29.36	9.146	25
	Intermediate	33.84	9.534	25
	Total	**31.60**	9.519	50
Total	Elementary	**22.04**	11.599	50
	Intermediate	**29.32**	10.440	50
	Total	25.68	11.572	100

Table 4.14 Descriptive statistics concerning *request modifiers* (i.e. internal, external, and multifunctional request modifiers)

Hence, the first hypothesis appears to be confirmed by these findings. In line with previous research (Martí, 2007), female participants produced more and more varied requests modifiers than their male counterparts. In so doing, and bearing in mind that a higher use of pragmatic modifiers has been equated as conveying a stronger degree of politeness (Nikula, 1996: 19), these figures would confirm Lakoff's (1975: 57) assertion in that "the more one compounds a request, the more characteristic it is of women's speech, the less of men's", as well as her intuition (2005: 178) according to which "women are expected to be polite under more circumstances, and to more kinds of people, than men". The reasons which would explain this outcome would be provided when dealing with the different types of request modifiers inasmuch as they will allow us to be more specific.

At this point, however, we would begin by subscribing both Brown's suggestion (1980: 17) in the sense that women might "have a higher assessment than men of what counts as imposition", along with Cameron's (1988a: 444) *caveat* regarding her belief in the different values men and women might assign to those universal non-gendered pragmatic values (i.e. power, social distance and ranking of imposition) considered by Brown and Levinson (1987) when calculating the degree of face-threat inherent in a given speech act.

Thus, in the following sub-sections, we will present and discuss the findings resulting from the implementation of a number of two-way ANOVA tests. Such statistical tests aimed at ascertaining the effect of the variables gender, proficiency, and their potential correlation with respect to the occurrence in the WDCTs of the three main types of request modifying devices (i.e. *internal*, *external* and *multifunctional* ones) on which hypotheses 2, 3 and 4 were formulated.

4.5.1.1 Effect of gender on the use of internal request modifiers

We will begin this sub-section by reporting, from table 4.15 to table 4.17, the findings resulting from the implementation of two-way ANOVA tests with respect to the different sub-types of *internal* request modifiers. In order to better understand the figures included in such tables, the *p*-values relevant for the analysis have been coloured thus:

a) The *p*-values expressing the effect of the variable **gender** will appear coloured in red, whenever their value is equal and/or inferior to 0.05. Such figure would indicate that the differences in the production of request modifiers existing between female *versus* male participants were statistically significant.

b) The *p*-values conveying the impact of **proficiency level** will appear coloured in grey, whenever their value is equal and/or inferior to 0.05. Such figure would indicate that the differences in the production of request modifiers existing between elementary *versus* intermediate participants were statistically significant.

c) The *p*-values meaning that both **gender** and **proficiency**, **separately**, have influenced the production of request modifiers will appear in yellow.

d) The *p*-values resulting from **the intersection** of the variables gender and proficiency will appear coloured in purple. Although less frequent, these values are particularly interesting when the aim is discerning how a variable can be explained from the remaining ones.

As can be gathered next from the figures displayed in table 4.15, only two categories among the group of *internal request modifiers* showed an influence on the part of the variables tested in our study. However, it was not the variable gender, but the variable proficiency level the one which was determinant to explain the higher frequency of appearance of only one sub-type of internal *request* modifiers. Therefore, hypothesis 2, according to which, *female subjects would produce more internal request modifiers than their male counterparts, with a special emphasis on the ones*

realizing negative politeness (e.g. openers) and more tentative and positively polite in nature (e.g. hedges and fillers), while fewer request reinforcers or aggravators (e.g. intensifiers) will occur (Lakoff, 1975: 53; Holmes, 1995: 222; Barrios Espinosa 1997-1998: 434-435; Martí, 2007) would be not confirmed by the results.

TYPE/SUB-TYPE OF INTERNAL REQUEST MODIFIERS	F	*p* - value
Openers	5.053	**0.003**
Softeners	1.467	0.228
Understatements	0.877	0.456
Downtoners	1,862	0,141
Intensifiers	0.279	0.840
Fillers	0.565	0.639
Hesitators	0.333	0.801
Cajolers	1.000	0.396
Appealers	0.576	0.632
INTERNAL REQUEST MODIFIERS	4.915	**0.003**

Table 4.15 Two-way ANOVA test results concerning the production of *internal request modifier*

In fact, it is not only that the actual production of internal request modifiers varied according to the participants' proficiency level and had nothing to do with their gender. Besides, those internal modifiers such as hedges ("sort of", "kind of"), which are more tentative in nature, or those like *cajolers* (e.g. "You know", "You see", "I mean"), which seek to get the hearer's involvement and, thus, express positive polite concerns, were hardly elicited in the processed data (in the case of *cajolers*) or totally absent from the corpus (as it happened with *hedges*).

Thus, there is no trace in our findings of the English native speaker unassertive and powerless woman, once depicted by authors like Lakoff (1975: 53) within the *dominance/deficit* model dealt with in subsection 3.3.1 of Chapter 3. In this case, therefore, it seems that the provision of input through some literary works like *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (see Barrios Espinosa, 1997-1998: 434-435) was clearly insufficient.

Furthermore, the virtual invisibility of both *softeners* and *fillers* along with the presence of *intensifiers* in the kind of data obtained in controlled pragmatic production like WDCTs could be explained, respectively, for (i) the condition of our subjects as EFL learners, and, more specifically, for the role of learning environment in the acquisition of speech acts; and (ii) for the study participants' deviation of a native speaker's use of *internal* modifiers due to L1 linguistic and cultural difference in terms of politeness orientation. It should not be forgotten that Spanish is a more positively polite oriented culture than the British one, in which, for example, no equivalents to the kind of hedges ("sort of", "kind of") to perform requests do exist.

The fact that female students' identity in the ESL/EFL classroom has been described (see section 3.2.1), from primary education onwards (Jones, 1993: 161), in terms of their behaviour as the teacher's helpers and substitutes, as well as the more attentive (Gass & Varonis, 1986: 349;

Batters, 1987), supportive in group work (Ross-Feldman, 2007: 76), and "academic" participants (Sunderland, 1998, 2000), grants a key importance to the role of input in one's learning environment as far as pragmatic acquisition is concerned (see Martí, 2008b).

Being our study subjects EFL learners, the influence of both teachers talk and textbooks becomes paramount to understand why these request modifying devices which, according to James (1983: 201) convey an informal style as well as intimacy of relationship, have not found a place in a context marked by status-bound teacher talk (Corson, 1992; Alcón, 2002b), along with deficient textbooks in the provision of authentic native-like pragmatic skills (Vellenga, 2004; Usó-Juan, 2007).

The lack of influence of both the variables gender and proficiency in the production of *intensifiers* is also noteworthy, since in previous studies (e.g. Martí, 2007) a decrease in their use was reported on the part of higher proficient students in comparison with their elementary counterparts and in line with native speakers of English, who, according to Sifianou (1999), hardly use this aggravator to modify the illocutionary force of requests. Furthermore, a higher resort to *intensifiers* by male students (Martí, 2007: 145), seems to be in agreement with men's slightly closer link to "assertive speech" (presented in Cameron, 2008: 43, and adapted from Hyde, 2005)

and on line with women's preference for mitigating, instead of aggravating requests (see Holmes, 1995: 222).

