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**THE EFFECT OF ONLINE CROSS-CULTURAL  
CONSERVATION THROUGH VIRTUAL CLASSROOM ON EFL  
LEARNERS' PRAGMATIC COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT :  
THE CASE OF EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY (USA)  
AND TLEMCEM UNIVERSITY (ALGERIA)**

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for the Degree of Doctorate in Applied Linguistics and T.E.F.L*

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## ABSTRACT

With growing emphases on communicative competence, the teaching of pragmatics is essential for learners to use language appropriately in various contexts. Unfortunately, though many studies believe that learning in native-speaking contexts and having face-to-face conversations with native speakers will enhance learner's pragmatic knowledge, for most EFL learners these conditions are rarely met.

In recent years, one promising field in network-based language teaching, henceforth NBLT, is the application of videoconference technology for assisting learners to engage in meaningful speech interactions. Such technology facilitates the development of real-life conversations, in which learners find themselves as if in a face-to-face interaction with native speakers. This field is constantly growing; however, few studies have been published to date in which online teaching is explored to assess the impact that technology use may have on learners' pragmatic development. Although developmental issues are their primary research goal, most of these studies have contributed a great deal to our understanding of EFL pragmatic use but less to our understanding of pragmatic development. This dissertation strives to fill this gap.

The present study, following a sociocultural approach, will examine if online interactions with native speakers help language learners to adjust their linguistic use with their interlocutors and learn when and how it is proper to make certain linguistic participations. Our case study is one example of these computer-mediated intercultural communications through approaches termed 'telecollaborative'. It is a world-cultures course taught through virtual classroom. The participants are 14 Algerian students from Tlemcen University and 16 American students from East Carolina University.

In our situation, the interactions are all naturalistic and will not include any elicited data. Video-taping the class, fortunately part of the class itself, was the best means to provide a rich ethnographic observation of naturalistic data. The observation was cross-sectional, i.e., at two single points in time: the beginning and the end of the link. The videos were, then, translated into transcripts that we will pool from the instances of help that knowing about the target culture might help in learning the language of that culture.

The data are, then, analyzed qualitatively to discover how learners support each other's learning of the target language, as learners were recorded when they transacted interactive tasks through their weekly videoconference links, i.e., the transcripts are analyzed for the features relating to assistance and pragmatic development with the idea that the assistance a learner receives through collaboration or interaction with an SL/FL expert might also push pragmatic development forwards.

## DEDICATION

My heartfelt thanks go to my parents - especially my wonderful, loving mother- and my brothers and sisters, without whose unfailing love, understanding, encouragement, and support over time and distance, I could not have got this far.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CA	Conversation Analysis
CLT	Communicative Language Teaching
CMC	Computer Mediated Conversation
DCT	Discourse Completion Task
ECU	East Carolina University
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ESL	English as a Second Language
FL	Foreign Language
GTA	Graduate Teaching Assistant
ILP	Interlanguage Pragmatics
ITA	International Teaching Assistant
L1	Mother Tongue
L2/SL	Second Language
LAN	Local Area Network
LLS	Language Learner Strategies
MCDCT	Multiple Choice Discourse Completion Task
MCQ	Multiple Choice Questionnaire
NBLT	Network-Based Language Learning
NNS	Non-Native Speaker
NS	Native Speaker
RP	Role Play
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
TCU	Turn Construction Unit
TL	Target Language
TUA	Tlemcen University of Algeria
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development

## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Studies dealing with collaboration in traditional face-to-face settings emphasize that collaboration is the most important and basic form of human interaction, and the skills of collaborating successfully are very important skills that learners need to master. Likewise, it has been argued that improving learners' social skills through teaching them and building their awareness of language functions, will promote their collaboration. The main idea, here, is that we can focus on the development of language functions in order to provide opportunities for learners to develop specific social skills for the enhancement of their collaboration.

However, these conclusions are based on the works that have been done in traditional language classrooms. Are these conclusions still true in the NBLT environment, where we no longer speak of 'collaboration' but 'telecollaboration'? This remains to be answered, especially that, NBLT is not a mere replication of a conventional classroom, but a new form of social interaction that makes different demands of both teachers and students. Among the important claims that have been made in the field of 'telecollaboration' is to focus more on the processes involved in successful peer interaction, rather than just on learning outcomes.

It appears, then, that NBLT, especially with the introduction of videoconferencing in the classroom, can provide a rich and particularly suited environment for student collaboration. Though videoconferencing continues to gain favor in the academic world, strategies that contribute to effective collaboration are still unknown and the exploration

of learners' communication in their learning process, particularly the communication related to their interaction with their partners, is limited. This study is, then, intended to understand collaborative learning in a context that enables interaction through videoconferencing. Particularly, it seeks to examine the relationship between the language functions development and the collaborative learning process, i.e., pragmatic competence development through peer assistance.

The research questions at the core of this study are the result of two years of previous work in the area of online intercultural exchanges. During that time I began to have an interest in the effects that videoconferencing with students from USA, and even from other countries, using English language as the medium of communication, had on my students' use of their English. They had opportunities in their correspondence to express their own feelings and views of the home culture, they required insightful questions from their partners in order to reflect critically on their own culture, and finally, they had to engage in dialogic interaction with their partners about issues about the home and target cultures, and all that in English.

These observations have led me to think seriously about the linguistic outcomes of engaging language students in such video links. Therefore, this thesis takes as subject for study pragmatic development through online cross-cultural links with the idea that the assistance a learner receives through collaboration or interaction with a language expert might also push pragmatic development forwards. It does so by answering the following question: *Does online interaction with native speakers help language learners adjust their linguistic use with their interlocutors and learn when and how it is proper to make certain linguistic participations?*

As a result of this process, the following sub-questions emerged as the centre of this research:

*1-Does online classroom conversation generate enough opportunities for learners' production of pragmatically appropriate language?*

*2-Does online classroom conversation affect pragmatic competence development?*

*3-How does learners' awareness of pragmatically appropriate language develop?*

*4- Does learners' development of their pragmatic knowledge help them as well, improve their grammar?*

These questions seek, first, to look through the examples provided by the virtual classroom video recordings to see if and how this type of classroom provides a native-like speaking context. Second question will discuss if online conversation- by providing the opportunity of using the target language productively- promotes the development of functional language ability and allows learners develop sociocultural knowledge to be able to use English to share their home culture information with their American partners. Third question will, then, focus on the stages of pragmatic competence development. Finally, the fourth question will deal with the structure and development of pragmatic ability and their relationship to grammatical competence, to highlight their dissociation.

This dissertation consists of five chapters. In Chapter one, the central problem is stated with the rationale for choosing the target pragmatic feature. The learning setting and the corpus under study are described, the main research purpose is discussed, the theoretical perspective is clarified, and the importance of the study is demonstrated. It, then, defines the operational terms, and describes the setting and participants of the study.

Chapter two reviews the literature pertinent to second and foreign language pragmatic development, outlines various theoretical frameworks underpinnings of pragmatic competence and sociocultural rules, and addresses the concept of pragmatic competence in relation to language learner strategies, as well as, the relation between language proficiency and performance quality of language learner strategies. It reviews, then, studies exploring pragmatic development in online learning environments and summarizes what has been done and what has not yet been done about the topic so far, indicating the gap that the present thesis tries to bridge.

Chapter three deals with the research method and research design. It presents the research methodology in terms of sampling, instrumentation, data collection, and data analysis. It begins with an overview of the methodologies used in previous ILP studies as a background to the design of the present study. Then, it reports the method for carrying out this study. It ends with a detailed description of data collection procedures, and data analysis.

In Chapter four, the data analysis procedure is outlined and the results are presented. It reports and discusses the main findings according to research questions. It, first, deals with first research question, which is if online classroom conversation generates enough opportunities for learners' production of pragmatically appropriate



language. It, then, addresses second research question, which is about whether online classroom conversation promotes the development of pragmatic competence or not, leading the way to the third research question which is about how does learners' awareness of pragmatically appropriate language develop. In the end, it reports on if learners' pragmatic competence development affects their grammatical competence by the end of the session.

Finally, Chapter five summarizes the main findings and draws conclusions from the analysis of the research questions. It, then, presents methodological and pedagogical implications of video-based communication, namely videoconferencing. It concludes with propositions for further research on what online intercultural encounters involve.

## **Chapter One SITUATION ANALYSIS**

1.1 Introduction

1.2. Context of Problem

1.3 Statement of the Problem to be Investigated

1.4 Key Concepts

1.4.1 Pragmatics

1.4.2 Pragmatic Competence

1.4.3 Interlanguage Pragmatics

1.4.4 Intercultural Pragmatics

1.4.5 Cross-Cultural and Intercultural Interactions

1.4.6 Videoconference

1.5 Setting and Participants

1.5.1 American Students' Profile

1.5.2 Algerian Students' Profile

1.5.3 Virtual Global Classroom

1.6 Conclusion

## **1.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, the central problem will be stated with the rationale for choosing pragmatics as a specific area of study, especially that pragmatics focus is on interactional and contextual factors of the target language. The main research purpose is, then, discussed so that peer assistance in online interactions pushes pragmatic development forward will make more sense. Therefore the theoretical perspective will be clarified, and the importance of the study demonstrated. Key concepts to be used are, then, defined and the setting and participants of the study are described.

## **1.2 Context of Problem**

English has been recognized as the world language for information exchange and communication (Cenoz and Jessner, 2000). It has grown in international importance achieving a status of universal language. According to House, this international spread has been promoted by:

*...the worldwide extension of the British Empire; the political and economic rise of the United States to world power status after the Second World War; the unprecedented developments in information and communication technologies; and the recent economic developments towards globalization and internationalization.*

(2002b:246)

Therefore and given this widespread use throughout the world (House and Kasper, 2000), learning English language has become necessary in any school curriculum. Language teaching has, always, been affected by researches in linguistics. Following the last four decades development where language is treated as a communicative activity rather than an isolated set of grammatical rules, the field of language teaching has welcomed the advent of CLT (Communicative Language Teaching) approach. With a view to developing learners' communicative competence, CLT specifies that teaching and learning a language should be about how to use language appropriately for communicative purposes in real-life interactional contexts. This change was possible by the introduction of pragmatics as a specific area of study within linguistics that favored a focus on interactional and contextual factors of the target language.

Pragmatic competence was, then, one of the major components in a number of models of communicative competence (Canale and Swain, 1980; Canale, 1983; Bachman, 1990; Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei and Thurrell, 1995; and Bachman and Palmer, 1996). By pragmatic competence it is meant the learners' ability to employ their linguistic resources and sociocultural knowledge in an appropriate way in a given context. The increasing attention paid to the acquisition of pragmatic competence has, then, given rise to Interlanguage Pragmatics (ILP) in the early 1980s. ILP is the study of the use and acquisition of various speech acts in the target language (TL) by second and foreign language learners. It investigates the learners' comprehension and production of different pragmatic features as well as the processes and factors that affect learners' pragmatic development in both second and foreign language settings (Kasper and Blum-Kulka, 1993a; Cohen, 1996; Kasper and Schmidt, 1996; Rose, 1997; and Bardovi-Harlig, 2002). Much of these researches have been criticized as being restricted to a rather small and "relatively well-defined" set of speech acts (e.g. requesting, complimenting, thanking, and inviting) (Ellis, 1994), i.e., they have predominantly concentrated on the

investigation of L2 pragmatic performance rather than development. As a consequence, little is known about developmental issues, and thus about the questions of acquisition which are also a principal research goal of ILP.

### **1.3 Statement of the Problem to be Investigated**

Some scholars like Kramsh (1993) and Byram (1997) have emphasized the need to expand models of communicative competence to explicitly address intercultural concerns through incorporation of intercultural communication as a goal and as a practice of language teaching. Such contact has, then, been greatly facilitated through the introduction of new technological tools affording teachers and learners the opportunity to engage in online intercultural communication through approaches termed 'telecollaborative'. These online classes, soon, turned to be the ideal spaces where peers, working together, not only build upon each others' grammatical and lexical knowledge, but also are able to perform beyond the level that each was able to attain individually.

Our present class, being observed, is one of today's English language classes that adopt 'telecollaboration' as a teaching approach. These telecollaborative approaches are thought to provide the right atmosphere for learners to develop awareness for the need of cultural knowledge of English to speak about their culture, and therefore, will develop their pragmatic competence as one step towards communicative competence development, i.e., it makes sense that the assistance a learner receives through collaboration or interaction with an L2 expert might also push pragmatic development forward.

In this context, Shea notes that

*...the quality of conversational participation can be seen as a critical locus for the development of second language proficiency (even for advanced speakers) because the native speaker's response is a critical means of constructing the nonnative speaker's discourse.*

(1994:378)

Shea's observation that native speaker interlocutors can open up zones of proximal development for learners is in the same line with Vygotsky's definition of ZPD (see 2.3.1), according to which assisted performance requires a more competent interactional partner. Therefore, following a sociocultural approach, we will examine the data qualitatively to discover how learners support each other's learning of the target language (Ohta, 1995, 2000a, 2001).

There are a variety of sociocultural approaches to SLA (cf. Lantolf, 2000; Ohta, 2001a; and Van Lier, 2000) that include the ZPD as an integral part of human developmental processes. These studies all show the veracity of the ZPD for language acquisition contexts. Findings show that learners boost their performance through collaboration, whether working with peers with stronger or weaker skills.

Considering how pragmatics is learned in the ZPD will help to move towards a more process-oriented view of what it means to acquire a language. In this way, expanding interlanguage pragmatics research to include the ZPD may also result in a richer understanding of the depth and variety of developmental processes that learners experience.

This study goes beyond student perceptions of online learning experiences, satisfaction, and attitudes, to examine the generated interactions that occur in online discussions and their relationship to student learning outcomes. Believing in that online interactions with native speakers help language learners to adjust their linguistic use with their interlocutors and learn when and how it is proper to make certain linguistic participations, the present study aims to answer some critical questions with respect to the participants' pragmatic knowledge development processes in the online learning environment. It does so by revisiting some recent studies on interaction in language classroom.

It has been suggested in previous studies (cf. Henri, 1992; Hiltz, 1990; and Mason, 1992) that the analysis of transcripts from online communications could give insights to the actual learning that takes place in this environment. Therefore, video-taping the class, fortunately part of the class itself, was the best means to provide a rich ethnographic observation of naturalistic data. The videos were, then, translated into transcripts that we will pool from the instances of help provided through interacting online with native speakers and how could this assistance affect our students' pragmatic knowledge.

#### **1.4 Key Concepts**

A generally accepted and uniformly used definition of terms is essential for any scientific work. In this paper, the terms to be used are defined. The central term "pragmatics" is examined for significance and use to establish a common ground for the topic under investigation. Definitions are obtained primarily from standard references, and may be taken verbatim from references or modified for clarity or to reflect common usage.

### 1.4.1 Pragmatics

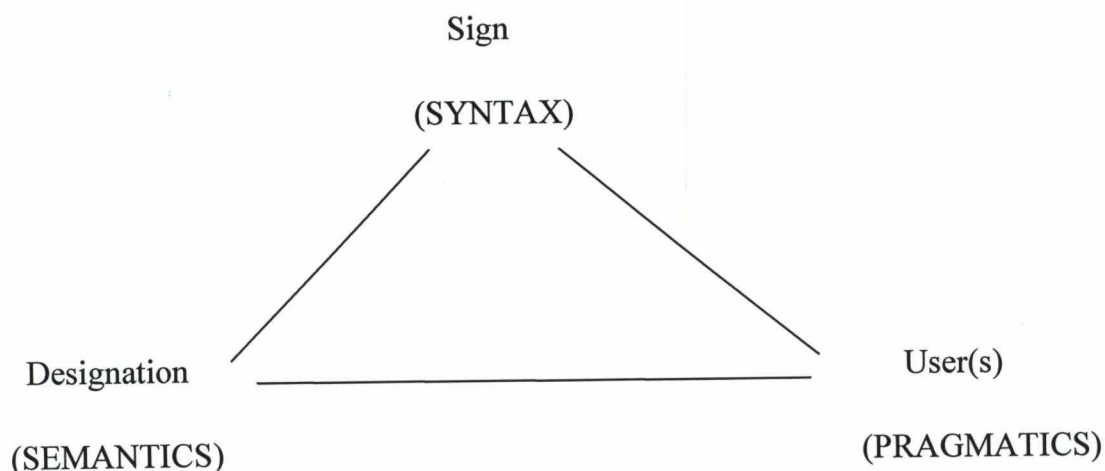
Over the last four decades, pragmatics has become a very important branch of linguistics and has aroused the interest of a number of scholars. The term *pragmatics* was coined by the philosopher Charles Morris (1938), who was concerned to outline the general shape of a science of signs, or semiotics, which was then divided into three distinct branches of inquiry: syntax (the study of the formal relation of signs to one another), semantics (the study of the relations of signs to the objects to which the signs are applicable: their designate), and pragmatics (the study of the relation of signs to their interpreters (Levinson 1983). Morris (1938: 6-7) said in this context:

*In terms of the three correlates (sign vehicle, designatum, interpreter) of the triadic relation of semiosis, a number of other dyadic relations may be abstracted for study. One may study the relations of signs to the objects to which the signs are applicable. This relation will be called the semantical dimension of semiosis, [...]; the study of this dimension will be called semantics. Or the subject of study may be the relation of signs to interpreters. This relation will be called the pragmatical dimension of semiosis, [...], and the study of this dimension will be named pragmatics.*

(Quoted in Horn and Ward, 2006: 443-444)

This can be illustrated in the following figure:





*Figure 11. Morris' Syntax-Semantics-Pragmatics Triadic Relations (Source: adapted from the above quotation)*

Then, it was Austin (1962), Searle (1969), and Grice (1975) who through their works, *pragmatics* came to be regarded as a discipline in its own right. It is argued that it appeared as a reaction to Chomsky's theory of mental faculty based on the independence of grammar from its user (Levinson 1983). *Pragmatics* was, then, defined as a discipline:

*concerned with the study of meaning as communicated by a speaker (or writer) and interpreted by a listener (or reader). It has, consequently, more to do with the analysis of what people mean by their utterances than what the words or phrases in those utterances might mean by themselves.*

(Yule, 1996:3)

Yule (1996), then proceeds to cite the four areas that pragmatics is concerned with, namely the study of: speaker meaning, contextual meaning, how more gets communicated than is said, and the expression of relative distance. In the same vein, Cenoz and Valencia (1994) introduce the main characteristics that define pragmatics as:

the use of language as a means of communication; the importance of language use focusing on functions rather than on forms; the study of the processes which occur in communication; the importance of context and authentic language use; the interdisciplinary nature of pragmatics; and the application of linguistic theories based on the concept of communicative competence.

Kasper and Rose (2002) have, also, considered pragmatics as characterized by: meaning is created in interaction with speakers and hearers, context includes both linguistic (co-text) and non-linguistic aspects, choices made by the users of language are an important concern, constraints in using language in social action are significant, and the effects of choices on co-participants are analyzed. This was inspired from Crystal's definition of *pragmatics* as:

*the study of language from the point of view of users, especially of the choices they make, the constraints they encounter in using language in social interaction and the effects their use of language has on other participants in the act of communication.*

(1985:240)

Pragmatics, then, depends on the interaction among the users of the language. Thomas (1995) says that it is meaning in interaction. She, also, states that *pragmatics* cannot be limited to only a speaker-oriented or hearer-oriented approach rather, both of them should be considered, i.e., adopt an approach to *pragmatics* which pays attention to cognitive factors as well as social factors. Wilson's (1986) relevance theory and Blakmore (1992) may be the best examples on the cognitive approach. Studies that

included the social approach may include Grice's (1975) model of logic and conversation, Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) models of politeness theory, and Barron's (2003) speech act theory.