A closer look to some examples of the use of intensifiers on the part of female and male subjects in our corpus might be interpreted as supporting Takano's (2005) perception, according to which, women in charge or female bosses resort to fewer tokens of *intensifiers* than men and show a preference for the word "now" to make clearer the status of their utterances as requests, not to aggravate their illocutionary force. As we will see in example 12 below, our female learners employed intensifiers mostly in situation 13 (the boss asking her secretary to make 40 copies of a report when she is about to go home), in a somewhat incongruent way, as if they were imitating an assertive style which they were not used to performing. In fact, contrary to male respondents who resorted to other forms of intensifiers (e.g. "just"), the potential forceful effect of "now" in the case of female undergraduates appears to be neutralized by the addition of other request mitigating devices.

Example (12)

- ***Just*** do you [sic] 40 copies of this report before you left [sic]! (S7: male, intermediate, English Philology).
- Secretary! I need you! Can you do **now** 40 copies of a report, **please**? Is [sic] urgent! (S82: female, elementary, Teacher training).
- I am the boss!!! And I have the copies **NOW!!!** If you do the copies, you can have **a free day tomorrow**. (S83: female, elementary, Teacher Training).

If the frequency of use of *intensifiers* appears statistically unaffected by the variables of proficiency and gender, this is not the case of *openers* and *internal request modifiers* as a whole. In order to understand how proficiency influences the production of both *openers* and *internal* request modifiers in general, we will focus on the means of elementary and intermediate groups as reported in tables 4.16 and 4.17 below:

OPENERS

gender	*proficiency*	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
Male	Elementary	0.04	0.200	25
	Intermediate	1.28	1.646	25
	Total	0.66	1.319	50
Female	Elementary	0.52	1.159	25
	Intermediate	1.36	1.955	25
	Total	0.94	1.646	50
Total	Elementary	**0.28**	0.858	50
	Intermediate	**1.32**	1.789	50
	Total	0.80	1.491	100

Table 4.16 Descriptive statistics concerning *openers*

As can be seen in table 4.16 above, the mean concerning the production of *openers* for both male and female elementary subjects is **0.28**, whereas the mean for both male and female intermediate students amounts to **1.32**. In other words, a higher use of *openers* resulted from the influence of participants' proficiency level.

Example (13)

- "Sorry, my mother is too ill and I need some free days to take care [sic] her. ***Would you mind*** give [sic] me two or three days? I will work those lost [sic] days in sumer [sic] holidays". (S72: female, elementary. Teacher training)
- "***Do you think*** you could lent [sic] me some money and I'll pay you back as soon as we get home?" (S19: female, intermediate, Law).

INTERNAL REQUEST MODIFIERS

gender	*proficiency*	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
Male	Elementary	0.32	0.557	25
	Intermediate	1.96	2.263	25
	Total	1.14	1.830	50
Female	Elementary	1.04	1.369	25
	Intermediate	2.04	2.508	25
	Total	1.54	2.062	50
Total	Elementary	**0.68**	1.096	50
	Intermediate	**2.00**	2.365	50
	Total	1.34	1.950	100

Table 4.17 Descriptive statistics concerning *internal request modifiers*

Similarly, the variable affecting the production of *internal request modifiers*, as a whole, is also the proficiency one. According to table 4.17 above, elementary undergraduates produce fewer internal modifiers (with a mean of **0.68**) than their intermediate counterparts (with a mean of **2.00**). In sum, then, the production of internal request modifiers is not altered by gender differences, but by the participants' proficiency level. In that respect, the present study supports previous ones (see Hassall, 2001; Martí, 2008a: 176), which have pinpointed the fact that some internal modifying devices might demand a more complex pragmalinguistic

structures such as the introductory formulae "would you mind?" or "do you think…?" reported earlier, a factor which would explain their increasing occurrence in the production of higher proficient male and female undergraduates.

4.5.1.2 Effect of gender on the use of external request modifiers

As regards our third hypothesis, according to which, *female subjects will produce more external request modifiers sub-types than male ones, when these mitigators are thought to compensate the requestee for providing a good or a service, whose degree of imposition cannot be lessened by the requester* (Brown, 1980: 117; Cameron 1998: 444; Martí, 2007), it seems to be confirmed by the outcomes. To illustrate this, we will start by reporting the findings obtained from having implemented a two-way ANOVA test for every sub-type of external request modifiers.

TYPE/SUB-TYPE OF EXTERNAL REQUEST MODIFIERS	F	*p* - value
Preparators	1.647	0.184
Reasons	6.013	0.001
Threats	1.588	0.197
Grounders	6.337	0.001
Non-intruders	1,779	0.156
Cost-minimizers	4,127	**0.008**
Sweeteners	1.811	0.150
Option-givers	2.211	0.092
Disarmers	6.000	0.001
Expanders	0.820	0.486
Promises of a reward	3.804	0.013
Appreciation tokens	2.805	**0.044**
EXTERNAL REQUEST MODIFIERS	8.903	0.000

Table 4.18 Two-way ANOVA test results concerning the production of *external request modifiers*

As can be gathered from the *p*-values coloured in grey, red, and, yellow; there are some external request modifiers whose production can be explained due to the impact of the participants' proficiency level; others that depend on the subjects' gender; and, a number of modifying devices which show the influence of both variables. Those external request modifiers whose frequency of use has only to do with the students' proficiency level are three: *non-intruders*, *cost-minimizers* and *option-givers*.

NON-INTRUDERS

gender	*proficiency*	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
Male	Elementary	0.56	0.870	25
	Intermediate	1.12	0.971	25
	Total	0.84	0.955	50
Female	Elementary	0.72	0.737	25
	Intermediate	0.92	1.038	25
	Total	0.82	0.896	50
Total	Elementary	**0.64**	0.802	50
	Intermediate	**1.02**	1.000	50
	Total	0.83	0.922	100

Table 4.19 Descriptive statistics concerning *non-intruders* (a sub-type of *disarmers*)

In table 4.19 above, the difference between means belonging to elementary (0.64) and intermediate (1.02) undergraduates amounted to 0.38, while the difference between male and female means was only of 0.02, a figure which is not statistically significant. In view of these results, it can be affirmed that the frequency of occurrence of these *external* request

modifying devices increased in line with subjects' higher proficiency level. Furthermore, it seems that it was not women but men the ones who produced a slightly higher mean of this sub-type of *disarmers*, *non-intruders*, which we will exemplify below:

Example (14)

- "***I know that you don't like cats but*** I have to go away for a week. Please, could you take the cats to your home?" (S52: male, elementary, Computering).
- "***I know that you are tired and you want to go home but***, before leaving, can you do 40 copies of this report? (S53: male, intermediate, Computering).

Cost-minimizers, same as *non-intruders*, are a sub-type of *disarmers*, and it was also intermediate students with a mean of 0.98 who outperformed elementary ones in their production of this *external* modifying device. In this respect, our findings are in line with previous studies with proficiency level as their main variable, according to which, higher proficiency level has the most significant effect on the use of *disarmers* as a whole. These external modifying devices denote both a good pragmalinguistic knowledge (use of subordinate clauses), and a stronger sociopragmatic sensitivity before highly impositive situations (see, e.g. Márquez Reiter, 2000: 129; Kobayashi & Rinnert, 2003: 169; and, Martí, 2008a: 178). However, the role played by the gender of the respondents, although far from being outstanding in statistical terms, should be also considered.

COST-MINIMIZERS

gender	*proficiency*	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
Male	Elementary	0.24	0.523	25
	Intermediate	0.80	0.816	25
	Total	0.52	0.735	50
Female	Elementary	0.60	1.118	25
	Intermediate	1.16	1.179	25
	Total	0.88	1.172	50
Total	Elementary	**0.42**	0.883	50
	Intermediate	**0.98**	1.020	50
	Total	0.70	0.990	100

Table 4.20 Descriptive statistics concerning *cost-minimizers* (a sub-type of *disarmers*)

This is so, because, according to table 4.20 above, it is women —with a mean of 0.88 *versus* men with a mean of 0.52— the subjects in the corpus who produced more *cost-minimizers*; and, although this difference is not statistically significant, it bears witness of women's orientation towards negatively polite oriented resources. In so doing, female participants in the study are not only showing their greater command of pragmatic formulae, but in line with Brown's suggestion (1980: 17), it is their feminine condition what might explain the need to mitigate a degree of imposition more heavily assessed to the extent of offering the requestee to share the cost of complying with the favour asked.

The same can be said in the case of *sweeteners*, which in the data —obtained but not reported here— from the implementation of the two-way ANOVA

test presented a *p*-value for the influence of gender of 0.059, a figure whose proximity with 0.050 (the limit from which statistically significance is acknowledged in our study), would mean that the variable gender was almost statistically significant. The higher tendency of female participants to use *sweeteners* in relation to men can be interpreted in line with Holmes' (1995: 5) definition of politeness, according to which this can be identified with "behaviour which actively expresses positive concerns for others, as well as non-imposing distancing behaviour". Besides, *sweeteners*, in their condition of complimenting formulae may also be a sign of the influence of the more positive-oriented Spanish culture in these EFL female's interlanguage request modification items.

In fact, only these data concerning both *cost-minimizers* and *sweeteners* (see example 15 for some realizations), can explain why the umbrella sub-type of *disarmers* was affected by both gender (in favour of women) and proficiency, when its third-subtype of *non-intruders* depended mainly on proficiency and was more frequently elicited in the case of male respondents.

Example (15)

- "Can you water my plants for a month, please? ***If you want, I bring them to your home***". (cost-minimizer written by S69: male, elementary, Computering).
- Excuse me, I'm going away for a week and I need someone to take care of my cats. Could you do it? ***It's only for a week…***" (cost-minimizer obtained from S74: female, intermediate, Teacher training).

- ***I know you have green fingers***, so would you mind water [sic] my plants for a month, please? (sweetener elicited by S47: male, intermediate, Computering).

The proficiency variable also explained, in isolation, the presence in our corpus of *option-givers*. Same as it happened with *non-intruders*, intermediate students superseded elementary ones in the production of this external request modifying device. The superiority of higher proficient subjects is shown with this nine times higher figure of 0.18, in comparison with the bare 0.02 mean employed by lower proficient respondents. However, contrary to *non-intruders*, it was female respondents (see table 4.21 below and example 16), not their male counterparts, the ones who produced more *option-givers* (with a mean of 0.14), also in line with the proficiency level attained.

OPTION-GIVERS

gender	*proficiency*	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
Male	Elementary	0.00	0.000	25
	Intermediate	0.12	0.332	25
	Total	**0.06**	0.240	50
Female	Elementary	0.04	0.200	25
	Intermediate	0.24	0.597	25
	Total	**0.14**	0.452	50
Total	Elementary	**0.02**	0.141	50
	Intermediate	**0.18**	0.482	50
	Total	0.10	0.362	100

Table 4.21 Descriptive statistics concerning *option-givers*

Example (16)

- "Could you help me to open the door, please? **Or take my suitcase if you prefer…**" (S86: female, intermediate, Teacher training).

In sum, all four sub-types under the umbrella of *disarmers*, saving the case of *non-intruders*, even when they are mainly influenced for the variable of proficiency, are good illustrations of how women try to reduce a given request rank of imposition, either by sharing the cost of its compliance, complimenting the requestee beforehand, or giving an option which shows concern for the respect of the interlocutor's right to see their freedom of action unimpeded.

Turning to *external* request modifiers which are only influenced by gender, we found the case of *appreciation tokens* or "thanks". As shown in table 4.22 below, *appreciation tokens* are among those request modifiers typically employed by women (see the difference between the gender means of 0.24 for males and 0.98 for women), because in Lorenzo-Dus and Bou-Franch's view (2003: 11), through them, women fit "the stereotype of being more prone to showing deference by going on record as incurring a debt".

Besides, inasmuch as the frequency of use decreased in the case of intermediate female respondents, it can be suggested that, along with "please" and repetition or *expanders*, possibly, *appreciation tokens* are also part of the kind of modification which do not involve a good command of complex syntactic structures and, at least in the case of girls and women,

are added to the request act in the first stages of pragmatic development (see Achiba, 2003). In fact, similarly to the resort to "please", the case of *appreciation tokens* must be one of the most easily acquired mitigators. This is so because *expanders* are not completely analogous to "please" and "thanks", because they tend to aggravate, instead of mitigating, the illocutionary force of requests and, as can be seen in table 4.18, *expanders* along with another aggravator as *threats* and attached mitigators like *preparators* have remained unaffected by both proficiency level and gender.

APPRECIATION TOKENS

gender	*proficiency*	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
Male	Elementary	0.08	0.400	25
	Intermediate	0.40	0.866	25
	Total	**0.24**	0.687	50
Female	Elementary	**1.20**	2.432	25
	Intermediate	**0.76**	1.200	25
	Total	**0.98**	1.911	50
Total	Elementary	**0.64**	1.816	50
	Intermediate	**0.58**	1.052	50
	Total	0.61	1.476	100

Table 4.22 Descriptive statistics concerning *appreciation tokens*

Precisely, before dealing with those *external* request modifiers sub-types influenced by both proficiency level and gender, it is worth highlighting the fact that female respondents also resorted to an aggravator as *threats*, breaking their apparently general pattern of preference for mitigating

request modifiers, in line with what we saw regarding the resort to *intensifiers* within the internal modifiers sub-types. Nevertheless, as shown in example 17 below, the vast majority of *threats* are produced by women when addressing the very drunken person at the pub situation.

Example (17)

- "Sir, can you go out the bar? ***If you don't do it, I will advise*** [i.e. call] ***security man***". (S79: female, intermediate, Teacher training).

Among those external request modifiers which are both affected by gender (in favour of females), and by proficiency level; *reasons*, *grounders*, *disarmers* and *promises of reward* are counted. These four remaining sub-types along with *appreciation tokens* can be seen as fully supporting our third hypothesis. This is so in the sense that, contrary to *cost-minimizers* —e.g. "Sister, can I wear your shoes? ***I promise you that I'll be careful*** (S36: female, elementary, Psychology)—, as well as *sweeteners* and *option-givers*; these four external *request* modifiers of *reasons*, *grounders, disarmers* and *promises of a reward* seem to adjust to those mitigators which aimed at compensating the requestee for complying with a request, whose degree of imposition cannot be lessened on the part of the requester (as it happen with *cost-minimizers*, *sweeteners* or *option givers*) and, thus, has to be justified (e.g. *reasons*, *grounders* and *disarmers*) or clearly recompensed (e.g. *promises of a reward*).