Leech (1983) and Thomas (1983) were among the first to introduce the two components of pragmatics: a) the study of language from the viewpoint of a language's structural resources; b) the study which examines the conditions of language use which derive from the social situation (adapted from Crystal 1997:301). *Pragmalinguistics* refers, then, to the linguistic side of pragmatics that is the range of structural linguistic resources from which speakers can choose when using language in a specific communicative situation, i.e., linguistic means to perform a speech act (speech act verbs, imperatives, politeness markers, other pragmatic markers). On the other hand, *sociopragmatics* relates to the social setting of language use, including variables such as the cultural context, the social status or social distance of interlocutors, i.e., when and how to perform a certain speech act, as illustrated in the following diagram.

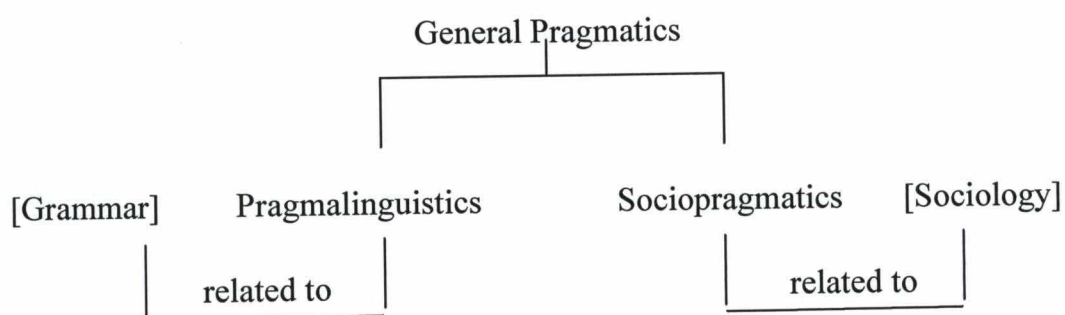


Figure 1.2 *Pragmalinguistics and Sociopragmatics* (Leech, 1983:11)

Some of the aspects of language studied in pragmatics include: a) deixis, meaning 'pointing to something', refers to the contextual meaning of pronouns that the speaker uses in a particular utterance in a given context; b) presupposition referring to the logical meaning of a sentence or meanings logically associated with or entailed by a sentence; c) performative implying that each utterance a speaker not only says something but also does certain things like giving information or stating a fact; and d) implicature which refers to an indirect implicit meaning of an utterance derived from context.

### **1.4.2. Pragmatic Competence**

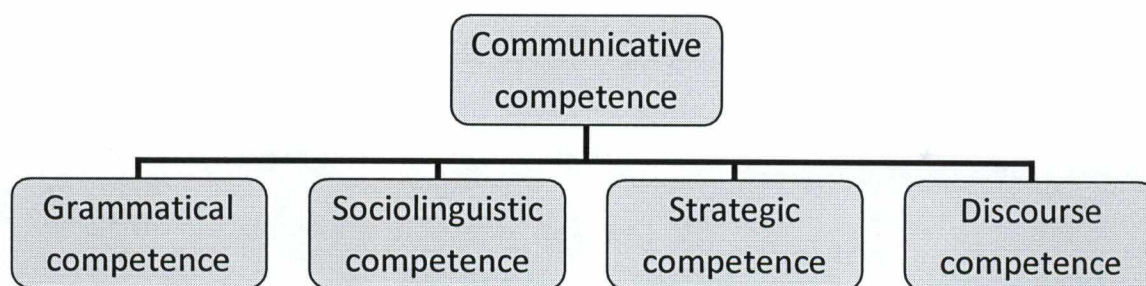
In the 1970s and early 1980s, there was a shift of emphasis from an almost exclusive concern with formal aspects of language (structural linguistics and transformational generative grammar) to a growing interest in language use. Language was no longer viewed as an isolated system, but as a means of communication that relates to so many extra-linguistic factors. Perceiving language as a communicative artifact, led to the rise of communicative approach to language teaching with competence as a key concept.

'Communicative competence' was, then, coined by the anthropological linguist Dell Hymes (1972) who argued that in addition to linguistic competence (the rules for describing sound systems and for combining sounds into morphemes and morphemes into sentences), one also needed notions of sociolinguistic competence (the rules for using language appropriately in context) to account for language acquisition and language use). He said: "*there are rules of use without which the rules of grammar would be useless*" (1972:277). He, also, proposed a theory of communicative competence consisting of four different aspects of knowledge: a) whether something is formally possible; b) whether something is feasible in virtue of the means of implementation

available; c) whether something is appropriate in relation to a context in which it is used and evaluated; and d) whether something is in fact done, actually performed, and what its doing entails.

Many applied linguists, later, adopted Hymes' terminology and perspective, in developing the communicative approach to language teaching in reaction to the grammar translation and audiolingual approaches to language pedagogy. Hymes' (1972) notion of communicative competence, thus, became part of the theoretical justification for a new language teaching approach and new teaching materials that were compatible with communication as the goal of second or foreign language teaching (Celce-Murcia, 2007).

Canale and Swain (1980) were among the first applied linguists to develop and elaborate a model of communicative competence that course designers and language teachers could apply to teaching and assessment. They added strategic competence (i.e. the ability to compensate for problems or deficits in communication and do various types of planning) to the linguistic competence (which they referred to as 'grammatical competence') and sociolinguistic competence that Hymes (1972) had proposed. Three years later, Canale (1983) added discourse competence (the ability to produce and interpret language beyond the sentence level) to the model. This is illustrated in the following example:



*Figure 1.3 Canale and Swain's (1980) and Canale's (1983) Model of Communicative Competence (Source: Cenoz, 1996:104)*

In this figure, *grammatical competence* refers to the knowledge of the rules of morphology, semantics, phonology, syntax, and sentence grammar. *Sociolinguistic competence* refers to the knowledge of rules of use and rules of discourse (only in Canal and Swain's model), which are crucial in interpreting utterances for social meaning. *Strategic competence* is used to refer to the knowledge to the verbal and non-verbal communication strategies which may be used to compensate for breakdowns in communication. Finally, *discourse competence* was added by Canal (1983), separating it from sociolinguistic competence, first introduced by Canale and Swain (1980). According to Canale, discourse competence is about mastery of how to combine grammatical forms and meanings to achieve cohesion and coherence of a unified spoken or written text.

Another model was presented by Celce-Murcia *et al* (1995) who proposed that *actional competence* (the ability to comprehend and produce all significant speech acts and speech act sets same as pragmatic competence) should also be part of communicative competence. In this model two changes in terminology were made regarding Canale-Swain's (1980) model: a) that *sociocultural competence* (the cultural background knowledge needed to interpret and use a language effectively) replaces *sociolinguistic competence*; and b) re-use *linguistic competence* (which includes the sound system and the lexicon as well as the grammar instead of *grammatical competence*). This is represented in the following figure:

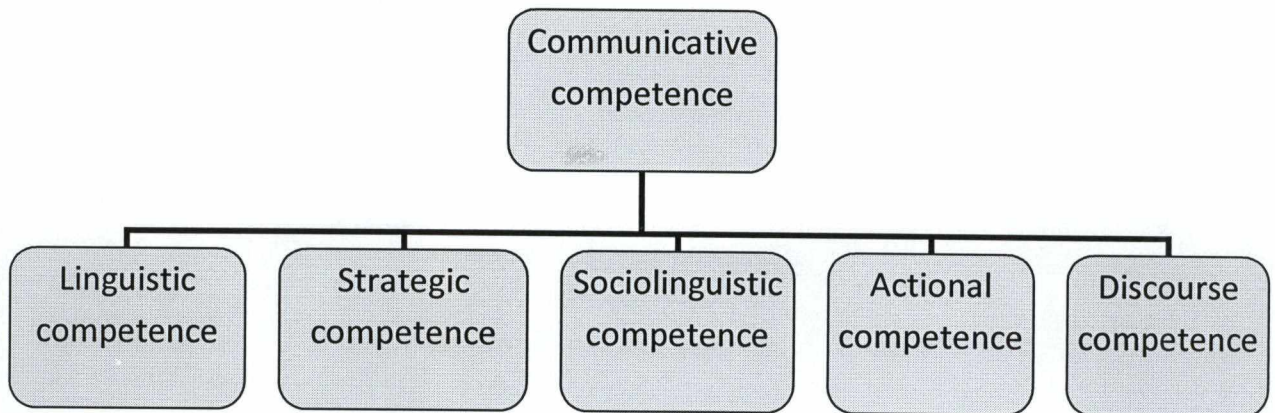


Figure 1.4 Celce-Murcia et Al (1995) Model of Communicative Competence (source: Celce-Murcia 2007)

The communicative competence models, presented so far, have been criticized on the basis that they did not take into consideration the importance of pragmatic component. Though Canale (1983) considered pragmatics as an area within sociolinguistic competence, Schachter (1990:42) asks: “where does pragmatics fit into the Canale and Swain framework? Is it assumed not to exist?” This pushed Bachman (1990) to explicitly divide communicative competence (Language competence in the model) into *organisational* and *pragmatic competence*, as shown in figure 1.5.

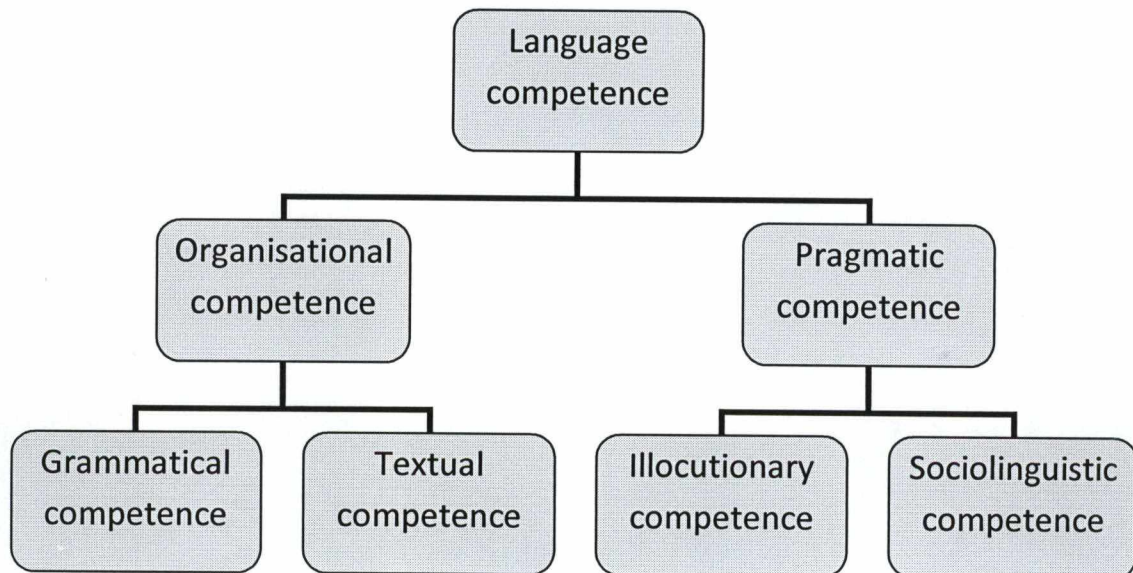


Figure 1.5 Bachman's (1990) Model of Communicative Competence (Adapted from Bachman 1990)

According to Bachman, *organisational competence* comprises *grammatical competence* (same as Canale and Swain's model) and *textual competence* which includes knowledge required to join utterances together to form a text. His main contribution was in his introduction of the second divide of communicative competence, i.e., *pragmatic competence*. He subdivided it, again, into two components. By *illocutionary competence* he means knowledge of the pragmatic conventions for performing acceptable language functions, i.e., *pragmalinguistics* (see 1.4.3). By *sociolinguistic competence*, on the other hand, he means the knowledge of the sociolinguistic conventions for performing language functions in their appropriate context, i.e., *sociopragmatics*.

Finally, the last model would be that of Alcon (2000) (in Safont, 2005). She believes that discourse competence is the core of communicative competence, though all the competencies are interrelated. Her model can be summarized in the following table:

Discourse competence	Linguistic competence Textual competence Pragmatic competence
Psychomotor skills and competencies	Listening Speaking Reading Writing
Strategic competence	Communication strategies Learning strategies

*Table 1.1 Alcon's (2000) Model of Communicative Competence (adopted from Safont, 2005: 56)*



Pragmatic competence can be, then, summarized as:

*Knowledge of the linguistic resources available in a given language for realizing particular illocutions, knowledge of the sequential aspects of speech acts and, finally knowledge of the appropriate contextual use of the particular languages*

(Barron, 2003: 10)

### **1.4.3. Interlanguage Pragmatics**

Researchers have always been interested in finding out why do learners of a second or foreign language with linguistic competence often respond in a way unacceptable to their native interlocutors. This has given birth to a new field of research called ILP (interlanguage pragmatics). ILP belongs to two different disciplines, both of which are interdisciplinary: second language acquisition and pragmatics (Kasper and Blum-Kulka, 1993).

According to Kasper (1995:1), ILP is "*the study of nonnative speakers' comprehension, production, and acquisition of linguistic action in L2*". Elsewhere, she defines it as "*the study of nonnative speakers' use and acquisition of L2 pragmatic knowledge*" (Kasper and Rose, 1999:81). This language system developed by learners on their way to acquiring the TL (target language), entails knowledge of language which is different from both the learners' mother tongue and the TL system they are trying to acquire (Ellis, 1985).

The term interlanguage was first introduced by Selinker (1972) and is best defined by Koike (1996:257) as “*a system that represents dynamic stages in the learning process and that are subjects to continual change and modification*”. The origin of the term ILP, on the other hand, is claimed by Kasper (1989a, 1998) who was interested in describing and explaining learners’ development and use of pragmatic knowledge. ILP is considered as modeled on cross-cultural pragmatics, adopting its research topics, theories and research methodology. This comes from the focus of ILP on comparing native speakers’ (NS) with non-native speakers’ (NNS) performance in certain pragmatic aspects.

Though, the field of ILP is a relatively young subdiscipline within the area of SLA, the scope of inquiry has quickly become very large. It includes: a) non-native speaker comprehension and production of a small number of speech acts, such as requests, apologies, refusals, complaints, compliments and compliment responses; b) use of internal and external modification to speech acts and learners’ use of semantic formulas or lexical downgraders; and c) only recently, discourse/pragmatic markers in NNSs (Fuller, 2003).

The following table summarizes some of the emergent findings of ILP with the name of the authors who undertook the study:

Study	Author(s)
indirectness in requests and refusals increases with proficiency	Takahashi & Beebe, 1987; Beebe & Takahashi, 1989; Rose, 1998; Churchill, 1999
supportive moves in requests increase with proficiency	Trosborg, 1995; Rose, 1998; Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1986

learners start out using unanalyzed routines but analyze them increasingly for productive use	Schmidt, 1983; Ellis, 1992; Kanagy & Igarashi, 1997
at intermediate stages, learners may be more verbose than NS	Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1986; House, 1989; Bergman & Kasper, 1993
even advanced learners have problems with L2 routine formulas	Kasper, 1981; Wildner-Bassett, 1984; House, 1993, 1996.

*Table 1.2 ILP Emergent Findings.*

Two aspects of pragmatic competence that different scholars emphasize are *pragmalinguistics* and *sociopragmatics*, initially introduced by Leech (1983) and Thomas (1983), who explain these concepts as follows:

a) *Pragmalinguistics*

According to Leech (1983) and his colleague Thomas (1983), pragmalinguistics refers to the linguistic side, or, in other words, what pragmatic strategies, pragmatic routines, and modification devices are available in the language being spoken. For Rose and Kasper (2001: 2) "*pragmalinguistics refers to the resources for conveying communicative acts and relational or interpersonal meanings.*" By linguistic side of pragmatics we mean the range of structural linguistic resources from which speakers can choose when using language in a specific communicative situation like when to perform a speech act (speech act verbs, imperatives, politeness markers, other pragmatic markers). One illustrative example is when refusing an invitation one can simply combine the words "no," "thank," and "you" in that sequence, in order to convey the refusal speech act.

b) Sociopragmatics

Sociopragmatics is the “*sociological interface of pragmatics*” (Leech, 1983: 10). It “*refers to the social perceptions underlying participants’ interpretation and performance of communicative action*” (Rose and Kasper, 2001: 2). It relates to the social setting of language use, including variables such as the cultural context, the social status or social distance of interlocutors, i.e., when and how to perform a certain speech act. This social status, social distance and degree of imposition put some kind of restraints on the speaker like for example, when one is speaking with a friend, he can say “Thanks, but no thanks” in refusal to something, but if speaking to someone such as a boss, one would be more formal and say “No thank you.”

Bardovi-Harlig (1999:686) extends this distinction to the notion of pragmatic competence, explaining that pragmalinguistic competence is “*the linguistic competence that allows speakers to carry out the speech acts*” that their sociopragmatic competence “*tells them are desirable*”. Rose and Kasper (2001), on the other hand, point out the dialectic unity of both components and state that pragmatics is concerned with social behavior where specific linguistic choices have consequences in real life.

#### 1.4.4. Intercultural Pragmatics

Teaching English as an international language is to have a goal of not only producing appropriate utterances but also of expressing learners’ own cultures in English for speakers of other languages (McKay, 2000), i.e., learners in the future may need to speak English with people from different parts of the world. Since one of the purposes for learners to learn English is to be able to communicate with people from different cultural backgrounds, intercultural communication is seen as an essential part of communicative

competence, i.e., the dimensions of communicative competence should take the cultural background of the speakers into consideration.

According to the different models of communicative competence presented earlier, cultural knowledge falls under sociocultural competence. It has, then, a close relationship with pragmatic knowledge. This is because misunderstanding of cultural knowledge between the speaker and his or her interlocutor(s) may easily cause communication breakdown during the intercultural conversation. Different cultures might have different conventions as to what appropriate behavior is in certain contexts (Spencer-Oatey, 2000). Rintell-Mitchell (1989) points out that:

*Perhaps the fascination that the study of cross-cultural pragmatics holds for language teachers, researchers, and students of linguistics stems from the serious trouble to which pragmatic failure can lead. No "error" of grammar can make a speaker seem so incompetent, so inappropriate, so foreign, as the kind of trouble a learner gets into when he or she doesn't understand or otherwise disregards a language's rules of use.*

(cited in Trosborg, 1994:3)

Effective intercultural communication, a domain of intercultural pragmatics, therefore requires both linguistic knowledge and cultural knowledge of the two languages for learners, i.e., pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics. Intercultural pragmatics, or as often referred to as cross-cultural pragmatics, is defined as:

*...a field of inquiry which compares the ways in which two or more languages are used in communication. Cross-cultural pragmatics is an important new branch of contrastive linguistic studies because in any two languages different features of the social context may be found to be relevant in deciding what can be expressed and how it is conventionally expressed.*

(House-Edmondson, 1986:282)

However, for learners of English, especially those in the EFL context, the learning of the cultural aspect of communicative competence is often difficult. Learners tend to transfer their mental sets of the first language (L1) pragmatic rules, often culturally related, directly into the target language, and the result is often misunderstanding between the learners and their interlocutors. For example, what sounds like an invitation often may not be one, as when Americans tell their new acquaintances “Let’s get together some day”, which expresses a standard good-bye formula rather than a serious intention to socialize, may keep their acquaintances wait long for an invitation to come, if it ever does.

Areas of cross-cultural variation, then, include the different weighting of specific contextual factors across cultures and a focus on the range and contextual distribution of strategies and linguistic forms used to convey illocutionary meaning and politeness. It has been shown, for example, in Kasper and Schmidt’s (1986) study that declarations are culture-bound speech acts due to cross-cultural differences in institutional structures. Another example is Takahashi and Beebe’s (1993) study, in which the Japanese compared to the west or to the Americans, see status as more important than face in politeness strategies.

### 1.4.5 Cross-Cultural and Intercultural Interactions

Culture is the shared values, norms, traditions, customs, arts, and history of a group of people in constant transmission to succeeding generations. Historically, the word derives from the Latin word 'colere' which means to cultivate, from which is derived 'cultus', that which is cultivated or fashioned. Thus 'culture', usually, refers to something that is derived from, or created by the intervention of humans, i.e., 'culture' is cultivated. For Dahl (1998) the word 'culture' is often used to describe something refined, especially 'high culture', or describing the concept of selected, valuable and cultivated artefacts of a society.