REASONS

gender	*proficiency*	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
Male	Elementary	4.60	3.524	25
	Intermediate	7.36	4.300	25
	Total	**5.98**	4.133	50
Female	Elementary	8.16	4.413	25
	Intermediate	9.00	3.189	25
	Total	**8.58**	3.834	50
Total	Elementary	**6.38**	4.342	50
	Intermediate	**8.18**	3.837	50
	Total	7.28	4.176	100

Table 4.23 Descriptive statistics concerning *reasons*

GROUNDERS

gender	*proficiency*	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
Male	Elementary	4.60	3.524	25
	Intermediate	7.56	4.214	25
	Total	**6.08**	4.125	50
Female	Elementary	8.24	4.428	25
	Intermediate	9.12	3.295	25
	Total	**8.68**	3.888	50
Total	Elementary	**6.42**	4.366	50
	Intermediate	**8.34**	3.826	50
	Total	7.38	4.197	100

Table 4.24 Descriptive statistics concerning *grounders*

DISARMERS

gender	*proficiency*	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
Male	Elementary	0.88	1.013	25
	Intermediate	2.32	1.701	25
	Total	**1.60**	1.565	50
Female	Elementary	1.84	1.772	25
	Intermediate	2.76	1.943	25
	Total	**2.30**	1.898	50
Total	Elementary	**1.36**	1.509	50
	Intermediate	**2.54**	1.821	50
	Total	1.95	1.766	100

Table 4.25 Descriptive statistics concerning *disarmers*

Example (18)

- REASON/GROUNDER: "Would you please stop smoking?" Smoke annoys me while I'm eating" (S1: female, elementary, English Philology). It is worth analysing the previous justification, in comparison with a COST-MINIMIZER employed in the same situation: "I'm still eating, can you wait a little time? When I finish, you can smoke all you want." (S36: female, elementary, Psychology).
- DISARMER: "***You are the last person I'd wish for doing it but…***could you look after my cats?" (S9: male, elementary, English Philology). The apologetic meaning of the *disarmer* should be compared with a COST-MINIMIZER used in the same situation: "Excuse me, I'm going away for a week and I need someone to take care of my cats. Could you do it? ***It's only for a week…***" (S74: female, intermediate, Teacher training).

PROMISES OF A REWARD

gender	*proficiency*	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
Male	Elementary	0.16	0.374	25
	Intermediate	0.24	0.436	25
	Total	**0.20**	0.404	50
Female	Elementary	0.24	0.436	25
	Intermediate	0.60	0.707	25
	Total	**0.42**	0.609	50
Total	Elementary	**0.20**	0.404	50
	Intermediate	**0.42**	0.609	50
	Total	0.31	0.526	100

Table 4.26 Descriptive statistics concerning *promises of a reward*

Promises of a reward show the same behaviour as *reasons/grounders* and *disarmers* in that, as mentioned earlier, all of them are more frequently used by female subjects and by intermediate students, both male and

female. Furthermore, as can be gathered from the comparison of requests included in example 19, the systematic resort on the part of female respondents to *promises of a reward* in situation 11 (a brother asking his sibling to tell their parents that he has failed all subjects), contrary to the more solidarity-oriented requests employed by male participants, illustrates Brown's (1980: 117) aforementioned contention that women "have a higher assessment than men of what counts as imposition".

Example (19)

- "Hey, bro! Tell mom and dad my grades. I'm really scared!" (S8: ***male***, intermediate, English Philology).
- "It will be OK that you tell mum and dad I have failed all subjects this year?" (S11, ***male***, intermediate, English Philology).
- "Please, sister! Can you tell it to our parents? ***I promised [sic] you I do all that you want***. Give me this favour, please!" (S40: ***female***, elementary, Psychology).
- Albi [nickname] please, can you tell mumy [sic] my results? ***I will give you 50 euros if you tell them my results***. (73: ***female***, intermediate, Teacher training).

In fact, as shown in table 4.27, it is female respondents the ones who employ the majority of this *external* type of request modifiers (with a mean of 14.24, faced with a lower mean of 9.32 displayed by male subjects), as well as it is higher proficient undergraduates (intermediate *versus* elementary) those who resort more to these peripheral supportive moves

with a mean of 13.70 in comparison with the mean of 9.86 concerning lower proficient participants. However, both female and intermediate means do not double male and elementary means, showing then a greater confluence between participants in terms of gender and proficiency level effects as far as *external* request modifiers are concerned.

EXTERNAL REQUEST MODIFIERS

gender	*proficiency*	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
Male	Elementary	6.64	4.508	25
	Intermediate	12.00	6.298	25
	Total	**9.32**	6.059	50
Female	Elementary	13.08	6.701	25
	Intermediate	15.40	7.042	25
	Total	**14.24**	6.903	50
Total	Elementary	**9.86**	6.522	50
	Intermediate	**13.70**	6.831	50
	Total	11.78	6.919	100

Table 4.27 Descriptive statistics concerning *external request modifiers*

In sum, then, the production of *external* request modifiers as a whole behave in agreement to the influence of both gender and proficiency level, but this influence is not so marked as the one we will see in the case of *multifunctional* request modifying devices.

4.5.1.3 Effect of gender on the use of multifunctional request modifiers

The fourth hypothesis guiding this study assumed that *female subjects will produce more multifunctional request modifiers sub-types than male ones, whenever these modifiers mark the kind of relationship in terms of power and/or*

social distance between requester and requestee, as well as whenever they convey the expression of added nuances of appealing and emotive meanings (Davis, 1995; Barrios Espinosa 1997-1998: 433-434, Barrett *et al.*, 2000; Fisher & Manstead, 2000: 90; Ackerman *et al*., 2001: 811; Wichmann, 2005; Martí, 2007). In order to confirm or discard this hypothesis, we will begin by recalling the reasons why *attention-getters* and "please" have been classified in our taxonomy as a request type other than *internal* and *external* ones. Such reasons go beyond the fact that (i) "please" can be considered in relation to the request head act as both *internal* (i.e. in medial position) and *external* request modifying (i.e. appearing either at the beginning or at the end of the request as such); and/or, (ii) *attention-getters* have been considered in Blum-Kulka *et al.*'s (1989) taxonomy as a category different from both head acts and supportive moves.

It is our contention that *attention-getters* and "please" are those request modifiers which better illustrate the extent to which women's requestive behaviour can be-other oriented. As quoted earlier, in Holmes' view (1995: 5), such behaviour "actively expresses positive concerns for others, as well as non-imposing distancing behaviour". In order to test this assumption, the findings regarding the influence of gender and proficiency level obtained by means of implementing a two-way ANOVA test are reported below:

TYPE/SUB-TYPE OF MULTIFUNCTIONAL REQUEST MODIFIERS & GLOBAL REQUESTS MODIFIERS	**F**	***p* - value**
Apologetic attention-getters	3.459	**0.019**
Terms of endearment	0.681	0.566
Greetings	0.566	0.228
Alerters	2.010	0.118
Family as addressees	4.672	**0.004**
Friends as addressees	6.395	**0.001**
Low SD addressees	6.772	**0.000**
Acquaintances as addressees	2.144	0.100
Work colleagues & superiors as addressees	4.277	**0.007**
Medium SD addressees	4.137	**0.008**
Strangers/High SD addressees	4.449	**0.006**
Manipulative "please"	5.421	**0.002**
Prescriptive/face-saving "please"	1.844	0.144
Contract-based "please"	2.110	0.104
"Please" *as elliptical request*	1.010	0.392
Pleading	2.854	**0.041**
"Please"	8.149	**0.000**
MULTI-FUNCTIONAL REQUEST MODIFIERS	15.236	**0.000**
REQUEST MODIFICATION	19.535	**0.000**

Table 4.28 Two-way ANOVA test results concerning the production of *multifunctional request modifiers* (i.e. different sub-types of attention-getters and different sub-types of *please*) and all aggregated sub-types of request modification (i.e. internal, external, and multi-functional request modifiers)

As can be gathered from the data displayed in table 4.28, two are the *multifunctional* request modifiers significantly influenced by the variable of proficiency level in statistical terms, namely, apologetic *attention-getters* (e.g. "Excuse me") and *prescriptive/face-saving* "please". Their frequency of use may increase in line with classroom instruction, since both modifying devices are among the pragmatic features which are explicitly taught in the EFL classroom. In fact, whereas "Excuse me" is easily found in conversations included in the more widely used textbooks; in the case of

"please", its embedded position in the request head act has been also identified as a proof of learners "approximating to the NS norm" (see Martínez-Flor, 2009: 40). No wonder, then, that their mean of occurrence is higher in the case of intermediate undergraduates (coloured in green) outperforming elementary ones (see orange figures).

APOLOGETIC ATTENTION-GETTERS

gender	*proficiency*	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
Male	Elementary	1.00	1.291	25
	Intermediate	2.36	2.289	25
	Total	1.68	1.963	50
Female	Elementary	2.04	1.767	25
	Intermediate	2.68	2.304	25
	Total	2.36	2.058	50
Total	Elementary	**1.52**	1.619	50
	Intermediate	**2.52**	2.279	50
	Total	2.02	2.030	100

Table 4.29 Descriptive statistics concerning the production of *apologetic attention-getters*

PRESCRIPTIVE/FACE-SAVING PLEASE

gender	*proficiency*	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
Male	Elementary	0.00	0.000	25
	Intermediate	0.32	1.249	25
	Total	0.16	0.889	50
Female	Elementary	0.12	0.600	25
	Intermediate	0.64	1.524	25
	Total	0.38	1.176	50
Total	Elementary	**0.06**	0.424	50
	Intermediate	**0.48**	1.389	50
	Total	0.27	1.043	100

Table 4.30 Descriptive statistics concerning the production of *prescriptive-face-saving* "please"

FAMILY AS ADDRESSEES

gender	*proficiency*	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
Male	Elementary	0.60	0.913	25
	Intermediate	0.52	0.653	25
	Total	**0.56**	0.787	50
Female	Elementary	1.32	0.900	25
	Intermediate	1.20	1.225	25
	Total	**1.26**	1.065	50
Total	Elementary	**0.96**	0.968	50
	Intermediate	**0.86**	1.030	50
	Total	0.91	0.996	100

Table 4.31 Descriptive statistics concerning the production of *attention-getters with family as addressees*

FRIENDS AS ADDRESSEES

gender	*proficiency*	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
Male	Elementary	0.00	0.000	25
	Intermediate	0.04	0.200	25
	Total	**0.02**	0.141	50
Female	Elementary	0.28	0.458	25
	Intermediate	0.36	0.490	25
	Total	**0.32**	0.471	50
Total	Elementary	0.14	0.351	50
	Intermediate	0.20	0.404	50
	Total	0.17	0.378	100

Table 4.32 Descriptive statistics concerning the production of *attention-getters with friends as addressees*

LOW SD ADDRESSEES

gender	*proficiency*	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
Male	Elementary	0.60	0.913	25
	Intermediate	0.56	0.712	25
	Total	**0.58**	0.810	50
Female	Elementary	1.60	1.155	25
	Intermediate	1.56	1.502	25
	Total	**1.58**	1.326	50
Total	Elementary	**1.10**	1.147	50
	Intermediate	**1.06**	1.268	50
	Total	1.08	1.203	100

Table 4.33 Descriptive statistics concerning the production of *attention-getters with low SD addressees* (i.e. family and friends)

ACQUAINTANCES AS ADDRESSEES

gender	*proficiency*	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
Male	Elementary	0.00	0.000	25
	Intermediate	0.08	0.400	25
	Total	**0.04**	0.283	50
Female	Elementary	0.12	0.440	25
	Intermediate	0.28	0.542	25
	Total	**0.20**	0.495	50
Total	Elementary	0.06	0.314	50
	Intermediate	0.18	0.482	50
	Total	0.12	0.409	100

Table 4.34 Descriptive statistics concerning the production of *attention-getters with acquaintances as addressees*

WORK COLLEAGUES & SUPERIORS AS ADDRESSEES

gender	*proficiency*	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
Male	Elementary	0.12	0.332	25
	Intermediate	0.24	0.523	25
	Total	**0.18**	0.438	50
Female	Elementary	0.44	0.712	25
	Intermediate	0.76	0.970	25
	Total	**0.60**	0.857	50
Total	Elementary	0.28	0.573	50
	Intermediate	0.50	0.814	50
	Total	0.39	0.709	100

Table 4.35 Descriptive statistics concerning the production of *attention-getters with work-colleagues and superiors as addressees*

MEDIUM SD ADDRESSEES

gender	*proficiency*	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
Male	Elementary	0.12	0.332	25
	Intermediate	0.32	0.852	25
	Total	**0.22**	0.648	50
Female	Elementary	0.56	1.044	25
	Intermediate	1.04	1.369	25
	Total	**0.80**	1.229	50
Total	Elementary	0.34	0.798	50
	Intermediate	0.68	1.186	50
	Total	0.51	1.020	100

Table 4.36 Descriptive statistics concerning the production of *attention-getters with medium SD addressees* (i.e. acquaintances and work colleagues and superiors)

HIGH SD/ STRANGERS AS ADDRESSEES

gender	*proficiency*	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
Male	Elementary	0.12	0.440	25
	Intermediate	0.32	0.690	25
	Total	**0.22**	0.582	50
Female	Elementary	0.84	1.068	25
	Intermediate	1.04	1.541	25
	Total	**0.94**	1.316	50
Total	Elementary	0.48	0.886	50
	Intermediate	0.68	1.236	50
	Total	0.58	1.075	100

Table 4.37 Descriptive statistics concerning the production of *attention-getters with high SD addressees* (i.e. strangers)

In light of the data resulting from descriptive statistics above, the first part of hypothesis 4 (according to which, *women would outperform men in the production of multifunctional request modifiers whenever these modifiers marked the kind of relationship in terms of power and/or social distance between requester and requestee*) is confirmed. Some kind of *attention-getters*, such as greetings (e.g. "Hello!") or alerters ("Look!", "Listen!") can be more indistinctively and more safely use as involving strategies to address any requestee, regardless of their potential differences with the requester in terms of power of social distance. However, *attention-getters with acknowledgement of interlocutors* are modulated, from the use of titles to the resort to nicknames, not only to convey but also to create the kind of social relationship existing between the requester and the requestee.

With a statistically higher significant *p*-values in the case of *low SD* addresses (0.000), followed by *high SD* or strangers (0.001) and *medium SD* ones (0.004), these *multifunctional* request modifiers do not adjust to Wolfson's 'bulge-theory' which, as reported by Nikula (1996: 26), holds that both increasing distance —the case of strangers— and increasing intimacy —with family and friends— "reduce the need to make use of politeness strategies".