On a more basic level, 'culture' has been used to describe the way a group of people works. This implies not only the shared method but also the shared values that underpin the method. For example, Kroeber & Kluckhohn's (1952: 181) definition of culture reads:

*Culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behaviour acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiment in artefacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e. historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values; culture systems may, on the one hand, be considered as products of action, on the other, as conditional elements of future action.*

(cited in Adler, 1997: 14)

Hall (1983) tried to refine the meaning of the concept 'culture', and put forward:

*Culture has always dictated where to draw the line separating one thing from another. These lines are arbitrary, but once learned and internalized they are treated as real. In the West a line is drawn between normal sex and rape, whereas in the Arab world is much more difficult, for a variety of reasons, to separate these two events.*

(1983: 230)

In what he said, Hall believed that members of a given society, internalize the cultural components of that society, and act within the limits as set out by what is culturally acceptable. He viewed culture as often subconscious and compared it to an invisible control mechanism operating in our thoughts. In his view, we become only aware of this control mechanism when it is severely challenged, for example by exposure to a different culture.

Hofstede (1994:5), too, defined culture as "*the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the member of one group or category of people from another*". Hofstede expands the concept of 'collective programming' by suggesting that culture could therefore be situated between human nature, which is not programmed, nor programmable on the one side – and the individual's personality on the other side. This idea of the culture in the individual is particularly useful for explaining the concept of culture on the one side – as well as allowing for the diversity of individual personalities within any one culture.



So far, we have considered the definition of culture as a concept that is subconscious and represents a set of shared values. We move, now, to its meaning as a concept that manifests itself in the behavior of a given group when it comes across another culturally different group. This takes us to the realm of *cross-cultural communication*. In the English literature, both terms ‘cross-cultural’ and ‘intercultural’ exist. Some English researchers favor ‘cross-cultural’ and, almost, avoid ‘intercultural’ as if it was a case of vocabulary interference with French adjective ‘interculturel’. Others, like House-Edmondson (1986), use the terms interchangeably.

For those who use both terms interchangeably, cross-cultural communication or intercultural communication is a field of study that looks at how people from different cultural backgrounds communicate, in similar and different ways among themselves, and how they endeavor to communicate across cultures (House-Edmondson, 1986), i.e., how people from different countries and cultures act, communicate and perceive the world around them. By studying situations where people from different cultural backgrounds interact, cross- or intercultural communication plays an important role in anthropology, cultural studies, linguistics, psychology, and communication studies.

On the other hand, Gudykunst (2003) in his book “Cross-Cultural and Intercultural Communication” maintained that ‘cross-cultural’ and ‘intercultural’ are not identical. For him cross-cultural communication emphasizes the comparison of communication across cultures whereas in intercultural communication the emphasis is on the communication between people from different cultures. In other words ‘cross-cultural’ applies to something which covers a separate comparison of chosen aspects of different cultures with no interactive analysis between them but ‘intercultural’ implies interaction. This is why we find, above all in Anglo-Saxon psychology and social psychology, the expression

*cross-cultural communication*, when giving preference to the comparative perspective and the neglect of any linguistic interaction.

In this study, first, we will use the term 'interaction' instead of 'communication' to highlight the fact that data are from spoken face-to-face interaction, especially that, this latter is a rich source of informative and interesting data for research in sociology, culture, linguistics, pragmatics, discourse, etc. Second, both terms will be used, not interchangeably though; because of the difficulty we faced in drawing the boundaries between 'cross-cultural' and 'intercultural' interactions. We will try to use 'cross-cultural' when there is more comparison across the two cultures: American and Algerian. When the emphasis is on the interaction between both cultures, we will use 'intercultural'. We believe that the task is very difficult, which is one of the main limitations of this study. We believe, also, that 'intercultural' will be overused; therefore, few words about intercultural interaction are in order.

It would seem appropriate here, first, to explain the concept 'intercultural communication' which forms the basis of any intercultural encounter. Intercultural communication can be defined as the interpersonal interaction between members of different groups, which differ from each other in respect of the knowledge shared by their members and in respect of their linguistic forms of symbolic behavior. It was, first, used in Edward T. Hall's (1959) influential book, *The Silent Language*, and Hall is generally acknowledged to be the founder of the field. The following table will trace the history of intercultural communication study:

Date	Events
1950-55	Development of the original paradigm of intercultural communication by Edward T. Hall and others at the Foreign Service Institute in Washington, D.C.
1955	First publication on intercultural communication by Hall ("The Anthropology of Manners" in <i>Scientific American</i> )
1959	Publication of <i>The Silent Language</i> in English (a Japanese edition appeared in 1966).
Late 1960s	Development of the first intercultural courses at universities (e.g., University of Pittsburgh); and publication of Alfred Smith's (1966) <i>Communication and Culture</i> .
1970	International Communication Association established a Division of Intercultural Communication
1972	First publication of an edited book on <i>Intercultural Communication: A Reader</i> , by Larry A. Samovar and Richard E. Porter
1973	<i>Intercultural Communication</i> by L.S. Harms at the University of Hawaii is published (the first textbook on intercultural communication).
1974	First publication of <i>International and Intercultural Communication Annuals</i> ; The Society of Intercultural Education, Training and Research (SIETAR) is founded
1975	<i>An Introduction to Intercultural Communication</i> by John C. Condon and Fathi Yousef is published (the second textbook in intercultural communication); the Speech Communication Association established a Division of Intercultural Communication.
1977	<i>International Journal of Intercultural Relations</i> begins publication.
1983-Present	Theory development in intercultural communication is emphasized (e.g., three <i>International and Intercultural Communication Annual</i> volumes on intercultural communication theory are published)
1998	Founding of the International Academy of Intercultural Relations

**Table 1.3** Major Events in the Development of the Field of Intercultural Communication.  
(Source: Hart (1996) and E.T. Hall Papers, Special Collections, University of Arizona Library).

After that, universities across the world were obliged to adopt intercultural international understanding and knowledge as one of their goals for the education of their students. International and intercultural understanding has become critical to a country's cultural, technological, economic, and political wellbeing. It has become essential for universities to educate their students to possess a certain level of global competence to understand the world they live in and how they fit into this world which is characterized by close and multi-faceted relationships.

As already mentioned, the word 'interaction' is used instead of 'communication' to characterize the spoken form of language use and emphasize that language exchange is face-to-face. Today is more affordable than any time before to arrange for an intercultural interaction. This is because Internet with its potential to bring learners into direct contact with the target culture, allow learners not only gain access to authentic publications from the target culture but they can also take part in online chat rooms, discussion boards and videoconferences, i.e., learners will develop intercultural competence. Becoming interculturally competent will allow the learner capture and understand, in interaction with people from foreign cultures, their specific concepts in perception, thinking, feeling and acting. Freed from prejudices, he/she will be interested and motivated to continue the interaction.

Intercultural interaction is, then, to boost sensitivity and self-consciousness through knowledge about other cultures, people, and nations. Through understanding others' behaviors and ways of thinking, learners will understand feelings and needs of their interactants, i.e., develop empathy. Finally, they will develop self-confidence by knowing what they want, their strengths and weaknesses, emotional stability, and will be able to express their own point of view in a transparent way with the aim to be

understood and respected by staying flexible where this is possible, and be clear where this is necessary.

Intercultural exchanges via e-mail and other electronic media like 'teleconference' have been found to support learner autonomy (Schwienhorst, 2000: Tella; 1991), foster language awareness (Appel, 1999), improve grammatical correctness (Brammerts, 1996) and develop higher order thinking skills (Lee, 1998). In many reports, the mere fact that students refer in their exchanges to such topics as food, restaurants and holidays is considered to be 'cultural learning' and many researchers assume that learners will develop intercultural competence simply by being exposed to information from the target culture (Gray and Stockwell, 1998).

It is important that intercultural competence training and skills not break down into application of stereotypes of a group of individuals. Although the goal is to promote understanding between groups of individuals that, as a whole, think somewhat differently, it may fail to recognize the specific differences between individuals of any given group. These differences can often be larger than the differences between groups, especially with heterogeneous populations and value systems.

Other researchers think that mere exposure to target culture is not enough. Kern (2000: 256), for example, suggests that in the context of online learning "*exposure and awareness of difference seem to reinforce, rather than bridge, feelings of difference*". He, then, pointed out to what extent intercultural online contact serves to develop the components of intercultural communicative competence. Another example is that of

Kramersch and Thorne (2002) who found that the reasons for online communication breakdown between their French and American students was due to both groups trying to use culturally different discourse genres, while both of them appeared to be unaware of the existence of these genres..

Therefore, as claims of contact with target culture automatically develops tolerance in learners cannot be taken for granted, the question arises as to what learners actually learn from online intercultural contact and, taking this into account, how such learning scenarios can best be structured and implemented. Belz (2002) suggests sensitizing students to such institutional and cultural differences before engaging them in exchanges.

#### **1.4.6 Videoconference**

Videoconferencing technology is a set of interactive telecommunication technologies which allow two or more locations to see and hear each other at the same time via two-way video and audio transmissions simultaneously. This rich communications technology, called also visual collaboration, offers new possibilities for schools and colleges to connect with guest speakers and experts, multi-school project collaboration, professional activities such as meetings and interviews, and community events.

A video call is like a telephone call, except when you connect, you see the other person in color video and may be able to transfer files. The call can be between two

people in private offices (point-to-point) or involve several sites (multi-point) with more than one person in large rooms at different sites.

A videoconference system must have audio-visual equipment. This includes: video input (video camera or webcam), video output (computer monitor, television or projector), audio input (microphones), and audio output (usually loudspeakers associated with the display device or telephone). It needs, also, a means of transmitting information between sites (analog or digital telephone network, LAN or Internet).

Among the benefits of a visual connection, is that it is an interactive communication medium. It is almost like being there. The visual connection and interaction among participants enhances understanding and helps participants feel connected to each other. It supports collaboration among traditionally isolated institutions and builds relationships in a way that e-mail, telephone, or online chat systems cannot. The excitement of using new technology and interacting with other students or adults increases motivation, as students perceive video guests as important and are more conscious of their appearance and oral communication.

Videoconferencing makes, then, a face-to-face visit possible, when a live visit is not. By removing the need for students to travel, yet still providing a two-way audio and video link, videoconference is providing educational opportunities for interactions that would not otherwise exist, saving then time and resources. This allows students to have a greater opportunity to form meaningful relationships with others who may be very different from them. They learn, as well, important communication and management

skills, e.g., when they see themselves on screen and realize that is how others see them; this may lead to dress change, posture change, and poise change, all for the positive.

### **1.5 Setting and Participants**

In today's world of globalization, the world is certainly becoming smaller. People of various cultures and who have a set of beliefs that defines the code of conduct and values for their respective cultures are, nowadays, able to communicate freely. Though cultural differences distinguish societies from one another, they find different ways to express thoughts, ideas which can cross cultures through different forms of media like the television, the newspapers and the Internet. Many people believe that due to the advancement in science and technology, cultural differences tend to disappear through time.

However, in spite of all the good will in the world, miscommunication is likely to happen, especially when there are significant cultural differences between communicators. One important contributor, among many, to the cultural difference is the history of a particular region or country. The events of the past shape the moods and opinions of people living in that specific country and which are certainly different from another country, i.e., we make different meanings of the world, our places in it, and our relationships with others. This cultural difference may lead, in most cases, to miscommunication that may lead, on its turn, to conflict, or aggravate a conflict that already exists.



Unfortunately, most of the variables of cultural differences are much more complex than what we might think of them. Each of them influences the course of communications, and can be responsible for conflict or the escalation of conflict when it leads to miscommunication or misinterpretation. For this reason, several different theories and models of cultural differences have been designed. These models are included in the following table:

<b>Model</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Dimensions</b>
Hall	1990	Space, Material Goods, Friendship, Time, Agreement
Hofstede	1991	Power Distance, Individualism, Masculinity, Uncertainty Avoidance, Long-Term Orientation
Lessem and Neubauer	1994	Pragmatism, Rationalism, Idealism, Humanism
Lewis	1992	Time
Trompenaars	1993	Universalism, Collectivism, Emotional, Specific, Status, Sequential, Inner-Directed

*Table 1.4: Models for Cultural Differences*

The first model is Hall's (1990). He introduced five dimensions or variables: 1)space towards which different cultures have different attitudes, 2)material goods that are used for power and status, 3)friendship which is one form of interpersonal relationships and which varies considerably across cultures, 4)time which is structured, sequential and linear (linear time cultures take time and deadlines very seriously, in a

very rationalist sense), and 5) agreement which is expressed, along with disagreement, differently by different cultures.

Hofstede (1991), too, identified five national culture dimensions as follows: 1) power distance that is the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally, 2) individualism vs. collectivism that indicates the relative closeness of the relationship between team members, 3) masculinity that identifies the sexuality of roles in society and the degree to which a society allows overlap between the roles of men and women, 4) uncertainty avoidance that is the extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by uncertain or unknown situations, and 5) long-term orientation that is based on values of Confucianism showing to what degree do people value the future versus the past or present.

The third model is that of Lessem and Neubauer (1994). They analyzed European management systems and categorized the impact of national culture under the following four inter-related criteria: 1) pragmatism that is a dominant influence in the conceptualizing of management principles and practice, 2) rationalism that is identified as a theory which regards reason, not sense, as the foundation of certainty in knowledge, 3) idealism/wholism that is a complex unity or system made up of parts in combination, and 4) humanism that pertains to the social life or collective relations of mankind.

Lewis (1992), on the other hand, differentiates monochronic cultures from polychronic ones. By a monochronic time system, he means that things are done one at a time and time is segmented into precise, small units. Under this system time is scheduled, arranged and managed. By a polychronic time system, he means a system where several

things can be done at once, and a more fluid approach is taken to scheduling time, i.e., a system that is flexible and unconstrained by concerns with time.

The last model is that of Trompenaars (1993). He developed seven parameters that are as follows: 1) universalism vs. particularism where the universalist approach is to say that what is good and right applies everywhere, while the particularist emphasizes the obligations of relationships, 2) collectivism vs. individualism which are similar to Hofstede's model, 3) neutral vs. emotional where some cultures are affective in that they show emotions while others are neutral, 4) specific vs. diffuse where in specific oriented cultures the manager separates the work relationships with subordinates from other dealings with them, 5) status which is while some cultures give status on the basis of achievement, others ascribe it on the basis of age, class, gender, education, etc., 6) sequential vs. synchronic where in sequential cultures time is treated as a sequence of events while in synchronic cultures a number of events are run at the same time, and 7) inner-directed vs. outer-directed where in the inner-directed cultures believe that they can and should control nature while outer-directed cultures go along with nature.

To summarize the main cultural differences that are already mentioned in the models discussed above, or that have been discussed in other numerous theories, surveys, and investigations that focus on specific countries, regions, and organizations, we may group them in 5 variables:

- 1) *high context vs. low context* where in a low context culture things are fully spelled out and are made explicit, and there is considerable dependence on what is actually said or written, whereas in a high context culture communicators assume a great deal of commonality of knowledge and views, so that less is

spelled out explicitly and much more is implicit or communicated in indirect ways.

2) *monochronic vs. polychromic* where monochronic cultures like to do just one thing at a time and value a certain orderliness and sense of there being an appropriate time and place for everything, whereas polychronic cultures like to do multiple things at the same time.

3) *future vs. present vs. past orientation* where future-oriented societies have a great deal of optimism about the future and think they understand it and can shape it through their actions, whereas past-oriented societies are concerned with traditional values and ways of doing things and tend to be conservative in management and slow to change those things that are tied to the past. Present-oriented societies, on the other hand, see the past as passed and the future as uncertain and prefer short-term benefits.

4) *power distance* where the extent to which people accept differences in power and allow this to shape many aspects of life like: is the boss always right because he is the boss, or only when he is right?

5) *individualism vs. collectivism* where in individualist cultures, a person is all the more admirable if he/she is a "self-made man/woman" or "makes up his/her own mind" or shows initiative or works well independently. In Collectivist cultures, on the other hand, people are expected to identify with and work well in groups which protect them in exchange for loyalty and compliance.

We will turn, now, to identify the participants' profile taking in consideration each of the variables discussed above to show how much more complex is their interplay, especially, when each of them may influence the course of communication, and can be responsible for conflict or the escalation of a conflict that leads to miscommunication or misinterpretation, i.e., miscommunication is likely to happen, especially when there are significant cultural differences between communicators leading to conflict, or magnifying a conflict that already exists.

### **1.5.1 American Students' Profile**

There were 16 American students from ECU. From the aforementioned models of cultures, being Americans makes them culturally low context. This means that they may be vulnerable to communication breakdowns when they assume more shared understanding than there really is, i.e., low context cultures are not known for their ability to tolerate or understand diversity, and tend to be more inward-looking. Their interactions with high context culture people can be problematic to the level to see them as too secretive, devious and strangely uncommunicative.

They are, also, culturally monochronic. In their society time is limited and punctuality is a virtue. It is insulting to waste someone's time, and the ability to do that and get away with it is an indication of superiority/status, i.e., time is seen as being a limited resource which is constantly being used up. Therefore, they don't have time to develop trust and had to replace it with rule-by-law as another mechanism instead. This makes them tend to be individualist, too. An American is more admired and estimated if he/she shows initiative or works well independently.

The United States is a good example of future-oriented societies. ECU students are, therefore, very optimistic about the future. They think they understand it and can shape it through their actions. They view management as a matter of planning, doing and controlling and never go with the flow, and let things happen. They are a low power distance country, too. This means that superiors and subordinates often interact socially as equals to the extent that an outsider watching a party of professors and graduate students typically cannot distinguish them.

The following table will summarize the number, age, major, year of study at university, and sex of ECU students:

Student #	Group	Name	Sex	Age	Major	Which year
1	1	Leo	Female	22	Biology	1 <sup>st</sup>
2	1	Ryan	Female	23	Communication	3 <sup>rd</sup>
3	1	Kayla	Female	19	Geology	1 <sup>st</sup>
4	1	Misean	Male	20	Biology	2 <sup>nd</sup>
5	1	Brielle	Female	21	Communication	2 <sup>nd</sup>
6	1	Chris	Male	22	Communication	2 <sup>nd</sup>
7	1	Monika	Female	19	Business	1 <sup>st</sup>
8	2	Wes	Male	20	Geology	1 <sup>st</sup>
9	2	Lauren	Female	19	Politics	1 <sup>st</sup>
10	2	Natasha	Female	20	Biology	2 <sup>nd</sup>
11	2	Diana	Female	21	Biology	2 <sup>nd</sup>
12	2	Mollisa	Female	22	Geology	3 <sup>rd</sup>
13	2	Mary	Female	20	Communication	1 <sup>st</sup>
14	2	Stacy	Female	22	Biology	2 <sup>nd</sup>
15	1	Ben	Male	21	Communication	1 <sup>st</sup>
16	2	Jonathan	Male	22	Geology	2 <sup>nd</sup>

*Table 1.5: American Students' Profile*

### **1.5.2 Algerian Students' Profile**

Algerian students were 14 in number. Being Algerian makes them culturally high context so that their interactions with Americans (low context) can be problematic. As example they might find them to be offensively frank, or can feel that they insult their intelligence by explaining the obvious. Coming from a high context culture, TUA students assume a great deal of commonality of knowledge and views, so that less is spelled out explicitly and much more is implicit or communicated in indirect ways

Algerian culture is polychronic. This means that time is plentiful and there is no problem with making people wait all day, and then tell them to come back the next day, i.e., time is more plentiful, if not infinite. This makes them tend to rely on trust to do business, contrary to the Americans who rely on rule-by-law and value a certain orderliness and sense of there being an appropriate time and place for everything. Building relationship on trust makes them collectivists who expect others to identify with and work well in groups which protect them in exchange for loyalty and compliance.

TUA students are, also, culturally a past-oriented society. This means that they are concerned with traditional values and ways of doing things. They tend to be conservative in management and slow to change those things that are tied to the past. Opposite to the Americans, they are from a high power distance country where bypassing a superior is a disobedience.