As far as our female respondents are concerned, it is their perception of the degree of imposition, involved in complying with the favour asked for, the key factor that can or cannot exempt the requester from showing consideration, even when the requestee is a relative. In that vein, example 20 has been included to illustrate the different calculation and displaying of request mitigators by male and female students in situation 4, when a sister is asked to lend her shoes to her sister whose favourite shoes have just broken (we should recall that according to the pilot study carried out with a group of NSs in London, the rank of imposition in situation 4 was regarded as "weak"). This example is particularly meaningful, because male subjects are asked to adopt the female role of the sister with the shoes broken, and to some extent, they may feel tempted to imitate a possibly highly stereotyped "feminine" speech style:

Example (20)

- "I know you love these shoes. But look what happened! Can I borrow yours?" (S8: male, intermediate, English Philology).
- "Please, ***sister***, can you give me your ***pink*** shoes to go to the party?" (S23: male, elementary, Industrial Engineering).
- "**You're so pretty**. Can I wear one of your pair of shoes?" (S53: male, intermediate, Computering).
- "Oh, ***my dear sister***! Can you leave me your shoes, please?" (S56: male, intermediate, Computering)
- "***Sweet***, look my shoes. Lend me your [i.e. yours], please. (S72: female, elementary, Teacher training).
- "**Sara,** if you don't mind, can you lent [sic] me your shoes to go to the party, please?" (S73: female, intermediate, Teacher training).
- "**Araceli**, can you lend me your blue shoes? I have broken my favourite shoes and I can't go to the party. My dress is ***blue***, exactly as your shoes. **Please, please**. **My favourite sister!**" (S79: female, intermediate, Teacher training).

Interestingly, there no seems to be so huge a distance between male and female respondents. Perhaps, it may be suggested that gender stereotypes in terms of linguistic behaviour affects both male and female learners. The fact that it is the more emotionally loaded sub-type of "please", the one that is also more clearly affected by the variable gender appears to support this contention. Contrary to the requests reproduced in example 20, however, the category of *pleading* is remarkably noteworthy because it was exclusively used by the female participants in our corpus. Apparently, the

gender stereotype of the over-emotional woman only worked with female subjects, although it is also true that, as seen in Chapter 3 (see Davis, 1995; Barrett *et al.*, 2000; Fisher & Manstead, 2000: 9; and Ackerman *et al.*, 2001: 811), boys and men have been shown to hide their emotions —except for anger—, when they might present them as vulnerable, which would be the case of pleading the requestee to obtain a favour.

PLEADING

gender	*proficiency*	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
Male	Elementary	0.00	0.000	25
	Intermediate	0.00	0.000	25
	Total	**0.00**	0.000	50
Female	Elementary	**0.28**	0.614	25
	Intermediate	**0.20**	0.577	25
	Total	**0.24**	0.591	50
Total	Elementary	**0.14**	0.452	50
	Intermediate	**0.10**	0.416	50
	Total	0.12	0.433	100

Table 4.38 Descriptive statistics concerning the production of *pleading*

The aggregated category of "please" (i.e. *manipulative*, *prescriptive/face-saving*, *contract-based*, *elliptical request* "please" and *pleading*) is the last one which is only affected by the variable gender, as it is shown in table 4.39 below. This finding appears to be in accordance with Lakoff's (1975: 55-56) view when she wrote:

> Women are the repositories of tact and know the right things to say to other people [...]. Women are supposed to be particularly careful to say 'please' and 'thank you' [...] certainly a woman who fails at these tasks is apt to be more in trouble than a man who does so: in a man,

it's 'just like a man', and indulgently overlooked [...] In a woman, it's social death.

PLEASE

gender	*proficiency*	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
Male	Elementary	5.80	3.731	25
	Intermediate	7.08	3.366	25
	Total	**6.44**	3.575	50
Female	Elementary	9.52	2.859	25
	Intermediate	9.72	3.373	25
	Total	**9.62**	3.096	50
Total	Elementary	7.66	3.788	50
	Intermediate	8.40	3.591	50
	Total	8.03	3.691	100

Table 4.39 Descriptive statistics concerning the production of "please" (i.e. *manipulative* "please", *prescriptive/face-saving* "please", *contract-based* "please", *elliptical request* "please", and *pleading*)

This does not mean that, apart from *pleading* and "please" as a whole, none of the remaining sub-types included in this category deserve calling our attention. In fact, the sub-type coined by Sato (2008: 1275) as *manipulative* "please" (i.e. "please" in initial position) is the only modifier throughout the analysis conducted in our study that presented a richer range of findings and, what is more, a significant *p*-value linked to the interaction of both gender and proficiency, and, thus, coloured in purple in table 4.28.

In that respect, and contrary to male subjects whose production is in line with higher proficiency level achieved, although with a minimum

difference between elementary and intermediate students' means, it is the female participants in the study the ones who employed more occurrences of *manipulative* "please" when their proficiency level is elementary (see table 4.40). In other words, as we commented regarding *expanders* and *appreciation tokens*, initial "please" as a request modifier which does not need a higher command of more complex syntactic structures can be attached to request head acts in the first stages of pragmatic development (see Achiba, 2003).

When resorting to initial "please", native speakers are, according to Sato (2008: 1275), marking their "firm disposition" of pursuing an immediate interactional goal, in detriment of showing any concern towards the addressee's face needs or interests. As a result, both *pleading* and manipulative "please" have in common their unstable status as mitigators with respect to the request head act, since, depending on each situation, they can be interpreted as "expressive", but also as "insistent" or even "aggressive" devices. Hence, their classification as *multifunctional* request modifiers seems fully justified.

Additionally, the use of "please" in initial position in the case of Valencian EFL subjects might be the result from an L1 transfer effect. This is so because, in the contrastive study carried out by Lorenzo-Dus and Bou-Franch in 2003, male undergraduates opted for apologetic *attention-getters*

like “disculpe” (i.e. “Excuse me”), while female students favoured the use of “por favor” (i.e. “please).

MANIPULATIVE PLEASE

gender	*proficiency*	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
Male	Elementary	**1.84**	2.656	25
	Intermediate	**1.92**	2.080	25
	Total	**1.88**	2.362	50
Female	Elementary	**4.40**	3.240	25
	Intermediate	**2.20**	2.327	25
	Total	**3.30**	3.005	50
Total	Elementary	**3.12**	3.205	50
	Intermediate	**2.06**	2.189	50
	Total	2.59	2.782	100

Table 4.40 Descriptive statistics concerning the production of manipulative *please*

Table 4.41 below summarizes the findings concerning *multifunctional* request modifiers as a whole:

MULTIFUNCTIONAL REQUEST MODIFICATION

gender	*proficiency*	Mean	Standard Deviation	N
Male	Elementary	7.76	5.044	25
	Intermediate	10.84	5.513	25
	Total	**9.30**	5.456	50
Female	Elementary	15.24	3.643	25
	Intermediate	16.40	5.979	25
	Total	**15.82**	4.935	50
Total	Elementary	**11.50**	5.765	50
	Intermediate	**13.62**	6.347	50
	Total	12.56	6.125	100

Table 4.41 Descriptive statistics concerning the production of *multifunctional request modifiers* (i.e. different sub-types of *attention-getters* and “please”)

In view of table 4.41, it can be ascertained that the *multifunctional* type of request modifiers is the one on which the effect of gender is clearer. This is so because, while the difference between males and females goes from a mean of 9.30 to a mean of 15.82, the distance existing between elementary (with a mean of 11.50) and intermediate students (with a mean of 13.62) is not so remarkable, quantitatively speaking.

Besides, as it happened with the production of *appreciation tokens* in the case of *internal* modifiers (see table 4.22), the *multifunctional* sub-types of *family as addresses*, and, obviously, its aggregated category of *low SD addresses* (see tables 4.31 and 4.33), along with *pleading* (see table 4.38) and *manipulative* "please" are counted among those request modifiers in which it is the elementary subjects in the study (both male and females in the case of *family addresses* and only females regarding *pleading* and *manipulative* "please") the ones who employed more occurrences of these pragmatic devices when their proficiency level is elementary. In other words, the frequency of appearance of these *multifunctional* request modifiers decreases in line with higher proficiency level attained.