The following table will illustrate some information about TUA students:

Student #	Group	Name	Sex	Age	Major	Which Year
1	1	Wafaâ	Female	21	English	3 <sup>rd</sup>
2	1	Amina	Female	23	English	4 <sup>th</sup>
3	1	Souad	Female	20	English	3 <sup>rd</sup>
4	1	Meryem	Female	19	English	3 <sup>rd</sup>
5	1	Hilel	Male	24	English	4 <sup>th</sup>
6	1	Razzia	Female	30	English	3 <sup>rd</sup>
7	1	Sana	Female	19	English	3 <sup>rd</sup>
8	2	Amel	Female	20	English	3 <sup>rd</sup>
9	2	Soufiane	Male	23	English	4 <sup>th</sup>
10	2	Amira	Female	19	English	2 <sup>nd</sup>
11	2	Nassima	Female	19	English	2 <sup>nd</sup>
12	2	kamila	Female	19	English	2 <sup>nd</sup>
13	2	Soumia	Female	20	English	2 <sup>nd</sup>
14	2	Souhila	Female	21	English	2 <sup>nd</sup>

*Table 1.6: Algerian Students' Profile*

### **1.5.3 Global Virtual Classroom**

Language contact has been greatly facilitated through the introduction of new technological tools affording EFL learners the opportunity to engage in computer-mediated intercultural communication through approaches termed “telecollaborative”. Our case study is one example of these telecollaborations. It is a world-cultures course taught through virtual classroom. A virtual classroom is a “virtual place to meet”. It connects teachers and students. It provides students with a place for discussion, and a place where they can test their knowledge, access the required texts and other readings, hand in their assignment, ask questions and get answers from their teachers. In this project, the virtual classroom is just a space where internet is used to allow partner countries from Africa, Asia, Europe and the Americas to have a direct personal



experience through real-time videoconferencing, chat, and emails, i.e., synchronous and asynchronous communication.

The link is guaranteed by at least 256K IP regular Internet connectivity, a videoconferencing camera, one internet connected computer with projector, one computer for backchannel communications and coordination, and 7 student computers co-located to classroom for in-class, real-time partner chat.

One of the main objectives of this project is that multiple cultures provide culturally diverse, direct international experience, where in each session students develop partners and friends in 3 diverse cultures. They meet 14 to 16 weeks per semester, more than 4 weeks per culture, and twice a week for 70 minutes each time. The students, usually 14 in number from each side, are divided into two groups of 7. They will be referred to, in our scripts, as TUA# and ECU#. One of the most important characteristics of the generated interactions is that they are done in English since it is today's *lingua franca*.

We have been taking part in the GVC for 5 years up till now. Each year, the experience is as exciting as, if not more than, the preceding year. Working with different partners each new session, makes the experience more fun and full of new expectations. Our class, being observed, is from the spring 2007-2008 session. We used to link on Mondays and Wednesdays. During the first session fall 2007, we linked with ECU ANTH 299 from USA, then with USIL AM from Peru, and finally AJKU from Pakistan.

The link was, all in all, good. We had most of the time to link through Skype, since it is more suitable in times of slow connections. The students were so excited each time to talk to their new partners and they were reporting, to the teacher, any problem that delayed their emails be it technical or attitudinal. They were eager to read their partners emails, and sometimes share some of them, when not so private, with their friends in the group. Each one was helping the other to keep the flow of discussion going smoothly. The main objective was to make new friends, and keep that friendship.

During the second session Spring 2008, we linked with UMT from Malaysia, then ECU HNRS from USA, and finally TSPU from Russia. The links were acceptable except with Russia, which was because of a series of technical problems we had on our side. The students could, though be introduced to each other via Skype, and encouraged to send emails, something which they did, and each time receiving an email they saw interesting, they shared it with the teacher and even asked for reviewing their emails before sending them. One time with ECU, they had invited two foreign students from Namibia, studying in TUA, to join the link and talk about their experience in Algeria. The purpose was to show their partners how open they are to talk to different nationalities with a different culture and different beliefs.

The emphasis of the course is students' interactions. Each faculty is asked to give a 20-25 minute lecture on its own culture and the rest of the time is spent with students interacting with each other. All students are numbered from 1-14 (but this time 16 from ECU). At the very first class students are given an online pre-course survey and a post-survey at the end of the session.

For each linked class students on each side are divided into two halves. Half of students (1-7) from each country will engage in groups discussion, and the other half (8-14) will be in individual chats with their partners. Half way through the course, the group discussion and the individual discussion students change places. The topics for each discussion day are: family, college and education, cultural traditions, meaning of life, stereotypes and prejudices. If there are more than 5 links, the two teachers can decide what topic to add.

For each discussion day we start with a discussion of the newspaper headlines of the other country, 5-7 minutes to acquaint out students with what is going on in the other country. The newspaper headlines, as well as all other readings are posted on the web under our Resource section. At the first link, the teacher will prepare big name tags for all students with each student's number and the name they want to go by. At the first link the teacher, the tech helper and each student will come in front of the camera, hold the name tag under his/her chin and give a brief introduction of him/herself where he/she has to give her name, age, major and hobbies. At the end of the section there will be a local day where the teacher helps the students to synthesize what has been learned about that country. The two partner students have to write a joint paper, due the week after the link is over.

## **1.6 Conclusion**

Chapter one, was devoted to situation analysis so that the problem to be investigated was stated. The central problem is how does the assistance a learner receives through collaboration or interaction with an L2 expert push pragmatic development forward. After the main research purpose has been discussed, the theoretical perspective

was clarified, and the importance of the study was demonstrated, especially that most of the studies, that have dealt with pragmatics as a specific area of study that favors a focus on interactional and contextual factors of the target language, have predominantly concentrated on the investigation of L2 pragmatic performance rather than development. The operational terms were, then, defined and the setting and participants of the study were described.

## **Chapter Two LITERATURE REVIEW**

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2.3 Pragmatic Competence and Intercultural Interaction

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2.8 Online Peer Support and Pragmatic Development

2.9 Conclusion

## 2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a review of the literature on the development of pragmatic competence, relevant to the topic under investigation in the present study. It, first, addresses the relationship between pragmatic competence and grammar. Next, the theoretical underpinnings of pragmatic competence and sociocultural rules are briefly discussed. The concept of pragmatic competence is, then, addressed with relation to language learner strategies. The fourth sub-section explores the relation between language proficiency and performance quality of language learner strategies. The remainder of the chapter reviews studies exploring pragmatic development in online learning environments.

## 2.2 Pragmatic and Grammatical Development

Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei, following Levinson (1983), studied the interconnection between pragmatic and grammatical competence and state that:

*Grammar relates to the accuracy of structure, including morphology and syntax, whereas pragmatics addresses language use and is concerned with the appropriateness of utterances given specific situations, speakers, and content.*

(1998: 233)

Kasper (2001), on the other hand, points out that pragmatic competence is neither isolated from nor subordinated to grammar and distinguishes between two scenarios of the correlation between grammatical and pragmatic competence. In the first one 'grammar precedes pragmatics', learners acquire grammatical features before they acquire

the pragmalinguistic functions (cf. Robinson, 1992; Salsbury and Bardovi-Harlig, 2000; Takahashi and Beebe, 1987). In the second scenario 'pragmatics precedes grammar', learners use pragmatic functions before they acquire the L2 grammatical forms that are acceptable realizations of those functions (cf. Schmidt, 1983; Cameron and Williams, 1997).

The 'grammar precedes pragmatics' scenario comes in different varieties. In one variety learners demonstrate knowledge of a particular grammatical structure or element while not adopting it to express or modify illocutionary force (Bardovi-Harlig's, 1999a; Salsbury and Bardovi-Harlig, 2000; Karkkainen, 1992). It can be best illustrated with Takahashi's studies on transferability (1996) and input enhancement (2001) of request strategies. Studying the relationship between syntactic structures and their illocutionary and politeness functions, Takahashi found out that advanced Japanese EFL students reject the biclausal 'I was wondering if you could VP' and 'Would it be possible for you to VP', opting for monoclausal structures such as 'would/could you (please) VP' instead. He concluded that *'the Japanese EFL learners lack the L2 pragmalinguistic knowledge that an English request can be mitigated to a greater extent by making it syntactically more complex'* (2001: 173).

In another variety of 'grammar precedes pragmatics' scenario, learners know a grammatical structure and use it to express pragmalinguistic functions that are not conventionalized target usage. Takahashi and Beebe (1987), for example, propose that advanced grammatical knowledge may correlate positively with negative pragmatic transfer. In the same line of thought, Bodman and Eisenstein (1988) cite learners' transliterated thanking routines in their expressions of gratitude in English, such as 'May God increase your bounty', and 'May God grant you a long life'.

In a third variety, learners know the grammatical structure and its pragmalinguistic functions yet use the structure in non-target like fashion, and demonstrate their lack of familiarity with the contextual and socio-pragmatic conditions that constrain target-like use. Several studies report on learners' use of information questions as indirect strategies in requests for action, warning, disagreeing, refusing, rejecting, or criticizing, in contexts where more transparent strategies would be more effective (e.g. Beebe and Takahashi 1989a, 1989b; Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford, 1991).

The use of the question strategy, for example, demonstrates that learners have the grammar to form interrogatives, and they have the pragmalinguistic knowledge to use questions in order to convey pragmatic intent indirectly, but do not have the sociopragmatic knowledge to assess when the use of a question strategy is appropriate and effective. Another example is Robinson's (1992) study on refusal. Prompted to refuse to help a friend with her house moving, one learner showed not only that she knows the form 'I would like' but also that she knows that 'I would like' is more polite than 'I want' and that her grammatical and pragmalinguistic knowledge are intact. Her problem was her sociopragmatic hypothesis that 'would like' is 'too polite' when talking to American friends.

In the reverse scenario, 'pragmatics precedes grammar' the learner's pragmatics is ahead of his/her grammar. It is well illustrated by Schmidt's (1983) study of a Japanese immigrant to Hawaii. His subject, Wes, whom he observed during a three-year period, made hardly any progress grammatically, but showed significant pragmatic development, using pragmatic routines for everyday tasks like requesting (for example, ordering something in a restaurant). Over the three-year observation period, Wes's grammatical knowledge developed only minimally, whereas his pragmatic and discourse competence



greatly improved and, to a limited extent, was also able to adapt his behavior to different speech situations. In this context, Kasper and Rose proclaim:

*Wes's case impressively illustrates the dissociation of grammatical from pragmatic/discourse ability. He demonstrates that a restricted interlanguage grammar does not necessarily impose constraints on pragmatic and interactional competence, and that high acculturation is not necessarily related to target-like grammar, whereas it appears to be strongly related to pragmatic and interactional competence.*

(2002:168)

In his early study Walters (1980), while explicitly addressing the structure and development of pragmatic competence and its relationship to grammatical competence, found that ESL-speaking children and adolescents successfully encoded the action and appropriately marked their requests for politeness with more complex yet partially non-target-like grammar, as in the examples below:

*We borrow your basketball please? (rising intonation)*  
*We can go in front of you? (rising intonation)*  
*You give me the paper? (rising intonation)*  
*Can you tell me where is the can openers, please*  
*Do you know where is the can opener?*  
*Do you give me 35 cents for the lunch?*  
*May you give us the towels to clean up our milk?*  
*Can you know where is the can opener?*  
*Are you have some rice?*

(Walters 1980: 341)

In Eisenstein and Bodman's (1986, 1993) study of expressions of gratitude, advanced ESL learners provided pragmalinguistically appropriate thanking strategies with ungrammatical forms. The authors concluded that the grammatical errors may make these thanking expressions less effective, but they are not pragmalinguistic errors. These data

are consistent with Koike's (1989) comment on the dissociation of pragmatics and grammar, and that these ungrammatical features do not convey illocutionary force or politeness, i.e., it is not always the case that learners' imperfect grammar constrains their expression of pragmatic intent, as seen with Wes, Walters' (1980) young learners, and Eisenstein and Bodman's (1993) participants.

### **2.3 Pragmatic Competence and Intercultural Interaction**

It is generally recognized that the focus of pragmatics is on interaction in various real communicative contexts, something that is precisely lacking in a traditional classroom where learners are exposed to “[c]lassroom discourse [that] is institutionally asymmetric, non-negotiable, norm-referenced, and teacher-controlled” (Kramsch, 1986:369). Similarly, Kasper and Rose think that even the richest and most complex classroom tasks such as role plays cannot “provide valid representations of pragmatic practices in authentic contexts” because of “the absence of social consequences” (2002:88). They mean that learners cannot engage in a joint meaningful and successful interaction and as a result their target language pragmatic competence remains underdeveloped or perhaps even unrealized.

This is, mainly, due to the fact that cross-cultural conversation is often difficult for the participants who are not only unfamiliar with the interlocutor's language, but also culturally different. Cultural differences have very specific influences on our styles for participating, especially, the way to express and interpret meanings in conversation, i.e., a person's social and ethnic background determines his or her pragmatic style (Gumperz, 1982).

These pragmatic styles, often decide about communicative choices (selection of vocabulary, discourse patterns, and so forth) and their interpretations along different lines. Unfortunately, when a native speaker (NS) and a non-native speaker (NNS) of a language experience a difficulty in understanding each other, we often attribute the problem to the non-native speaker, whereas actually the problem is a mutual one that must be resolved through adjustments by both parties.

Cross-cultural encounters often require us to adjust the ways we approach fundamental aspects of communication, aspects which we may consider normal. This means that instead of only activating our own expectations to evaluate the interlocutor in terms of our expectations, we should also listen for the purpose of the conversation from the interlocutor's perspective, i.e., culture helps us define our expectations in conversation so that we organize our knowledge of conversation in a certain way and use it to predict how other people will talk.

In spite of all these difficulties, intercultural conversation presents enormous benefits to be gained from learning to participate in an unrestricted classless egalitarian way. By recognizing cultural preferences for conversation styles, we can compensate for differences and understand a range of new people, ideas, and experiences. Many contemporary students are already doing that through their access to a broad spectrum of real language use by means of telecommunication technologies, above all the Internet (Kinginger, 1998). For the rest, the best way would be to think of engaging them in a learning arrangement known as "telecollaboration" which has recently been on the rise, and where they can expand the range of discourse options (Belz, 2002, 2003a, 2003b; Belz and Kinginger, 2003). According to Belz, the core of telecollaborative foreign language instruction is:

*“institutionalized, electronically mediated intercultural communication under the guidance of a languacultural expert (i.e., a teacher) for the purposes of foreign language learning and the development of intercultural competence”*

(2003a:02)

Elsewhere, Belz argues that a “telecollaborative” learning configuration affords *“the alternation of Internet-mediated intercultural sessions with face-to-face intracultural sessions”* (2006:214)

‘Telecollaboation’ is one of the key terms for this study, and the learning that goes through is the learning that takes place as an outcome of people working together towards the acquisition of knowledge, skills, or attitudes occurring as the result of group interaction (Kaye, 1992). This type of collaboration results in a level of knowledge within the group that is greater than the sum of the knowledge of the individual participants, for knowledge is an interactive process that allows learners to develop their abilities to learn from themselves (Whipple, 1987).

Numerous studies (Johnson & Johnson, 1989; Coelho, 1992) emphasize that collaboration is the most important and basic form of human interaction, and the skills of collaborating successfully are the most important skills anyone needs to master. They emphasize the need to teach social skills (Coelho (1992), since good social skills can promote collaboration and some negative behaviors can turn off a future collaboration. Therefore, “telecollaborations” may provide one of the best environments for learners to develop the kind of assistance they need in acquiring those social skills. In

the present study, “telecollaboration” is explored in terms of student’s interactions which are major learning factors in collaborative learning. These interactions are intercultural since intercultural implies engagement with or back-and-forth movement across two different cultures: American and Algerian.

Henri (1995), in defining interaction, provides an analytic model to distinguish between two types of messages:

- 1). *Interactive messages: these answer or interpret a previous statement. They refer to the theme of the teleconference and are also connected, explicitly or implicitly, to one or more other messages.*
- 2). *Non-interactive or independent messages: their content relates to the theme of the teleconference, but is not connected to other messages of the teleconferences.*

(Henri, 1995:152)

The following table will summarize the categories and sub-categories of the model:

CATEGORY	DEFINITION
EXPLICIT INTERACTION	Any statement containing a specific reference to another message, to another person or to a group of persons
1 Direct Answer	Any statement answering a question in an explicit or obvious manner by referring to it directly.
2 Direct Comment	Any statement referring to and furthering an idea which has been raised, by direct reference to it.

<p>IMPLICIT INTERACTION</p> <p>1 Indirect Answer</p> <p>2 Indirect Comment</p>	<p>Any statement containing an implicit reference to another message or to another person or group of persons.</p> <p>Any statement which obviously answers a question, but without referring to it by name.</p> <p>Any statement referring to and furthering an idea which has been raised without referring to the original message.</p>
<p>INDEPENDENT</p>	<p>Any statement dealing with the subject under discussion, but message not answering or commenting.</p>

*Table 2.1: Analytic Model of Interactive Behavior (Henri, 1995:153)*

Although language learners may know the difference between their mother tongue and the target language grammatical paradigms, it is often for the first time that they discover the uniqueness of their mother tongue, and that what they have known for ages as a firm grammar fact does not always work in cross-cultural interaction. This latter helps promote the development of functional language ability through learners' participation in communicative events. In what follows, we will see that not only cross-cultural interaction helps students respond to genuine communicative needs in realistic target language situations, but also provide them with the sociocultural knowledge they need to infer the social meanings or values of utterances.

### **2.3.1 Language Functions**

Intercultural conversation is the perfect locus where we can see the problem of EFL learners' use of pragmatic transfer. Their lack of awareness of the sociocultural aspects of the target language makes EFL learners tend to transfer the use of speech act in their native languages directly into the target language (Zegarac and Pennington, 2000). Knowledge of speech act is often culturally related, and it is commonly believed that the use of speech acts is better acquired by learning in native-speaking countries or by having face-to-face interaction with native speakers. Since for most EFL learners, these possibilities are still commonly unavailable, telecollaborative learning technology, thus, has an important role to play to bridge the gap in the EFL context where native speakers' input is rare.

An outstanding advantage for using "telecollaboration" technology is to engage language learners in cross-cultural interactions so that they can see how useful the sociocultural context is in improving their use of their language functions through a sound use of their speech acts in oral production after a period of online practice.

Recently one major emphasis in foreign language teaching is on developing learners' communicative competence (Hymes, 1972) by expanding the narrow notion of competence presented by Chomsky (1965) and adding sociocultural factors into the definition of communicative competence. It claims that the appropriateness of a sentence is not judged by the grammar or the form only but by the acceptability of its function in the social context. Due to this shift of emphasis, researchers later started to look at the relationship between sociocultural factors and language use (Canale & Swain, 1980;

Leech, 1983). One example is Searle's (1969) speech act theory who took extralinguistic factors into consideration. He classified the use of language into several speech acts, or illocutionary acts, such as request, complaint, and apology that one performs when speaking, and that the performance of the same speech act may differ in several ways according to various situations. Therefore, language functions depend largely on successful performance of speech acts which depend on whether they are performed in a contextually appropriate way.

Language functions refer to what the learner can do with language, such as giving and receiving information, asking for clarification, and expressing agreement or disagreement (McDonnell, 1992). Saville-Troike (1996) indicates that without understanding why a language is being used as it is, one cannot understand the meaning of its use in the context of social interaction, i.e., the functions of Language generally provide the primary dimension for characterizing and organizing communicative processes. 'Telecollaboration', particularly videoconferencing, is thought to afford great possibilities of negotiation of meaning in which various language functions appear like asking information, giving information and explaining, giving and requesting information which are basic functions used at group collaboration. Learners are often able to make suggestions, express opinions, agree and disagree about ideas. Through their culturally-different interaction, negotiate meanings and try to arrive at a common understanding by discussing and debating.

The classification of language functions used in the present study is an adaptation of Finocchiaro's functional categories that meet our purposes (Finocchiaro and Brumfit, 1983). These fall under five major categories: personal, interpersonal, directive, referential, and imaginative. The following table will summarize, an array of functions



under each category, though not all possibilities are included but only the most important ones.

Category	Examples
<i>Personal</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• clarifying or arranging one's ideas</li> <li>• expressing one's thoughts or feelings (love, joy, pleasure, happiness, surprise, likes and dislikes, satisfaction, disappointment, distress, pain, anger, anguish, fear, anxiety, sorrow, frustration, annoyance at missed opportunities, etc.)</li> <li>• expressing moral, intellectual, and social concerns</li> <li>• expressing the everyday feelings of hunger, thirst, fatigue, sleepiness, cold, and warmth</li> </ul>
<i>Interpersonal</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• greetings and leave-takings</li> <li>• introducing people to others</li> <li>• identifying oneself to others</li> <li>• expressing joy at another's success (or disappointment at another's misfortune)</li> <li>• expressing concern for other people's welfare</li> <li>• extending and accepting invitations</li> <li>• refusing invitations politely or making alternative arrangements</li> <li>• making appointments for meetings</li> <li>• breaking appointments politely and arranging another mutually convenient time</li> <li>• apologizing</li> <li>• excusing oneself and accepting excuses for not meeting commitments</li> <li>• indicating agreement or disagreement</li> <li>• interrupting another speaker politely</li> <li>• changing an embarrassing subject</li> <li>• receiving visitors and paying visits to others</li> <li>• arguing or debating</li> <li>• offering food or drinks and accepting or declining such offers politely</li> <li>• sharing wishes, hopes, desires, problems, beliefs, thoughts, opinions, etc.</li> <li>• asking about others' wishes, hopes, desires, problems, beliefs, thoughts, opinions, etc.</li> <li>• making promises and committing oneself to some action</li> <li>• complimenting someone</li> <li>• making excuses</li> </ul>

<i>Directive</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• accepting or refusing direction</li> <li>• making suggestions in which the speaker is included</li> <li>• persuading someone to change his/her point of view</li> <li>• requesting and granting permission</li> <li>• requesting information</li> <li>• asking for help and responding to a plea for help</li> <li>• forbidding someone to do something; issuing a command</li> <li>• giving and responding to instructions or directions</li> <li>• warning someone</li> <li>• discouraging someone from pursuing a course of action</li> <li>• establishing guidelines and deadlines for the completion of actions</li> <li>• asking for directions or instructions</li> </ul>
<i>Referential</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• talking or reporting about things, actions, events, or people in the environment</li> <li>• identifying items or people in the classroom, the school, the home, the community</li> <li>• asking for a description of someone or something</li> <li>• describing someone or something</li> <li>• understanding messages or descriptions</li> <li>• creating questions</li> <li>• scanning or skimming for information</li> <li>• paraphrasing, summarizing, or translating (L1 to L2 or vice versa)</li> <li>• interpreting information</li> <li>• explaining or asking for explanations of how something works</li> <li>• comparing or contrasting things</li> <li>• discussing possibilities, probabilities, or capabilities of doing something</li> <li>• requesting or reporting facts about events or actions or about a text</li> <li>• hypothesizing</li> <li>• formulating and supporting opinions</li> <li>• evaluating the results of an action or an event</li> </ul>
<i>Imaginative</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• discussing a poem, a story, a text, an advertisement, a piece of music, a play, a painting, a film, a TV program, etc.</li> <li>• story-telling, narrating events</li> <li>• experiencing and/or discussing a simulation (e.g., of an historical event)</li> <li>• expanding ideas suggested by others or by a piece of reading</li> <li>• creating rhymes, poetry, stories, plays, or scripts</li> <li>• recombining familiar dialogues or passages creatively</li> <li>• suggesting original beginnings or endings to dialogues or stories</li> <li>• solving problems or mysteries</li> </ul>

*Table 2.2: Language Functions (Finocchiaro and Brumfit, 1983: 65-66)*

The reasons to choose these particular language functions are twofold. On the one hand, though under different headings and elaborated in diverse ways, their purposes are similar with the other categories of language functions (Finocchiaro and Brumfit, 1983). On the other hand, they are viewed as the basic functions of group work and are present in cross-cultural interactions and support the social skills needed for collaborative learning, i.e., language functions can be addressed as part of a social skills strand (Olsen and Kagan, 1992).

These social skills can be improved by teaching people and building their awareness of language functions which can, also, promote their collaborative learning, especially that that collaboration is the most important and basic form of human interaction, and the skills of collaborating successfully are the most important skills anyone needs to master (Coelho, 1992). In other words, teaching corresponding language functions can provide opportunities for learners to develop specific social skills for the enhancement of their collaborative learning (Olsen, 1992).

Coelho (1992), on another hand, believes that language functional categories described by applied linguists look remarkably parallel to the social/collaborative skills described by collaborative learning experts. The examples of functional categories given by Finocchiaro and Brumfit (1983) resemble the social skills for students to practice recommended by Olsen and Kagan (1992) in the following table:

Social Skills in Interaction	Social Skills/Collaborative Learning
asking for clarification	acknowledging others' contributions
asking for explanations	appreciating others' contributions
checking understanding of others	asking others to contribute
elaborating ideas of others	praising others
explaining ideas or concepts	recognizing others
giving information or explanations	verifying consensus
paraphrasing and summarizing	keeping the group on task
receiving explanations	keeping conversation quiet and calm
requesting clarification	mediating disagreements or discrepancies

**Table 2.3:** *Social Skills (adapted from Olsen and Kagan (1992))*

If we compare the functional categories of language (see table 2.2) and the list of social skills (see table 2.3) needed for collaborative learning, we can notice some striking similarities between them. This implies that being aware of the different ways we can use language to achieve a communicative purpose is very important for collaborative learning.

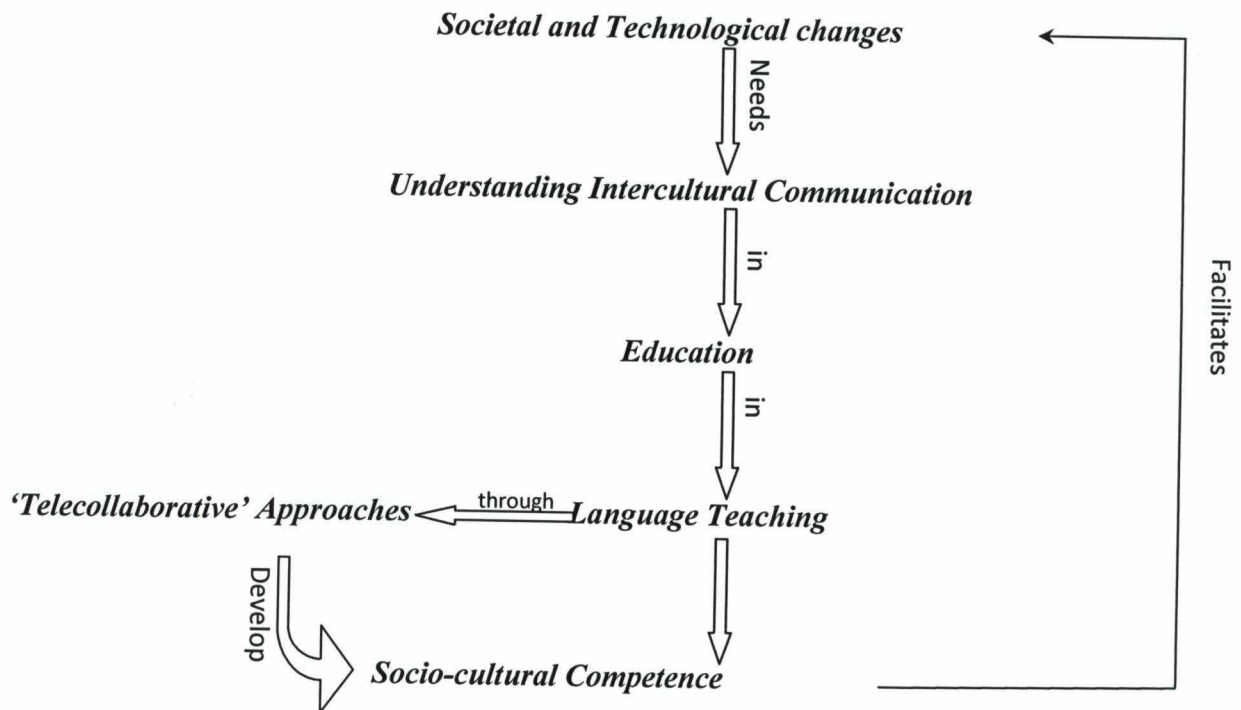
According to the extent of collaboration in a classroom that uses videoconferencing, and as online dialogue continues, effective questioning, response modeling, and student-centered discussion are emerged. It appears, then, that cross-cultural interaction, generated through “telecollaboration”, can provide a rich and

particularly suited environment for student collaboration to improve their language functions' use and social skills. These social skills will be considered in more details in what follows.

### **2.3.2 Socio-Cultural competence**

The growing pace of globalization is creating new contact zones with significant cultural factors which open, for university and college education, a cultural dimension that should engage both learners and educators in relatively new teaching practices, i.e. pedagogical norms should account for diversity and variation in the English classroom especially that the study of whether and how language might influence culture, and to what extent language can be a cultural referent, has become an academic pursuit of a paramount importance

From this perspective, the present subsection deals with research on English acquisition and use with specific focus on the development of *sociocultural competence* by the English language learner. There is an urgent need to understand intercultural communication which is the main characteristic of today's English language classrooms that adopt 'Telecollaboration' as a teaching approach. These telecollaborative approaches provide the right atmosphere for learners to develop awareness for the need of cultural knowledge of English to speak about their culture, and therefore, will develop their socio-cultural competence as one step towards communicative competence development. This may be illustrated in the following diagram:



*Figure 2.1: Culture and Language Teaching*

This diagram illustrates that the societal and technological changes seen in the world at large and the need for an ever-greater understanding of intercultural communication are reflected in today education, generally, and language teaching, particularly. It tries to show that intercultural interaction is an important locus for the development of language awareness and language use. We can see, also, that telecollaborative approaches to language teaching allow both teachers and learners to engage in intercultural communication and, specifically, learners to develop awareness for the need to have enough knowledge and competence to be able to use English to share their home culture information with speakers from other cultures, i.e., intercultural interaction helps language learners develop their sociocultural competence. What is, then, sociocultural competence?

Everything starts with Hymes (1972)'s introduction of the concept of *communicative competence*, which stands for understanding first language acquisition, by not only taking into account the grammatical competence (Chomsky 1957) but also the ability to use language appropriately. Canale and Swain (1980), then, applied it to foreign language learning and turned it into a model for communicative language teaching development. The model was based on the acquisition of the necessary skills to communicate in socially and culturally appropriate ways. The model comprised grammatical, sociolinguistic, and strategic competences, with sociolinguistic competence being made up of *socio-cultural competence* and discourse competence.

Socio-cultural competence is concerned with the extent to which certain propositions and communicative functions are appropriate within a given socio-cultural context (Canale 1983). It requires the cultural background knowledge as a need to interpret and use language effectively, i.e. knowledge of language variation with reference to socio-cultural norms of the target language (Celce-Murcia 1995). Celce-Murcia, even sees that “... *a social or cultural blunder can be far more serious than a linguistic error when one is engaged in oral communication*” (Celce Murcia In Alcon Solar and Safont Jordia (Eds.) 2007:46). She notes that the common picture is that most of the time SL and FL teachers are more aware about the linguistic rules than they are about the socio-cultural behaviors and expectations that go with the use of the target language.

Therefore, it is recommended that SL and FL learners should be introduced to the life and traditions as well as knowledge of the history and literature of the target community. And since it's difficult to afford an extended living experience among the target language group, a well-thought design should consider the principles of language

courses implementation that will allow a linguistic and cultural competence awareness and development by providing the skills and knowledge that SL and FL learners need. Brinton *et al* (2003), too, say that teaching language through content is one of the most effective means for communicative competence development in a second or a foreign language. By content, they mean the target community politics, education, main religions, holidays, and main customs and celebrations.

Savignon and Sysoyev (2002) proposed the principles of sociocultural strategy training to develop EFL learners' sociocultural competence so that learners can establish and maintain international contact in a spirit of peace and a dialogue of cultures. This will make learners act as representatives of their own culture for engaging in intercultural communication, though it is very difficult for them to know for sure the exact nature of what is culturally acceptable in the target language. Savignon and Sysoyev (2002), therefore, think that these learners need sociocultural strategies that may help them to cope with various situations they may face during the conversation with people from different cultures.

These strategies are divided into two categories: (1) strategies for establishing and maintaining intercultural contact, and (2) strategies for creating sociocultural portraits of the TL context and the participants in intercultural communication (Savignon and Sysoyev, 2002). The major goal of these strategies is to help language learners create an equal and valuable dialogue between two different cultures. Though, sociocultural knowledge is difficult to teach and assess in classroom settings, today, Internet can bridge the gap between the classroom and the real world. Through videoconferencing students are exposed to spontaneous language used by native speakers and, therefore, have more opportunities to learn about the culture in which the TL is spoken. They will learn both



the function of linguistic forms provided in the given language and the appropriate time for using these devices based on various contextual factors during the online communication process. A lack of knowledge at this level is often the reason why language learners fail to achieve successful communication with native speakers or speakers with different cultural backgrounds.

## **2.4 Socio-Cultural Perspectives on Pragmatic Development**

Societal and technological changes seen in the world at large, are affecting language education suggesting that the profession shall require an ever-greater understanding of intercultural communication. Specialists are more concerned with issues of how to integrate intercultural encounters into curricula in rational and productive ways. Norton (2000), Lantolf and Pavlenko (2001), and Belz (2002) emphasize the shift away from exclusive concern with the monolingual ideal speaker's grammar and language towards consideration of the interactant whose language development is shaped not only by individual characteristics but also by the access that this interactant is willing and able to negotiate within a range of socio-cultural environments.

Therefore, there exists a highly relevant complementarity between the intercultural focus on interaction and the socio-cultural perspective on language development, i.e., socio-cultural theory suggests a principled way towards documentation and explanation of the specific manner in which intercultural interaction fosters language development in particular contexts. For sociocultural approaches, language development is essentially a social process. These approaches view learning as something inter-mental, embedded in social interaction. This means that individuals and environments mutually constitute one

another and we are linked to the environments and interactions through which language development occurs.

Sociocultural theory, then, rejects both a behaviorist view of learning and information-processing view, and believes that knowledge-including knowledge of language-arises from activities in particular contexts of use, and that learning is essentially a social, rather than an individual, process. This means that the learner achieves the capacity to function autonomously in a skill by first sharing responsibility for the achievement of tasks with a more capable peer in a process of other-regulation, and gradually appropriates the regulatory means to perform the task him- or herself and is able to function independently and without mediation, achieving what is called self-regulation (Kinginger and Belz, 2005).

The foundational role of interaction in cognitive and language development is, therefore, at the center of sociocultural theory. Garrison, Anderson, and Archer (2001) encourage instructors to generate a social presence in the virtual classroom, and avoid becoming the center of all discussions by emphasizing student-student interactions, and attend to issues of social equity arising from use of different communication patterns by culturally diverse students.

Social constructivists, such as Vygotsky (1978), assert that students do not learn in isolation but collaboratively, a view that focuses primarily on the social and cultural processes that contribute to the development of higher order cognitive functions, which suggests that interactions with, a 'more capable other' are essential for the continuing

development of communicative-including pragmatic-competence. In this vein, Laurillard (2000:137) argues that higher education should include “*engagement with others in gradual development of their personal understanding*”. This engagement is developed through students interacting with each other creating, therefore, important learning communities where they feel connected to and assist each other in their efforts to learn.

Sociocultural theory, by viewing interaction as a tool for L2 learning and as a competency in its own right, is therefore particularly suited to the study of pragmatic development. By introducing the notion of ZPD (zone of proximal development) and its related notions of scaffolding or assisted performance, it can prove to be quite useful to research in interlanguage pragmatics.

#### **2.4.1 Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)**

There are many sociocultural approaches to SLA that include the ZPD as an integral part of human developmental processes (cf. Lantolf, 2000; Ohta, 2001a; and Van Lier, 2000). These studies all show that learners boost their performance through collaboration, whether working with peers with stronger or weaker skills. From a sociocultural perspective, the ZPD is used to understand how assistance is related to language development. According to Vygotsky, ZPD is:

*the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers*

(1978:86)

A ZPD is evident wherever one learner is enabled to do something by the assistance of another that he or she would not have been able to do alone. Researchers and scholars of interlanguage pragmatics understand the impact of instruction and the need for pragmatics to be taught in language courses, and instead of adding the ZPD to one's existing conceptual framework, some prefer to move toward a more process-oriented view of what it means to acquire a language. In this way, expanding interlanguage pragmatics research to include the ZPD may also result in a richer understanding of the depth and variety of developmental processes that learners experience.

The implication of the ZPD for SLA is that what the learner can be assisted in doing is soon to be something that the learner will be able to do without help. Therefore, the ZPD became a key developmental space, i.e., when learners bump up against their own limitations and are assisted to move beyond them with the help of their peers, development follows. This goes with Ohta's (2001:9) reformulated definition of the ZPD for L2 learning as the '*distance between the actual developmental level as determined by individual linguistic production, and the level of potential development as determined through language produced collaboratively with a teacher or peer*'.

The following table will summarize some of the studies that used data sets which show how what is accomplished in collaborative contexts builds into later individual TL production. These studies were researches on interlanguage pragmatics in connection with the ZPD:

<b>Author(s)</b>	<b>Study</b>
Brooks (1992a, 1992b)	how pairs assisted one another in classroom language learning tasks (college students studying Spanish)
Donato (1994)	how college-level learners of French pool their knowledge in group work
Swain and Lapkin (1998), Swain (2000)	how the grammatical knowledge peers constructed in collaborative pairs was retained on a subsequent quiz (the talk of French immersion middle-schoolers working on a dictogloss)
Ohta (2000)	how peer interaction resulted in higher levels of grammatical accuracy and complexity for both learners; most interesting was that gains were made by students who provided most of the assistance as well as the one who struggled (a pair of college students as they worked on a Japanese language grammar task)
Guerrero and Villamil (2000)	how students used a variety of scaffolding strategies during the revision process (peer revision)
Ohta (2001a)	how peers, working together, not only built upon each others' grammatical and lexical knowledge, but also were able to perform beyond the level that each was able to attain individually (a longitudinal study of learners of Japanese)

*Table 2.4 Research on Interlanguage Pragmatics in Connections with the ZPD.*

Some of these studies touch on pragmatics in some way, but the main findings relate to language acquisition processes in the ZPD. Whether looking at how learners build upon each others' knowledge (Donato, 1994), or how learners develop the ability to act as good listeners (Ohta, 2001a) pragmatics has been less a focus of the research than a finding along the way how interlanguage pragmatics develop in connection with the

ZPD. Since the fundamental components of the ZPD do not change, and that an assisted learner is able to out-perform what he/she could do without assistance, we will turn now to explore this notion of assistance in more details and see how it emerges in talk-in-interaction between people.

### **2.4.2 Scaffolding**

In order to better understand the role of interaction in SL/FL development, researchers have begun to study how native speakers as more proficient 'experts' support and collaborate with SL/FL learners as they work on assigned language learning tasks in their virtual classrooms. The idea behind such an investigation is that language acquisition is realized through a collaborative process whereby learners appropriate the language of the interaction for their purposes, building grammatical, expressive, and cultural competence through this process (Lantolf, 2000), i.e., developmentally appropriate assistance in the Zone of Proximal Development.