Therefore, most of these sub-types of *external* and *multifunctional* modifiers are the ones which show a clear developmental pattern documented by authors such as Achiba (2003), at least as far as initial or *manipulative* "please" is concerned. Interestingly, the majority of the aforementioned

request modifiers (i.e. "thanks" and initial "please") also coincides with those kind of mitigators presented in previous literature as being typical and even prototypical of this supposed "feminine" stereotypical way of speaking. Interpreted, either as conveying the powerless condition of women, in Lakoff's 1975 view, or their skill in producing cooperative-oriented genderlects, according to Tannen (1986, 1990a/1991, 1990b, 1990c, 1995, 1998); this "female" or "feminine" linguistic features have been being discussed and argued for and against, especially since the advent of the feminist second wave and its *difference* stance or *two-cultures* hypothesis was put forward.

Conversely, the production by elementary female students of *pleading* would confirm the second aspect pinpointed in our fourth hypothesis, namely, the expression of affective and emotive meanings conveyed in a sub-type of "please" like *pleading*. This is so, because *pleading* is probably the most emotional-loaded category among the sub-types of "please", along with the *manipulative* sub-type or initial "please".

The fact that only relatives or family terms within the sub-type *attention getters with acknowledgement of interlocutor* are more frequently used by both male and female elementary learners seems to confirm the higher resort to social indexing request modifiers. However, this finding also contradicts the existence of a direct link to the stereotype of women as

more family-oriented individuals than men. The shared stronger family-orientation or closeness of both male and female participants in the case of our Spanish EFL learners can be attributed to the features of their origin Mediterranean culture which, same as documented by Economidou-Kogetsidis (2008: 130) for Greek learners of English, still regards family as one of the most respected social institutions.

Finally, all the added affective and emotive nuances conveyed by *pleading* (see for example Wichmann, 2005), a request modifier —which, meaningfully, was not produced by any of the male participants in our corpus—, may make women appear as more vulnerable and overemotional human beings. Yet, at the same time and from an acquisitional point of view, the resort to *pleading* is highly useful for elementary students as far as their initial pragmalinguistic repertoire is concerned.

As it happens with the case of "thanks", the use of "please" is one of the most transparent and generalized (at least in the case of Western cultures) polite markers, which is explicitly taught to children by their parents, teachers, and other carers. By adding a particular intonation to "please", the EFL elementary student draws on his/her L1 easily acquired and most frequently used pragmatic particles and, simultaneously, compensates for his/her lack of knowledge of other more complex syntactically speaking

pragmalinguistic formulae, which are not still available to them, but can be conveyed by this *pleading*. Moreover, in line with *manipulative* "please", as interpreted by Sato (2008: 1275), *pleading* can be regarded, depending on the context of the speech act event in which the requester is involved, as "expressive", "persuasive", "insistent"; or, even "aggressive".

Be that as it may, the testing of the four hypotheses formulated to guide the present study, although they were not fully confirmed with respect to the perception of internal modifiers and in the case of family addressees, exposes the fact that the potential effect of the variable gender on offline pragmatic knowledge is worth being pursued and further explored, at least as far as request modifiers are concerned. Precisely, it is in the final section of this chapter where we will advance some aspects that would deserve to be investigated in the near future, as well as some of the many limitations of this study.

4.6 Limitations and further research

As shown in the previous section, in which the results of the present study were presented and discussed, most of the four hypotheses tested when conducting this piece of research were confirmed by the findings. Only the fact that female EFL participants *did* outperform male ones in the number and variety of request modifiers elicited (hypothesis 1) would have supported our assumption that gender can and should be an individual

variable whose effect on pragmatic competence does deserve to be fully investigated.

All in all, the present piece of research has to be regarded as highly exploratory in nature. This is because virtually absent previous literature within the field of interlanguage pragmatics, saving the pilot sudy we conducted in 2007, has involved more difficulties in formulating the hypotheses, which are mostly based on L1 pragmatics and cross-cultural pragmatics previous studies; and, therefore, the interpretention of the findings in a wider and shared theoretical framework has presented a serious challenge.

Apart from these theoretical handicaps, our study is also mostly tentative, methodologically speaking, due to the fact that both the sample of population and the data-collecting procedure chosen presented some clear limitations. Concerning the former, a proficiency placement test should have been implemented with the inclusion of the measuring of both writing and speaking skills. Besides, other potentially influential factors, apart from proficiency level, such as participants' socio-economic background, their previous stereotypical beliefs regarding gender (see Visser's 2002 test), or their motivation to learn the English language; all of them aspects which might have affected the subjects' pragmatic online knowledge, could have also been controlled in order to ensure the

potential role of gender in isolation with respect to the perception of the targeted pragmalinguistic items.

As far as the elicitation tool is concerned, it is true that WDCTs present some advantages in the early stages of research in order to easily collect a first corpus of data (see Sasaki, 1998; or, Billmyer & Varghese, 2000). However, the fact that we first aspired to deal with pragmatic competence as a whole, and not only with offline pragmatic knowledge, defined by Félix-Brasdefer (2010: 45) as "sociopragmatic knowledge in a non-interactive format", would have made highly advisable the collection of naturallistic data processed by means of CA. If this had not been possible due to institutional constraints, authors such as Félix-Brasdéfer (2010: 46-47, 54) has recently advocated, on the one hand, for the implementation of WDCTs with refined versions such as COPT or MET (what he calls "interactive DCTs"); and, on the other, he has also suggested the convenience of complementing the data obtained through WDCTs with retrospective or concurrent verbal reports of the kind of stimulated recall or think-aloud protocols.

Finally, further research should take into account that, whenever the analysis of gender is put forward in the field of ILP, the condition of both male and female subjects as ESL or EFL learners will call for considering the advantages and disadvantages of one of these two learning contexts.

Since in our case we are immersed in an EFL environment, the link existing between the input to which our learners are exposed and their development in terms of pragmatic competence should be more deepely analysed.

Throughout this chapter we pointed to the potential benefitial effects of some ELT materials or literary works (see, Poulou, 1997; Barrios Espinosa, 1997-1998; and/or, Molina Plaza, 1997-1998), but a direct link between enriched pragmatic sources of input (e.g. including audiovisual materials) and learners' noticing of pragmatic target-oriented features is far from having being established, as it usually happens with all issues involving language acquisition. However, inasmuch as female language students have been presented in the section devoted to gender and the EFL classroom as more attentive than their male peers would deserve to be further explored in order to design some instructional interventions, since the positive effect of noticing on pragmatic acquisition has been repeatedly highlighted by authors like Schmidt (1993, 1995, 2001).

The fact that the second hypothesis with respect to *internal* modifiers was not confirmed by the findings poins to existing deficiencies in some of our EFL classrooms concerning the teaching of pragmatic competence. If conversationalist skills —which would have included the explicit teaching of typically oral native speakers' linguistic devices such as *hedges* or

fillers—, were not virtually absent from EFL programmes which, unfortunately, are still mainly grammar-oriented, it is thought that the participants in our study would have been able to produce more internal request modifiers of this kind.

However beneficial individual variables (such as proficiency level, length of stay abroad, or gender in the sense of facilitating female socialization in polite strategies which coincide with the target language pragmatic strategies) might be as far as the development of pragmatic competence is concerned, most studies in the field of interlanguage pragmatics seem to have concurred with the fact that more pragmatic instruction treatements (e.g. awareness-raising approaches) are needed. They, along with authentic and richer pragmatic materials, should be designed in order to meet EFL students' needs. This study is just a first step to measure gendered pragmatic offline knowledge and to detect those pragmatic resources which are lacking in our specific foreign language instructed context.

CONCLUSION

The main goal of this study was to analyse the production of request modifiers by exploring an individual variable, that of gender, which has been mostly neglected within the field of interlanguage pragmatics. In so doing, we aspired to document both differences and similarities in males and females' perception of these pragmatic devices. Hence, the title of the present doctoral dissertation: *Gender reality* (i.e. both similarities and differences) *and offline pragmatic knowledge* (i.e. non-interactive use)*: EFL learners' perception of request modifiers.*

Why did we resort to the terms "offline pragmatic knowledge" (taken from Félix-Brasdéfer, 2010: 45), and use the word "perception" rather than production or performance? The answer has to do with the limitations of the data-gathering tool consisting of WDCTs. Different scholar voices have claimed for dealing with "discourse pragmatics" (see, for example, Kasper, 2006a, 2006b), instead of continuing implementing written tasks which cannot offer an approach to real communication, but only learners' perception of how they *should* communicate in the different situations and contexts presented to them, either in DCTs or by means of oral role plays.

Given the fact that this study, as repeteadly mentioned throughout its pages, is highly exploratory in nature, the aforementioned methodological limitations were accepted, inasmuch as WDCTs were regarded as useful to collect a first and basic corpus of data. Further deficiencies can be also

detected as far as the sample of population participating in this experiment is concerned. This is so because, although the effect of proficiency level was the second individual variable controlled when processing the data, other potential features such as students' socio-economic background, motivation before studying English; or, previous stereotypical beliefs on gender issues were not measured beforehand.

All in all, in view of the results reported in Chapter 4, when the study outcomes are compared and contrasted with the four hypotheses formulated to guide the investigation, the condition of our female subjects either as women or as language learners appears to have a different weight on the research findings. Concerning the use of internal request modifiers (e.g. *openers*, *hedges*, *fillers* and i*ntensifiers*), for example, female participants' role as language learners seems to have overriden their linguistic behaviour as tentative and more negatively polite oriented personae when requesting.

This would be so, provided we forgot the fact that the female preference for this kind of realizations of *internal* request modifiers by means of *hedges* or *fillers* was pointed to in the case of Anglo-Saxon native speaker women, whose culture is more negatively oriented in terms of politeness than our students' origin culture and language. In other words, not all the findings reported by L1 pragmatics can be directly transferred to

interlanguage pragmatics, and therefore, to the wider field of second language acquisition, as it has been usually done with respect to other linguistic elements (vocabulary acquisition) or skills (reading and writing processes).

In fact, both hypotheses 3 and 4 were confirmed by the findings because they are more in tune, not only with females' different calculation of facework, but also with their status as foreign language learners with a specific cultural origin, which differs from the target language and culture in terms of politeness orientation. More specifically, the behaviour of female students concerning *external* request modifiers (hypothesis 3) and emotionally-loaded *multifunctional* ones (second part of hypothesis 4) illustrates, on the one hand, the prevalence of Western women's societal position as still subordinated individuals who, in evaluating the rank of imposition as higher than their male counterparts, seek to compensate requestees for their compliance; and, on the other hand, the higher frequency of occurrence of both *manipulative* "please" and *pleading* endorses the stereotype of women as overemotional human beings.

Whether this higher command of some request modifiers sub-types on the part of our EFL female students is due to feminine psychological traits detected in women's personality and behaviour as a homogeneous group; or they derive from the influence of those Western gender stereoypes we

analysed in Chapter 2, it is difficult to ascertain. What really matters is the fact that, same as it happened in the case of other superior verbal skills and attitudes detected in females in the context of the EFL/ESL clasroom, both the similarities and differences between male and female language learners as far as pragmatic devices are concerned should be taken into account. In so doing, awareness-raising treatments would find a place on the teaching agenda, especially when they aimed at enhancing the noticing of those "invisible" request modifiers absent from our participants' pragmatic production (e.g. most *fillers* and all *hedges*).

In sum, further research is needed to explore the extent to which female students might benefit for an initial advantage in the acquisition of pragmatic competence, as it was defined in the first chapter of this doctoral dissertation. As shown in the case of learner-learner interaction in EFL classrooms, the goal is not to find tyrants and victims or to keep the study of modern languages as one of the feminine domains in the curricula. Same as all learners may benefit for females' cooperative styles in classroom oral work, which have been proven to provide more comprehensible input and output, they can also make the most of girls/women's higher pragmatic sensitivity before high imposing situations when acquiring pragmatic aspects of the target language.

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APPENDIX

WRITTEN DISCOURSE COMPLETION TASK

Name: ....

✍ **Complete the following sections with information about yourself:**
Completa les seccions següents amb la teva informació personal:

A. Age: _______________

B. Gender: Male ☐ Female ☐

C. Years studying English at:

- School: ____
- High School: ____
- University: ____
- Other public or private institutions: ______________________

D. Names of course books or materials used: ___________________
____
____
____

F. Mother tongue (First Language): __________________________

G. What language do you use?

	Catalan/Valencian	Castilian/Spanish	Others: ....
With your parents/ at home			
With your friends			
When you go shopping			
In class			
With your teachers			

E. In your opinion, which is your proficiency level in these languages

	Catalan/Valencian	Castilian/Spanish	English	Others:	Others: ....
Bad (no idea)					
A little					
Good					
Excellent					

✍ **Read these situations and write down what you would say in English:**
Llegeix les situacions següents i escriu el que diries en anglès:

1. You and a friend arrive in Dublin and go to your hotel. You left your credit card at home and you don't have enough money to pay for the hotel. You ask your friend:

....

....

2. A couple is having dinner in a restaurant. The waiter is speaking very quickly and they cannot understand the menu. The woman asks the waiter:

....

....

3. A father and his daughter are on a bus. The driver is driving very quickly and the daughter is scared. The father asks the driver:

....

....

4. You are going to a party. You've broken the heel on your favourite shoes. Your sister wears the same size. You ask her:

....

....

5. You are in a restaurant having dinner. Someone starts smoking before you finish your meal. The smoke is annoying you. You ask that person:

....

....

6. You have your first oral presentation tomorrow. You need some advice. You ask a teacher:

....

....

7. Your neighbour always walks his/her dog inside the building. You are not happy with that. You ask him/her:

....

....

8. Your friend is coming to visit. You need a place to stay and you want to borrow your uncle's apartment. You ask him:

....

....

9. You have a very heavy suitcase and cannot open the train door to get in the train. You ask a policeman passing by:

....

....

10. You work as a shop assistant. You need two days off because your mother is ill, but you have no holidays left. You ask your boss:

....

....

11. Your brother has failed all subjects this year. He does not want to tell your parents. He wants you to tell them. He asks you:

....

....

12. You work at the information desk in Heathrow airport. A passenger wants to go to central London. S/he asks you:

....

....

13. In an office a boss needs 40 copies of a report. Her secretary is about to go home. She asks her secretary:

....

....

14. You work at a pub at the bar. A very drunk person just walked in. Your contract says you cannot allow drunken people in the bar. You ask him/her:

....

....

15. Your friend is going away for a month. S/he needs someone to water his plants. S/he asks you:

....

....

16. You are going away for a week. You need your neighbour to look after your three cats. S/he doesn't like cats. You ask your neighbour:

....

....