Assistance in the ZPD is called scaffolding (Wood *et al.*, 1976). Works such as Bruner (1975) and Cazden (1988) have demonstrated the gains produced through a collaborative process called scaffolding, through which assistance is provided from person to person such that an interlocutor is enabled to do something she or he might not have been able to do alone. Research on scaffolding in language learning has shown how learners working together reach a higher level of performance by providing assistance to one another (cf. Brooks, 1992; Donato, 1994; Ohta, 1995/1997/1999; and Anton and Dicamilla, 1998). The idea of scaffolding has, also, been described through another metaphor, that of 'assisted performance' (Tharp and Gallimore, 1991) which captures both the scaffolding provided and the results of that assistance in facilitating performance (Lantolf, 2000).

Scaffolding in SLA is, also, referred to as child-directed talk. It “*provides a supportive ‘climbing frame’, or verbal scaffold, within which the child can achieve a degree of communicative success, and success moreover that he or she would not have been able to achieve unaided*” (Thornbury and Slade, 2006:196). Assistance, then, functions most effectively when it is tailored to the learner, adapted and eventually withdrawn in response to learner development, i.e., as the child’s ability to handle the skills of conversation increases, the adult’s support and control is gradually withdrawn. On the other hand, the construct of the ZPD (Lantolf, 2000) specifies that development cannot occur if too much assistance is provided or if a task is too easy, for development is impeded both by helping the learner with what he or she is already able to do, and by not withdrawing assistance, such that, the learner develops the ability to work independently.

A part from providing immediate conversational support, scaffolding may play an important role in the development of language itself, especially of its syntax (Thornbury and Slade, 2006), i.e., it does not only maximizes opportunities for reciprocal interaction, but supports the emerging conversational and linguistic competence through the use of questions, continuing moves, repetitions, and comments and elaborations. Language development can manifest at two levels: the co-construction of a proposition over a number of turns (called a *vertical construction*) (Scollon, 1976) which may prepare the child for subsequent production of *horizontal constructions* that is syntactic sequences of prepositions embedded in a single turn. This increase in complexity may represent a developmental stage in the emergence of grammar.

Scaffolding, also, contributes to the development of conversational competence through the use of adjustments as slowing of pace, higher pitch, repetition, and restricted vocabulary and simple syntax use. Since the interactants are motivated by the need to

communicate with their interlocutors, they tend to ignore the grammatical inaccuracy and concentrate instead on the content.

While in the ZPD assistance is managed by the adult or more expert peer, it involves, also, beyond the materials and the teacher, interactional configurations that include grouping students with one another or with expert speakers and exploiting resources both inside and outside of the classroom. In this context, Ohta (2006), while investigating how the ZPD functions in the learning of Asian languages by analyzing in-depth interviews with learners of Japanese, Chinese, Sanskrit, and Korean found that adult learners were able to operate in a self-managed fashion, seeking and obtaining assistance from a variety of sources, as in the following table:

	<b>Other-management</b>	<b>Self-management</b>
Assess	Helper assesses learner needs	Learner assesses own needs
Tailor	Helper provides developmentally appropriate assistance	Learner chooses an appropriate modality and level of help (peer, teacher, other L2 expert, bound or online dictionary, Google, reference book, textbook, etc.
Adjust	Helper adjusts assistance in response to learner needs	Learner adjusts source of help as needed to solve problem.
Withdraw	Helper provides less assistance as learner skill grows	Learner seeks less assistance as skill level grows, or avoids previously created helps

*Table 2.5. Assistance in the ZPD: Other-Management and Self-Management (adopted from Ohta 2006:159)*



## **2.5 Language Learner Strategies and Pragmatics**

Recent work has concentrated on underscoring the need for more support of learners in their efforts to acquire pragmatic ability by providing them with strategies for enhancing their pragmatic performance. Some of these works have prompted learner strategy experts to consider interventions for enhancing strategy use by L2 learners. There have, for example, been studies involving explicit strategy instruction for learners in listening (Rubin, 1990), speaking (Dornyei, 1995; Nakatani 2005), and reading and writing (Macaro, 2001), and they have demonstrated that learners who consciously make use of language strategies produce better results in their language performance than students who are less strategic (Cohen, 2005).

Though there is still no generally accepted definition of the concept of language learner strategies (LLS), as shown in the following table which contains a sample of definitions that show a discrepancy in a number of features, there is some consensus among experts that LLS are conscious or semi-conscious thoughts and behaviors deployed by learners, often with the intention of enhancing their knowledge and understanding of the TL (Cohen, 2005).

<b>Source</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Tarone (1981)	An attempt to develop linguistic and sociolinguistic competence in the target language.
Rubin (1987)	What learners do to learn and do to regulate their learning.
Chamot (1987)	Techniques, approaches or deliberate actions that students take in order to facilitate learning, recall of both linguistic and content information.

Wenden (1987)	The term refers to language behaviors learners engage in to learn and regulate the learning of L2 to what learners know about the strategies they use (i.e., strategic knowledge) and to what extent learners know about aspects of L2 learning.
Weinstein and Mayer(1986)	Behaviors and thoughts that a learner engages in during learning that are intended to influence the learner's encoding process
Oxford (1990)	Behaviors or actions which learners use to make language learning more successful, self-directed and enjoyable.
Ellis (1995)	Generally, a strategy is a mental or behavioral activity related to some specific stage in the process of language acquisition or language use.
Ridley (1997)	Broadly speaking, the term strategy denotes procedures- which are sometimes conscious and sometimes unconscious- used by a person as a way of reaching a goal.
Cohen (1998)	Processes which are consciously selected by learners and which may result in action taken to enhance the learning or use of L2, through the storage, recall and application of information about that language.
Purpura (1999)	Conscious or unconscious techniques or activities that an individual invokes in language learning, use and testing.

*Table 2.6 Definitions of Language Learning Strategies (source Takač, 2008: 51)*

Oxford (1990), says that the word strategy comes from the ancient Greek term *strategia*, which means steps or actions taken for the purpose of winning a war, and though, through time, dropping the warlike aim, but control and goal-directedness remain in the modern version of the word strategy. But since there is a large taxonomy of language learner strategies involved in L2 learning, it would be better to start by distinguishing language learning strategies from language use strategies as two components of language learner strategies. Though it is almost impossible to recognize the distinction in practice (Ellis, 1995), it would be helpful to know the theoretical distinction between language use strategies on the one hand and language learning strategies on the other, and this distinction that can be useful for later analysis in this study. This distinction is advocated by Ellis (1995) and Cohen (1996a, 1998) who define both sets of strategies as actions that learners “*consciously select either to improve the learning of L2, the use of it, or both*” (Cohen 1998:5).

### **2.5.1 Language Learning Strategies**

Language learning strategies include strategies in four common categories: *cognitive, metacognitive, social, and affective* strategies, though social and affective strategies are often classified in the same set of strategies and forming the *socio-affective* group of strategies (Cohen, 1998; O'Malley and Chamot, 1996; Williams and Burden, 2001). These strategies “*have an explicit goal of assisting learners in improving their knowledge in a target language*” (Cohen 1998:1-2). They are “*behaviors or thoughts that a learner engages in during learning that are intended to influence the learner's encoding process*” (Weinstein and Mayer, 1986:315) and the learner's toolkit for active, purposeful, and attentive self-regulation of mental process during learning.

### **2.5.1.1 Cognitive Strategies**

These strategies are concerned with the mental actions that are employed in learning or problem solving, and that require distinguishing, grouping, practicing, and committing material to memory, through direct analysis, transformation or synthesis of learning material (Rubin, 1987), i.e., strengthening and elaborating mental associations between the new and the known .

According to Williams and Burden (2001), these strategies include processing language in the human mind and constitute mental processes directly concerned with receiving, storage, retrieval and use of information in order to learn, for instance, in the case of a new speech act, learners need to identify those language structures that make this speech act and perhaps group them accordingly so that storage is easy and retrieval is easier. Other examples may include using text features to understand the meaning, taking systematic notes using a T-line format, and breaking a word down into its root, prefix and suffix.

### **2.5.1.2 Metacognitive Strategies**

These strategies operate at a different level to cognitive strategies. They involve planning of learning, setting of goals, thinking about the learning process, monitoring or performance and comprehension, as well as evaluation of results and the learning process, i.e., planning what to do, checking how it is going, and then evaluating how it went. The learners are more aware of their own strategy use and have a conscious control

and regulation of adequate strategy use in various learning situations, and are able to analyze their own learning. For Williams and Burden (2001), learners look at their learning from the 'outside', i.e., knowledge about language learning. Examples of these strategies may be: knowing one's favored learning style, identifying necessary materials for a given language task, and monitoring mistakes during the task.

According to Wenden (1991), there are three kinds of metacognitive knowledge: *person knowledge*, *task knowledge* and *strategic knowledge*. By *person knowledge* he means the general knowledge that learners have about learning or about themselves as learners, including cognitive and affective factors that facilitate or prevent learning. *Task knowledge*, on the other hand, refers to the preconditioned knowledge about procedures involved in the task for a successful completion. This knowledge may include knowledge of the purpose of the task, knowledge of the nature of the task, knowledge of when deliberate learning is required and knowledge of task demands. Finally, *strategic knowledge* refers to the knowledge that learners have about strategies like knowledge about which strategies work best, and knowledge about general approaches to language learning that can guide learners.

### 2.5.1.3 Social/Affective Strategies

Social and affective strategies refer to the way in which learners mediate their language learning experience with others. Social strategies entail corporation with other learners, the teacher, or other speakers of the TL. They "*facilitate interaction with others, often in a discourse situation*" (Oxford, 1990b:71), and put learners in an environment where practicing is possible and they do not affect learning directly (Rubin, 1987).

Affective strategies, on the other hand, are learners' attempts to understand and gain control over their feelings by using various relaxation techniques, self-encouragement, etc. Although affective strategies do not directly affect learning, their role in language learning is still seen as very important.

These two sets of strategies are often taken together and form a category of socio-affective strategies, and are defined as interpersonal strategies that include cooperation, collaboration, peer checking and asking questions for clarification (O'Malley and Chamot, 1990). Their use is affected by the learners' willingness to participate in pair and group work in class or other activities which require interpersonal contact (O'Malley and Chamot, 1990; Nunan, 1992).

O'Malley *et al.* (1985) divide social/affective strategies into two substrategies: the cooperative strategy where cooperation is "*working with one or more peers to obtain feedback, pool information, or model a language activity,*" and the questioning for clarification strategy as "*asking a teacher or other native speaker for repetition, paraphrasing, explanation and/or examples*" (Brown, 2000:126)

### **2.5.2 Language Use Strategies**

Language use strategies, also called communicative strategies, are the techniques that learners employ when attempting to use the target language for the purpose of communication. They "*focus primarily on employing the language that the learners have in their current interlanguage*" (Cohen, 1998:2). The primary goal for employing these

strategies is not usually learning, and that such strategies do not always result in learning, although they frequently do have learning as a byproduct (Cohen, 1998). They include retrieval strategies, rehearsal strategies, cover strategies, and so-called communication strategies. Another way to describe these four strategies is mnemonic (intended to assist the memory) strategies for retrieval, practice strategies, image-protection or masking strategies, and restricted knowledge strategies, each of which is defined and illustrated below:

### 2.5.2.1 Retrieval Strategies

Retrieval strategies are *“frequently the mirror image of the language learning strategies initially used to encode the language material into long-term mental storage”* (Byram, 2000:131). When the technique is used for initial learning, it is clearly a learning strategy. However, when the same technique is used for retrieving language material for communicative use, this technique becomes a communicative or language use strategy, i.e., the learner might have used a mnemonic learning strategy for initial encoding of the material in long-term memory storage and employing the same strategy helps the learner to retrieve the material when needed for live communication (Byram, 2000).

For Cohen (1998: 6), too, retrieval strategies are those behaviors or techniques *“used to call up language material from [long term mental] storage, through whatever memory searching techniques the learner can muster”*. They are strategies for calling up information about the language already stored in memory like retrieving the correct verb in its appropriate conditional tense for making a polite request or retrieving the meaning of a particular adjective when it is heard or read.

This means difficulties with word retrieval can be aided with effective word finding strategies like using cues to help word retrieving. These cues are simply using a hint or clue as to what the missing word might be. Examples may, also, include using techniques or strategies that enable learners to retrieve information by using sounds, images, a combination of sounds and images, body movement, mechanical means, etc. (Oxford, 1990). These can be divided into phonemic and semantic cues. By phonemic cues we mean using sounds like the first vowel or consonant sound of the missing word which may trigger an individual's memory of the full word. Another strategy linked to phonemic cues is rhyming where by using a word that rhymes with the missing one can help retrieve the first. Semantic cues, on the other hand, are category or background clues. A category clue would provide the group the missing word belongs to and a background clue would state a function of the word.

### **2.5.2.2 Rehearsal Strategies:**

These strategies, called also practice strategies, are employed for rehearsing structures in the target language. Although language learning might indeed be involved in this process to one degree or another, the rehearsal aspect for real communication makes these strategies communicative or language use strategies. For Weinstein and Mayer (1986), learners use these strategies for practicing L2 structures that have already been learned to some extent. A good example would be "*rehearsing the subjunctive form in preparation for using it communicatively in a request in Spanish to a boss for a day off*" (Cohen, 1998:6).

A rehearsal strategy, then, uses repeated practice of information to learn it. The learner, for example, to learn a list of items, often will attempt to memorize the information by repeating it over and over. He may say the words out loud, or he may sub-



vocalize the information (say it to himself). The repeated practice increases the student's familiarity with the information. For certain information, (for example the telephone number we need to memorize until we can write it down or make the call), verbal rehearsal of the numbers is a fine strategy as opposed to memorizing long lists of information which requires a more complex approach to yield better results.

Learners have different approaches and preferences in using rehearsal strategies. Some learners do better with rehearsal strategies when they can attach sound or movement to the items to be learned, while some others may prefer to practice in quiet. When learning information that contributes to a larger concept or skill, lots of practice may be required for the learners to learn the information to a level of automaticity.

### 2.5.2.3 Cover Strategies

Cover strategies are defined by Cohen as:

*those strategies that learners use to create the impression that they have control over material when they do not. They are a special type of compensatory or coping strategy which involves creating the appearance of language ability so as not to look unprepared, foolish, or even stupid*

(1998:6)

A learner's primary intention in using them is not to learn any language material, but rather use them as strategies for covering oneself in the language classroom (such as participating in classroom tasks to look good in front of other students or the teacher, without intending to learn or communicate any particular aspect of the target language). Some examples given by Cohen (1996, 1998) are : using a memorized and partly understood phrase to keep the conversation going, producing simplified utterances, or producing overly complex utterances.

Using a memorized and not fully-understood phrase in an utterance in a classroom drill in order to keep the action going, would be the best example of a cover strategy. The learner can utter an elaborate a complex circumlocution because the finely-tuned vocabulary is lacking and he has to use only that part of a phrase that he can deal with. The aim behind such strategies is an attempt to compensate for gaps in target language knowledge (Cohen, 1996).

In addition to these linguistically-based cover strategies are some others like: laughing, joking, diverting the conversation partner, smiling, nodding, and appearing to be interested or fascinated by the conversation while not understanding what is being said (Oxford, 1995). Such social-psychological cover strategies are often known as masking or image-protection strategies in an anxiety-ridden communication situation. These terms can be employed to encompass linguistically-based cover strategies as well.

#### 2.5.2.4 Communication Strategies

The general term for the fourth group of language use strategies, is 'communication' strategies and is deeply entrenched in the research literature (cf. Bialystok, 1990; Cohen, 1998; Dornyei, 1995; Dornyei and Scott, 1997; Faerch and Kasper, 1983; Poulisse, 1990; and Tarone, 1981). By focusing on how to convey meaningful information that is new to the recipient, such strategies may or may not have any impact on learning. For example, learners may use a vocabulary item encountered for the first time in a given lesson to communicate a thought, without any intention of trying to learn the word.

Communication strategies include overgeneralizing a grammar rule or vocabulary meaning from one context to another where it does not apply, avoiding or abandoning a topic that is too difficult, reducing a message, switching to the native language temporarily (code switching), paraphrasing, or using circumlocution (Chen, 1998; Oxford, 1990). In all these instances, the most important issue is

*to capitalize on the restricted amount that one knows, with the ultimate goal of conveying a meaningful message. Therefore, the term restricted-knowledge strategies might be a useful synonym for communication strategies.*

(Byram, 2000:131)

This means that by steering the conversation away from problematic areas, expressing meaning in creative ways (e.g., by paraphrasing a word or concept, coining words, using facial expressions or gestures), creating more time for themselves to think,

and negotiating the difficult parts of the communication, learners use strategies to deal with their restricted knowledge. In addition to that, learners may use strategies that include compensating for gaps by literal translation from the first language (L1) or switching to another language. For Dörnyei and Scott (1997) and Dörnyei and Kormos (1998), communication strategies, also include conversational interaction strategies like asking for help, clarification, or confirmation and strategies for maintaining the floor by, for example, using fillers and other hesitation devices.

## **2.6 Language Proficiency and Language Learner strategies**

The research conducted to date has been consistent in linking levels of language proficiency to strategy use, i.e., strategies are the causes and the outcomes of improved language proficiency. Many studies show the relationship between proficiency and language learning strategies, and MacIntyre (1994) further emphasized that strategy use results from and leads to increased proficiency.

In other studies (Anderson, 1991; Dreyer and Oxford, 1996; Ehrman and Oxford, 1990, 1995; and Green and Oxford, 1995), proficient L2 learners have been found to have a wider repertoire of strategies and draw on them to accomplish L2 tasks, while less proficient L2 learners draw on a smaller number of strategies and do so in a less effective manner. This is in support of the idea that there is a strong relationship between strategy use and TL proficiency. The following table summarizes some of the main studies about the relation between TL proficiency and strategy use:

Author	Study
McGroarty (1987)	studied university students learning Spanish and Japanese. She found that language achievement was related with classroom strategies demonstrating cognitive rehearsal.
Rossi-Le (1989)	studied 147 adult ESL students in the United States and found that language proficiency level could predict strategy use.
Rost and Ross (1991)	concluded that students with different levels of language proficiency make different use of certain strategies. The more proficient students differed from the less proficient students in their cognitive level.
Oxford, Park-Oh, Ito and Sumrall (1993a, b)	studied 107 high school students of Japanese, and reported a significant relationship between strategy use and language achievement scores.
Park (1994)	investigated the relationship between strategy use and proficiency in Korea. In this study, standardized test scores-TOEFL scores-were used to measure proficiency. Park indicated a linear relationship between strategy use and language proficiency.
Oxford and Ehrman (1995)	studied 520 adult learners in the US. The learners in this study were highly educated and motivated. Oxford and Ehrman tried to explore <i>"the use of learning strategies as an important factor in the success of adult learners of foreign languages"</i> (1995: 359). As a result, they reported a low but significant correlation between cognitive strategy use and speaking proficiency.
Green and Oxford's (1995)	found that the more successful learners reported using more language learning strategies frequently than less successful learners, and suggested a causal ascending spiral relationship between level of proficiency and language learning strategies: <i>"active use strategies help students attain higher proficiency, which in turn makes it more likely that students will select these active use strategies"</i> (1995: 288)

Bremner (1999)	argued the relationship between proficiency and strategy use might be that strategies are " <i>simply features</i> " of proficiency, which means that " <i>only by reaching a certain level will a student be likely to use a given strategy</i> " (1999:495).
Chamot and El-Dinary (1999)	investigated the learning strategy applications in elementary students learning French, Japanese, and Spanish in immersion classrooms and reported no differences in total strategy use between effective and less effective students, but noted that there were some differences in the types of strategy students used when reading in the target language. Effective students used more background-knowledge strategies, and less effective students used more phonetic decoding strategies. They also discussed the possibility that less effective learners focus too much on details instead of on seeing the task as a whole.
Sheorey (1999)	studied Indian college students' language learning strategy use, and found that students with higher proficiency used language learning strategies more frequently than those with lower proficiency, especially in the use of functional practice strategies.
Bremner (1999)	studied language learning strategies and proficiency involving 149 students who were primary teachers. He conducted two analyses, taking proficiency as the independent variable and strategy use as the dependent variable in the first, and taking proficiency as the dependent variable and strategy use as the independent variable in the second. He reported significant relationships between proficiency level and strategy use, especially compensation strategies, social strategies and mostly, cognitive strategies. He also reported, " <i>no clear indication of causality in one particular direction</i> " between proficiency level and strategy use" (1999:504).

Osanai's (2000)	studied 147 foreign students in universities in the United States, and found self-rating proficiency was significantly correlated to the use of language learning strategies.
Wharton's (2000)	studied university students' language learning strategies, and reported that students who rated their proficiency as "good" and "fair" used more strategies significantly more often than those who rated their proficiency as "poor". He further concluded "... a linear relationship between proficiency level and the reported frequency of use of many strategies", and the "relationship is two way, however, with proficiency affecting strategy use and vice versa" (2000:232).

**Table 2.7** *Language Proficiency and Strategy Use*

According to Table 2.4, it appears learners with higher proficiency use language learning strategies more often than those with lower proficiency. Another thing that researchers (Abraham and Vann, 1987; Vann and Abraham, 1990) insist on is that there are no good or bad strategies, there is good or bad application of strategies. They reported that less proficient learners were using useful strategies, often the same strategies used by learners who were more proficient. They claimed that the difference between successful and less successful learners was the degree of flexibility the learners showed when choosing strategies, and the learners' ability to appropriately apply strategies in their own learning situation (Hinkel, 2005).

Anderson (1991), too, in his research shows that effective and less effective learners reported using the same kinds of strategies. The difference is how the strategies are executed and orchestrated. This suggests that the ways that effective learners use strategies and combine them makes the distinction between them and less effective

learners, and not that successful L2 learners use good strategies and less effective learners use poor or bad strategies. Cohen (1998:8) supports this concept. He states that “*with some exceptions, strategies themselves are not inherently good or bad, but have the potential to be used effectively*”.

## **2.7 Language Learner Strategies in Online Learning Environment**

Apprenticeship techniques have been effectively applied to SL and FL classes (Klingner and Vaughn, 2000) and computer-supported collaboration (Angeli, Valanides, and Bonk, 2003) to engage students in social interaction and active learning. By social interaction, we mean SL/FL learners’ interaction with others in social learning environments, is inspired by Vygotsky’s (1978) concept of ZPD (see 2.3.1). In fact, opportunities for social interaction have exploded with the emergence of Web-based learning technologies and activities. It is one of the areas which have paid most attention to the influence of the sociocultural context, called also NBLT (network-based language teaching), which refers to language teaching involving the use of computers in either local or global networks (Warschauer and Kern, 2000). The following table summarizes some of the CMC activities for L2 development:

Activity Type	Example	Reference (s)
In-class Practice Activities	NNS use oral and written chat to create practice dialogues and discuss analysis questions related to model dialogue	Sykes (2005)



Cultural Analysis & Literary Discussion	NNS interact with NS of the target language to discuss cultural topics (e.g., family structures) and parallel texts (e.g., <i>Aschenputtel/Cinderella</i> ) as part of their in-class assignments.	Belz (2002, 2003, 2008)
Project-based Learning Task	Students (NS and NNS) work together to create a website containing a bilingual essay relevant to topics/ideas previously discussed in other interactions.  Students (NS and NNS) compile and research an itinerary for a vacation.	Belz (2002, 2003)
Free Conversation	Learners engage in a free conversation task in which they can talk about anything they wish (e.g., travel, personal information, daily routines).	Gonzalez-Lloret (2003)

*Table 2.8 Simple Activities in CMC for L2 Pragmatic Development (Sykes and Cohen 2008:86)*

The introduction of these activities led to the growing awareness that SL/FL teachers and learners are working within a complex range of institutional and sociocultural contexts which have an important influence on the language learning process (Candlin and Mercer, 2001; Richards, 2001; and Salomon and Perkins, 1998). Therefore, language learning curricula were obliged to include different forms of instructional techniques and organizational structures that will facilitate strategy use and active participation in social interaction.

Various forms of instructional techniques have, then, been proposed to assist learners in performing complex tasks and adjusting their responses based on their experiences and knowledge, e.g. reciprocal teaching (Palincsar and Brown, 1984; Brown and Palincsar, 1989) through which students practice strategies, such as questioning, clarifying, summarizing, and predicting. Another example is cognitive apprenticeship with strategy training like modeling, coaching, scaffolding, articulation, exploration, and reflection (Collins, Brown, and Newman, 1989). These strategies might help learners take responsibility of their own learning and as they become themselves more proficient in applying the strategies on their own may on their turn assist their peers.

Online environment like video conferencing offer, then, means by which pragmatic competence requirements such as mastery of recognition, comprehension, and production skills, can be addressed in a variety of ways relevant to the development of L2 pragmatics (Belz, 2005; Sykes, 2005, 2008; Sykes and Cohen, 2008), i.e., computer-mediated environments are useful for delivering information and providing authentic, meaningful interaction through collaboration, and other means of interaction in the target language.

An increasing number of studies are looking at how the outcomes of intercultural telecollaboration (e.g., video conferencing) can be influenced by both macro- as well as micro-level aspects of the sociocultural and institutional environments in which they take place. This is because telecollaboration requires two or more classes located in different contexts to interact and collaborate together, and can therefore lead to misunderstandings or conflict which will be influential on the development and outcomes of the exchange.

According to educational researchers and psychologists, peer-interaction is the most successful form since it promotes support, acceptance, and social development (Slavin, 1990; Wells, Ling, and Maher, 1990). This type of cooperative language learning (peer-interaction) embodies the idea that language has a predominant social function and endorses the "social interactionist theory" in which language finds its use in functions relevant to the learner's immediate communicative needs (Doughty, 2000b).

The second expressed goal of telecollaborative FL learning is the development of linguistic competence. The great benefit of telecollaborative discourse is that it offers opportunities for the longitudinal examination of the development of particular linguistic phenomena in particular interactions over specified periods of time (Belz, 2004a; Belz and Kinginger, 2003).

Telecollaborations are, then, a possible option for strategy development in TL pragmatics. These contexts enhance the development of SL/FL pragmatics because they can be oriented towards different types of strategies (e.g., learning vs. practice orientation), and therefore, are viable means for developing skills in L2 pragmatics. This can be illustrated in the following table:

Strategies	Examples
Strategies for learning pragmatics:	-I will refer to published material (e.g., articles, websites) dealing with communicative acts. -I will ask NSs to model how they perform the communicative act. -I will identify the communicative act (.i.e. requests, apologies, complaints) I need/want to focus on.

	<p>-I will gather information (through observation, interviews, written materials, movies, radio) on how the communicative acts are performed.</p> <p>-I will pay attention to what NSs do by noting what they say, how they say it, and their non-verbal behavior.</p>
Strategies for performing Pragmatics	<p>-I remain true to my own cultural identity &amp; personal values while still being aware of the cultural expectations of NSs.</p> <p>-I use communication strategies to get the message across (e.g., "I'm not sure how to say this right," repair when necessary; attempt to follow native-speaker examples).</p> <p>-I ask native speakers for feedback on my pragmatic abilities.</p> <p>-I practice (e.g., role plays, imaginary situations, conversation with native speakers) in order to improve my pragmatic skills.</p> <p>-I devise and utilize memory strategies for retrieving the communicative act materials that have already been learnt.</p> <p>-I determine my style preferences as a learner and try approaches that are consistent with my individual style.</p>
Metapragmatic strategies	<p>-I will be conscious of the necessity for pre-planning.</p> <p>-I will decide what my focus is: Performance? Comprehension? Both?</p> <p>-I will monitor my performance of communicative acts (e.g., level of directness, terms of address, timing, organization, socio-cultural factors).</p>

*Table 2.8: Learner Strategies and L2 Pragmatics (adapted from Sykes & Cohen, 2009)*

## **2.8 Online Peer Support and Pragmatic Development**

The trend of using online discussions with ESL/EFL learners is also supported by studies on the linguistic features of online messages. Warschauer (1996) and Chun's (1994) studies reveal that students' written language in online discussion boards resembles what they would say in face-to-face discussion. As a result, they propose that online discussions can serve as a prelude to oral discussions, or a bridge connecting oral interaction and written composition.

Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural theory suggests that learning firstly occurs in interpersonal communication with experts who can be their peers who have more knowledge or skills. They can help to learn from each other to solve problems, and to learn to actively participate and contribute to group work (Chen and Lou, 2004; Topping and Ehly, 1998). Studies show that online peer interaction helps learners acquire new strategies and strengthen their own ideas, because they use the same target language and have similar experiences in groups, and are familiar with learning behavior and learners' characteristics that instructors might be unaware of (Beauvois, 1994; Forman and Cazden, 1985; Miller, 1995).

Online peer interaction, frequently present in virtual learning environments, is the locus of many instances of peer support. This is done through explanations or advice to questions elicited by their peers through online communication. Burgstahler (1997:2) thinks that peer support promotes participants' mutual responses, by "*encouraging them to be givers as well as receivers of the support.*" Results from online communication studies on language perspectives show that both learners' knowledge of language and

their language production increase through online peer interaction (Kern, 1995; Singhal, 1998; Warschauer, 1996). They found that learners had a higher participation rate, produced more sentences, and used a greater variety of discourse functions in online discussions than face-to-face communication (Beauvois, 1992; Gonzalez-Bueno, 1998; Kern, 1995).

Therefore, online discussions have been widely implemented among FL/SL learners to improve their communication strategies (Lam, 2000; Liu, Moore, Graham and Lee, 2002; Singhal, 1998). Because online discussions offer an equal opportunity for learners with different cultural background and personalities, they help increase participation and use of language and hence, improve learners' communication strategies. The following table illustrates some of the main studies carried on the support features in online communication:

Author (s)	Study
Darling (1987), Darling & Staton (1989), Duba-Biederman (1994)	studied graduate teaching assistants (GTA) and found that they exchanged experiences and information with their peers, and sought help from their peers.
Myers (1998)	explored GTAs' involvement in supportive communication relationships and found that peer supportive communication was more effective than mentoring supportive communication.  The peer supportive communication relationship was " <i>the primary socialization agent</i> " for novice GTAs. As a result, Myers (1998:66) concluded that peer support " <i>provided a foundation for TA socialization</i> "

Heift and Caws' (2000)	found that students' participation was not related to their language proficiency. Active participants were those who posted the most peer-feedback messages. However, examples of peer-feedback messages in their study were like "I agree with that" or "Thanks." To make an impression of active involvement in teachers' minds, students posted many of these messages without providing substantive comments or reflections.
Hyland's (2000)	studied the impact of feedback on ESL writers and found that informal peer feedback worked better than peer feedback directed by the teacher. Students appreciated their peer support at various stages of the writing process.
Maarof's (2002)	asked students to observe their peers' communication strategies and then discuss their observations. Evidence from students' comments and responses suggested that peer observation, feedback, and discussion all helped to raise students' awareness of using communication strategies.
Matsumura & Hann (2004)	documented peer support among ITAs and found that trainers need to help ITAs discern cultural differences between U.S. and their native countries through peer support.

*Table 2.10: Support Features in Online Interactions*

## 2.9 Conclusion

The review of Language developmental pragmatic research has shown that sociocultural knowledge is crucial for learners to engage in appropriate and meaningful conversations. Without it, language learners may not be able to sense how contextual factors influence the selection of proper linguistic forms. It has shown, too, that simple exposure to NSs' input through online learning environment may boost learners' pragmatic competence. This can be done through the assisted performance provided by more expert peers, in this case NSs, who fall on the other end of the Vygotskian's theory of Zone of Proximal Development. With their help, NNSs can achieve what they could not without assistance.



## **Chapter Three RESEARCH METHOD**

3.1 Introduction

3.2 Designs of Previous ILP Studies

3.2.1 Longitudinal Studies

3.2.2 Cross-Sectional/Single-Moment Studies

3.3 Methods of Collecting Spoken Data in Previous ILP Studies

3.3.1 Naturalistic Data

3.3.2 Elicited Data

3.4 The Method of the Present Study

3.4.1 Data Collection

3.4.2 Analysis

3.4.3 Conversation Analysis

3.5 Conclusion

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the methodology employed for data collection and analysis in the current thesis study. It begins with a brief overview of the methodologies used in previous ILP studies with a view to providing a background to the design of the present study. Then, it reports the methodological changes which were considered necessary prior to carrying out this study. It ends with a description of data collection procedures, and data analysis of the main study.

### **3.2 Designs of Previous ILP Studies**

A review of the existing ILP literature shows three types of studies: longitudinal, cross-sectional, and single-moment (non-true cross-sectional). We will see that the limited number of longitudinal and true cross-sectional studies, which most of them are ILP performance studies, makes it more difficult to investigate the development of TL pragmatic competence, i.e., there has been a relative shortage of developmental ILP studies to date which requires attention from ILP researchers.

#### **3.2.1 Longitudinal Studies**

Longitudinal studies provide data from observing a particular learner or group of learners over an extended period of time, usually ranging from a few months to a year or two, which makes it possible to construct a reliable profile of the SLA of individual learners. This is often considered an ideal design for investigation of the development of SL/FL pragmatic competence (Kasper, 1996; Rose, 2000). However, apart from the

difficulty in accessing and obtaining permission to observe learners over a long period of time, an important disadvantage with this design lies in the difficulty involved in making generalizations based on the profile of only one or two learners.

Compared to cross-sectional studies, the main differences lie in the fact that most longitudinal studies have focused on learners at the early developmental stages of pragmatics and the settings where the data collection took place were usually SL classrooms, and that these studies deal with a much wider range of pragmatic aspects than cross-sectional studies, including the study of conversational ability (Schmidt and Frota, 1986), speech acts (Schmidt, 1983; Ellis, 1992, 1997; Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford, 1993a; Kondo, 1997; Ohta, 1997; Barron, 2000, 2003; Achiba, 2003), implicature comprehension (Bouton, 1992, 1994), interactional routines (Kanagy and Igarashi, 1997; Kanagy, 1999), discourse markers (Sawyer, 1992), politeness (DuFon, 2000, 2003), communicative and pragmatic competence (Siegal, 1994, 1996; Cohen, 1997), listener responses (Ohta, 1999, 2001a, 2001b) and modality in disagreements (Salsbury and Bardovi-Harlig, 2000a, 2000b).

As will be shown later (see table 3.1), most of these studies are conducted in an ESL context. One example is Schmidt's (1983) three-year study of Wes, which offered some insight on aspects of Wes' acquisition of pragmatics. Wes was a Japanese adult learner of English, who at the beginning of the study, was very limited in using directives, but whose use of requestive markers such as *please* was more frequent, and associated the verb morpheme *-ing* with requestive force (*sitting for let's sit*). Schmidt noticed by the end of the observation period that some improvements occurred, as Wes started to use imperatives more frequently, dropped the incorrect utilization of *-ing*, used routines more productively, and his directives were generally much more elaborated.

Another study is that of Ellis (1992). During two years Ellis studied the requests of two learners of English (aged 10 and 11) in a classroom setting. He noticed that their directives were initially characterized by propositional incompleteness, but over time diminished considerably as well as their use of direct requests. In another ESL learners study, Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford (1993a) studied the development of suggestions and rejections by NNSs of English in the context of academic advising sessions. They noticed that their participants' competence increased over time, although they still did not know how to mitigate their speech act realizations. Their results revealed an interesting pattern of development which seemed to favor sociopragmatics over pragmalinguistics.

Achiba (2003), also, in a recent study observed her seven-year old daughter Yao's acquisition of requesting over a period of seventeen months and found out that her pragmatic development when requesting became more refined as she went through the different developmental stages. Yao was also able to vary the forms and strategies employed for requesting as her linguistic knowledge and sociocultural perceptions increased, as well as drawing on a developmental pattern when requesting depending on sociopragmatic factors.

Moving on to the longitudinal studies conducted in FL settings, we may start with Schmidt and Frota's (1986) investigation of Schmidt's own acquisition of Brazilian Portuguese. Later on, Cohen (1997) in a similar study also kept a diary and developed a study based on his own learning of Japanese during a course lasting a semester. Although he acquired some ability to perform such speech acts as requests, expressions of gratitude and apologies, by the end of the course his pragmatic ability did not reach his expectations. In a similar way, a Japanese immersion kindergarten was also studied to analyze children's acquisition of pragmatic routines (Kanagy and Igarashi, 1997). The

results showed that children increased their use of spontaneous utterances after seven weeks of immersion. The studies conducted by Ohta (1997, 1999, 2001a, 2001b) also illustrate the development of different pragmatic aspects, such as the Japanese affective particles, and provide evidence for language socialization as a framework to acquire pragmatics in the FL classroom.

Barron (2000, 2003), examined the development of pragmatic competence in a group of Irish students of German during an academic year in the target speech community, to analyze the effects of study abroad. She was interested in pragmalinguistic issues relating to requests, that is, internal modification, and discourse aspects and learners' pragmatic competence in realizations of requests, offers and refusals of offers. Her results have shown that the period of study abroad had a positive effect on learners' pragmatic development. The following table summarizes longitudinal studies carried in both FL and SL settings along with the speech acts under investigation, data collection instruments, and the participants:

Study	Speech acts	Instruments	Learners
Schmidt, 1983	Requests	Naturalistic	Japan ESL beginner (1)
Ellis 1992, 1997	Requests	Naturalistic	Portuguese, Punjabi ESL preteens beginners (2)
Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 1993a, 1996	Suggestions, rejections	Naturalistic	ESL advanced (10) diverse L1
Kondo, 1997	Apologies	Pre-year abroad questionnaire, DCT, assessment questionnaire	Japanese EFL teenagers (45)
Kasanga, 1999	Requests	Naturalistic (field notes)	ESL female adult learner (1) L1

Hoffman-Hicks, 1999	Greetings, leave-takings, Compliments	Open-ended questionnaire, pre-year abroad questionnaire, interview, case studies, naturalistic, RP	American learners of French FL adults (14)
Barron, 2000	Offers, Refusals of Offers	DCT, RP, Retro interview, questionnaire	Irish Germ FL –advanced (33)
Salsbury & Bardovi-Harlig, 2000	Expression of modality in oppositional talk	Conversational interview (RP)	ESL beginners (8) –diverse L1
Dufon, 2000	Negative responses to experience questions	Naturalistic, learner journal	American learners of Indo (3), Japan-American learners of Indo (1), Japan learners of Indo (2) – true beginner (3), intermediate (3)
Churchill, 2001	Requests	Naturalistic (notebook data)	Japan EFL – low level (47)
Matsumura, 2001	Offering advice	MCQ	Japan EFL advanced (97), non-study abroad students (102)
Bardovi-Harlig, 2001	Epistemic modality in disagreements	Conversational interview (RP)	ESL beginners (3) – diverse L1
Matsumura, 2003	Advice	MCQ, self report on Eng exposure	Japan ESL (137) – diverse proficiency

*Table 3.1: Longitudinal Studies.*

### 3.2.2 Cross-Sectional/Single-Moment Studies

This type of studies focuses mainly on observing learners of different proficiency levels at a certain point in time to investigate developmental processes by examining features observed at different stages of development (Rose, 1997). Compared to longitudinal studies, these studies collect data more easily and quickly, and thus are more often employed by ILP researchers to provide valuable information about TL pragmatic development. Indeed, most of the cross-sectional studies conducted to date have focused on the effects different proficiency levels and the length of stay in the TL community

have on pragmatic development (Bardovi-Harlig, 1999a). As suggested by Kasper and Rose (1999, 2002), most of the cross-sectional studies have examined learners' production of speech acts, whereas only a small number of studies have been devoted to analyzing the development of pragmatic awareness.

Starting with those studies carried out in SL settings, Olshtain and Blum-Kulka's (1985) studied the appropriateness of request and apology strategies by learners of Hebrew and found out that NNSs tended to accept the TL pragmatic norms more as the length of residence in the target community increased. In Kerekes (1992) and Koike (1996), on the other hand, by studying assertiveness and supportiveness in troubles talk, in the case of Kerekes and Spanish suggestions by English-speaking learners of Spanish in the case of Koike, the authors found that with increasing proficiency their perceptions became more native-like.

Although learners have access to the same range of realization strategies as NSs, regardless of their proficiency level (Kasper and Schmidt, 1996; Kasper and Rose, 1999), yet they differ from NSs in the way they use linguistic strategies when choosing conventions of form as well as their selecting of conventions of form and means depending on social factors (Kasper and Rose, 1999). Scarcella (1979), the first to examine this aspect, showed that learners' pragmatic routines and other linguistic means of speech act realization expanded as their proficiencies increased.

By studying Japanese learners of English, Takahashi and DuFon (1989) also reported that with increasing proficiency, these learners moved from more indirect requestive strategies to more direct, target-like conventions. In the same line of thought, Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1986) noted that learners' use of supportive moves in request

performance also approximated a target-like distribution with increasing TL proficiency. Finally, in Hassall's (2001) study of English speakers learning Bahasa Indonesian as SL, the author found that higher proficiency learners were closer to TL use. Examples of this study include the decline in the use of "want" statements, the preference for elided imperatives to express direct requests or hinting as proficiency increases.

Moving on to studies conducted in FL environments, it is important to mention that there are only a few cross-sectional studies dealing with the development of pragmatic competence in the context of EFL. Among these Bardovi-Harlig and Dornyei (1998) who dealt with different speech acts, namely those of requests, suggestions, apologies and refusals, which appeared at the end of videotaped interactions between two university students. Participants, a female and a male, were asked to distinguish between appropriate-inappropriate and correct-incorrect utterances in order to focus on their degree of awareness of errors in grammar and pragmatics.

Niezgoda and Rover's (2001) also focused on the effects of the learning environment on the development of grammatical and pragmatic awareness in order to determine whether Bardovi-Harlig and Dornyei's (1998) study could be generalized to all SL and FL settings. These authors used the same instruments and procedures but dealt with different learner populations (48 ESL and 124 EFL Czech students at university level) without paying attention to teachers. They, too, found that their ESL students rated pragmatic errors as being significantly more serious than grammatical errors. However, the Czech EFL students noticed a much higher number of pragmatic and grammatical errors and judged the two types of errors to be more serious than the ESL population did. This finding highlighted the fact that the learning environments in each study were different.



Other cross-sectional studies pragmatic transfer as a developmental stage in pragmatic proficiency. One example is Takahashi and Beebe (1987) who compared the written refusals of 20 NSs of Japanese, 20 NSs of English and 40 Japanese NNSs of English (20 each in Japan and the United States). The NNS groups were further divided into low and high proficiency groups. The results showed that pragmatic transfer from Japanese to English was found in both contexts (ESL and EFL) and at both proficiency levels, although Japanese ESL learners approximated NS norms better than EFL learners in their productions of refusals.

Hill (1997) also analyzed the requests of 60 university-level Japanese learners of English, and found a heavy reliance on direct requests for the low proficiency group, while the advanced group employed direct requests far less frequently. Trosborg (1995), too, studied three groups of Danish learners of English and found that as proficiency increased, there was an approximation of native-like request strategies, which included the use of upgraders, downgraders, and supportive moves.

Rose (2000), was more concerned with pre-adolescent participants and the study was based on the development of requests, apologies and compliment responses in English among three groups of Cantonese-speaking primary school students in Hong Kong, and he suggested a precedence of pragmalinguistics over sociopragmatics in the early stages of pragmatic development in the TL.

Safont (2001), as well, analyzed beginner and intermediate students' acquisition of the speech act of requesting in the instructional setting of the university with a focus on the effects of level of proficiency, the type of task to be performed, learners' sociolinguistic background (monolinguals versus bilinguals), and the role of instruction.

The author reported that the explicit teaching of requests to EFL learners plays a positive role, both quantitatively and qualitatively. The following table summarizes most of the cross-sectional studies carried until now:

Study	Speech acts	Instruments	Learners
Scarcella, 1979	Invitations, Requests	RP	Arabic ESL – beginner (10)/ advanced (10)
Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1986	Requests	DCT	American learners of Hebrew SL- low-intermediate/high-intermediate/ advanced (240)
Takahashi & Beebe, 1987	Refusals	DCT	Japan ESL (20) Japan EFL (20) Graduate/ undergraduate.
Trosborg, 1987	Apologies	RP	Danish EFL – intermediate (12)/ low-advanced (12)/ high-advanced (12)
Takahashi & Dufon, 1989	Requests	RP, RP check interview	Japan ESL – beginner/intermediate/advanced 3 pairs (learners-NS) each
Beebe & Takahashi, 1989b	Disagreement, Chastisement	DCT, naturalistic	Japan ESL –high intermediate/advanced(15)
Omar, 1991	Greetings	Questionnaire, RP, naturalistic	American learners of Kiswahili FL – beginner (16)/ intermediate (12), advanced (4)
Robinson, 1992	Refusals	DCT, self-report	Japan ESL – intermediate (6)/ advanced (6)
Svanes, 1992	Requests	DCT	Learners of Norwegian SL, L1 diverse length of stay: 8-12 months (44), 12-36 months (21), > 3 years (35)
Limmaneeprasert, 1993	Apologies, Responses to Apologies	Questionnaire, meta-pragmatic assessment	American learners of Thai SL/FL – beginner (16), advanced(18)
Kim, 1995	Requests	Oral DCT	Korean ESL – intermediate/ advanced (15)
Trenchs, 1995	Complaints	Questionnaire	Catalan EFL – low intermediate (13)/ advanced (14)

Trosborg, 1995	Apologies, Requests, Complaints	RP	Danish EFL learners – high beginner/ intermediate/ advanced
Houck & Gass, 1996	Refusals	Video-recorded RP	Japan ESL low (2), high (2)
Maeshiba, Yoshinaga, Kasper, & Ross, 1996	Apologies	DCT, rating scale	Japan ESL intermediate (30)/ advanced (30) Japan NS (30) Eng NS (30)
Yamashita, 1996	Refusals, Requests, Apologies	Self-assessment, language lab oral test, open DCT, RP, RP assessment, MCDCT	American learners of Japanese SL (34), American learners of Japanese FL (13) – beginner (12), intermediate (20), advanced (15)
Hill, 1997	Requests	DCT, assessment Questionnaire	Japanese EFL male – low (20), intermediate (20), advanced (20)
Francis, 1997	Requests	Naturalistic	ESL adults , 9 levels of proficiency
Suh, 1999	Requests	MCQ	Korean ESL –intermediate (10)/advanced (10) / American Eng NS (10)
Baba, 1999	Compliments and Compliment Responses	Modified RP	Japanese ESL (14) – intermediate (4)/ advanced (10) American JSL (17) – intermediate(10)/advanced(7)
Rose, 2000	Requests, apologies, compliment responses	Audio-taped cartoon oral production task	Hong Kong Chinese EFL children, 7-year-old (20), 9-year-old (14), 11-year-old (19)
Safont (2001)	Requests	Open RP Open DCT	160 Spanish female EFL beginner and intermediate student between 19 and 22 years old.

**Table 3.2: Cross-Sectional Studies**

According to Rose (2000), many studies are called cross-sectional while they collect data from learners of different proficiency levels but treat them as one single group against the TL group. He considers such studies ‘single-moment’ rather than cross-

sectional which deal with TL pragmatic performance rather than TL pragmatic development. He supports his idea with Cook's view:

*(A) cross-sectional study ... looks at different learners at different moments in time and establishes development by comparing these successive stages in different people ... (Other studies) do not compare groups of learners at different cross-sectional levels to establish a series of developmental language states, but either lump all the learners together in one group, or separate them by first language or criteria other than chronological development ... A further term, single-moment studies, needs to be coined to distinguish this approach from the true cross-sectional design.*

(1993:34)

Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford (1993:280), too, think that "Single-moment" studies should also include those investigating "non-native speakers at a single level of proficiency". Since it is difficult to differentiate between cross-sectional and single-moment studies (considered non true cross-sectional) the following table summarizes most of them:

Study	Speech acts	Instruments	Learners
Fraser, Rintell, & Walters, 1980	Requests, Apologies	Closed RP, -point scale	Spanish learners of Eng (8)
Cohen & Olshtain, 1981	Apology	RP	Hebrew learners of Eng (20)
Rintell, 1981	Requests, Suggestions	Closed RP, 5-point scale	Spanish learners of Eng (16 requests/ 10 suggestions)
Blum-Kulka, 1982	Requests	DCT	American learners of Hebrew SL- intermediate/advanced (44)
Olshtain, 1983	Apologies	Closed RP, Questionnaire	Eng learners of Hebrew SL (13) Russian learners of Hebrew SL(14)
Eisenstein & Bodman, 1986	Thanking	DCT, Interview	ESL advanced (67) diverse L1

Cohen, Olshain, & Rosenstein, 1986	Apology	Questionnaire	Hebrew EFL advanced (84)
House & Kasper, 1987	Requests	DCT	German ESL intermediate/advanced (200) Danish ESL intermediate/advanced (200)
Olshain & Weinbach, 1987	Complaints	DCT	Learners of Hebrew SL – “rather high level” (35)
Banerjee & Carrell, 1988	Suggestions	DCT	Chinese Malay EFL –advanced (28)
Takana, 1988	Requests	RP	Japanese ESL (4 pairs)
House, 1988	Apologies	DCT, 3-point scale (NS only)	German ESL intermediate/advanced (200)
Bodman & Eisenstein, 1988	Thanking	RP, DCT, Naturalistic	English learners (40pairs learners-learners, 24 pairs learners-NS)
Faerch & Kasper, 1989	Requests	DCT	Danish ESL between intermediate & advanced (200) -Danish learners of German SL (200)
Rintell & Mitchell 1989	Requests, Apologies	DCT	ESL – low advanced (29 request/ 21 apology)
Garcia, 1989	Apologies	RP, interview	Venezuelan ESL learners (10)
Beebe & Takahashi, 1989a	Disagreement, Embarrassing info	DCT, naturalistic	Japanese(15) ESL intermediate & advanced
Wolfson, 1989	Compliments	Naturalistic	ESL: diverse L1 and proficiency
Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 1990	Status-congruent/ incongruent acts	Naturalistic	ESL –advanced (18) –diverse L1
Beebe, Takahashi, and Uliss-Weltz, 1990	Refusals	DCT	Japanese ESL (20)
Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 1991	Rejections	Naturalistic	ESL advanced (39) diverse L1
Linnell, Porter, Stone, and Chen, 1992	Apologies	DCT	Learners of Eng (20)

Han, 1992	Compliment Responses	Field notes, Interview	Korean ESL female (10)
Boxer, 1993	Complaints	Naturalistic, Field notes	Japanese ESL learners
Cohen & Olshtain, 1993	Apologies, complaints, requests	RP	EFL advanced (15)
Weizman, 1993	Requests (hints)	DCT	Learners of Hebrew SL (305), diverse L1
Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 1993b	Rejections	Open questionnaire, DCT	ESL graduate (13) diverse L1
Takahashi & Beebe, 1993	Corrections	DCT	Japanese ESL(15) intermediate & advanced
Olshtain & Weinbach, 1993	Complaints	DCT	British learners of Hebrew (27), American learners of Hebrew (23)
Cenoz & Valencia, 1994	Requests, Apologies	DCT	Basque EFL (62)
Murphy & Neu, 1996	Complaints	Oral DCT	Korean ESL male graduate (14)
Arent, 1996	Complaints	RP, interview, verbal report	Chinese ESL graduate (22) – intermediate & advanced
Eisenstein, Bodman & Carpenter, 1996	Greeting	Open-ended Questionnaire	Bilingual graduate students (20), ESL advanced (80)
Nakabachi, 1996	Complaints	DCT	Japanese EFL -intermediate (39)
Tokano, 1997	Complaints	DCT (including assessment task)	Japanese learners of Eng (34)
Hassall, 2001	Requests	RP, rating scale	Australian learners of Bahasa Indones FL – low (3), middle (15), high (2)
Sasaki, 1997	Requests, refusals	RP, questionnaire	Japanese EFL –low/low-intermediate/high-intermediate (12)
Hinkel, 1997	Advice	MCQ, DCT	Taiwanese Chinese ESL (40 DCT, 40 MCQ) – “relatively high proficiency”

Aktuna & Kamisli, 1997	Chastisements	Written RP	Turkish EFL advanced (68)
Kasanga, 1998	Requests	Naturalistic, DCT	ESL (100-naturalistic, 34 DCT)
Nakashama, 1999	Requests	RP, retrospective verbal report	American learners of Japanese SL (5)
Tatsuki, 2000	Complaints	DCT (cartoon prompts)	Japanese EFL (41) – high level
Kobayashi & Rinnert, 2003	Requests	RP, Naturalistic	Japanese EFL

*Table 3.3: Single-Moment Studies*

### **3.3 Methods of Collecting Spoken Data in Previous ILP Studies**

ILP studies favor case study methods which have been used in social science research since the late 1940s, but were not used until the 1970s. Case study methods as a research strategy tend to examine a specific phenomenon with fairly clear-cut boundaries in the eyes of the researcher, such as a teacher, a home, a classroom, or a school (Johnson, 1992). This allows for a reliance on observation and reflection techniques for and during data collection. The analysis of the data entails figuring out the linkages between the context and the particular phenomenon of interest. Beyond reflection and analysis, case study methods can involve multiple sites, quantitative analysis and evaluation (Merriam, 1988). There are two main types of case study methods: *interpretive* and *intervention*.

*Interpretative* case studies are analytical descriptions that illustrate, support or challenge existing theoretical assumptions about teaching and learning, and therefore involve attention to description and the interpretation of meaning. Beyond a description

and discussion of the case, the level of analysis can range from exploring and asserting connections between context and phenomena to constructing theory (Golato, 2005), i.e., they begin with a set of assumptions about how or why a particular phenomenon of interest occurs, with an eye toward refining an existing theory constructed under a different context.

*Intervention* case studies, on the other hand, seek to find out if and how the intervention had an effect on the phenomenon of interest. The goal is to explain behavior and/or meaning constructions on the basis of what happens as a result of the intervention. They are interested in understanding the contextual conditions under which the intervention operates or not, and are far less common in language and education than interpretive studies. The main difference between the two methods is that in intervention case studies the researcher studies what effect an intervention has on participants in the case, while in interpretive case studies, the case itself is the primary interest and there is no intervention.

Data collection in both methods of case study constitute a very important area of concern, as there is no easy way to collect the type of data that is both relatively 'naturalistic' while at the same time allowing for researcher control. It can be done within the natural setting of the case, or it can involve elicitation of language information data, or use a combination of both, i.e., studies that combined different elicitation methods or combined one or more elicitation methods with naturalistic data, or even combined one or more elicitation methods with meta-pragmatic assessment methods such as assessment questionnaires and rating scale.



### **3.3.1 Naturalistic Data**

A review of the data collection instruments of most ILP studies (see tables 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3 ) shows that only few were based on naturally occurring data (collected using field notes, observation, or telephone conversations). This is a small number, given that naturalistic data are desirable for ILP studies. This because while naturalistic data may be useful for obtaining initial findings in a natural setting, it does not allow for researcher control of relevant social and contextual variables, thus making the findings less comparable. Additionally, it is also not easy to gather a large enough corpus of data for comparison in this way.

However, the naturalistic findings may provide evidence which falsifies some of the research proposals and corroborate the experimental findings. By using note-taking, audio-recording, and/or video-recording, researchers try to capture naturally-occurring interactions and other information. Written language samples such as notes, journals, and letters produced spontaneously for communicative purposes also qualify as naturalistic data (Golato, 2005).

The best example of naturalistic data would be recordings of naturally occurring talk-in-interaction. CA researchers analyze talk-in-interaction in order to show how patterns of communication unfold, and their data consist of non-elicited, audio-taped or videotaped face-to-face encounters, and/or audio-taped spontaneous telephone conversations. Structures are, then, analyzed as they are used in real life –and in real time- with the added advantage of looking beyond speech, to study bodily performance,

i.e., every element of the interaction (hesitation, laughter, silences, eye gaze, body-movements) may be incorporated in the analysis.

Another advantage is that this methodology allows for the repeated and detailed analysis of utterances in their sequential context (Atkinson and Heritage, 1984), and researchers investigate how the participants in the talk display understanding and orientation to the other participant's talk.

In spite of the strength of this methodology, it has been criticized because working within this paradigm makes it rather difficult (if not impossible) to control for extraneous variables such as power, status, gender, and age differences between interactants (Yuan 2001), let alone the fact that it is rather painstaking to collect a large corpus of data samples which display the phenomenon being investigated (Kasper, 2000), leading to a corpus that is too small for statistical analysis (Yuan, 2001) which affects generalizability of the findings.

### **3.3.2 Elicited Data**

Given the naturalistic data collection difficulties, many ILP researchers tend to draw on elicited data as an alternative. Some of the widely used techniques for elicitation of data are structured interviews, open-ended questionnaires, think-aloud protocols, stimulated recall, and interactive journal writing between the researcher and case study participants (Johnson, 1992). For example (see Table 3.1), researchers have employed either DCTs (Discourse Completion Tasks) both oral and written, RP (Role Play) both

open and closed, or questionnaire including MCQ (Multiple Choice Questionnaire). In what follows, we will see some of the data collection procedures that have been most used in the past for the study of speech acts.

a) *DCTs and Questionnaires:*

In discourse completion tasks and (production) questionnaires, subjects are presented with a situation in which a specific speech act is believed to be the next relevant action. Subjects are, then, invited to note what they would say or how they would react in this situation. This method of data collection allows the researcher to control for certain variables (e.g., age of respondent, features of the situation, etc.) (Billmyer and Varghese, 2000 ), and to quickly gather large amounts of data (Beebe & Cummings, 1985) without any need for transcription (Johnson, Kasper, and Ross, 1998), thus making it easy to statistically compare responses from native and nonnative speakers (Blum-Kulka and Olshtain, 1984).

However, data collected with this method do not always correspond to natural data and DCTs do not provide reliable examples of what speakers are actually doing when interacting with participants (Aston, 1995; Golato, 2003; Hartford & Bardovi-Harlig, 1992). These studies believe that DCTs are in a crucial sense metapragmatic in that they explicitly require participants not to conversationally interact, but to articulate what they believe would be situationally-appropriate responses within possible, yet imaginary, interactional settings. They, also, do not show the interactional facets of a speech event; for example they do not capture whether and how multi-turn sequences develop in order to fulfill a certain speech function (Beebe and Cummings, 1985).

Despite a DCT is an off-line task in which the respondent has time for introspection losing, then, the spontaneity of language use, it is widely used in the field of pragmatics, intercultural communication, and second language acquisition, mainly because of its simplicity of use and high degree of control over variables which lead to easy replicability.

b) Role-Plays

By pretending to be someone or something to simulate an experience, usually interacting with others doing the same, RP contextualizes language use and exposes the student to conversational routines and cultural discussion. Open role-plays provide more naturalistic data and “*represent oral production, full operation of the turn-taking mechanism, impromptu planning decisions contingent on interlocutor input, and hence negotiation of global and local goals...*” (Kasper and Dahl, 1991:228). However, although speakers may be interacting with each other, the context of their interaction within role-plays is often imagined and thus not real (Wildner-Bassett, 1989), and is predominantly motivated by the researcher’s goals rather than those of the interactants (Kasper, 2000).

Role-play, and in spite of its limitations, is still widely used in research on ILP, because it is easy to administer, allows for comparison across dyads, and allows for control of extra-linguistic variables such as power, status, gender, age, etc. (Kasper, 2000). It provides online-production tasks and has then features similar to naturally-occurring conversation like turn-taking, sequencing, hesitation phenomena, etc.

c) Field Observation

Field observation is a data collection instrument employed by qualitative researchers, whose main objective of any research is to try and understand the true perspectives of the subject being studied. It allows the researcher to access the subject and record what they observe in an unobtrusive manner. It is called also, field notes, because it refers to the various notes recorded by scientists during or after their observation of a specific phenomenon they are studying.

Field workers are asked to observe the specific phenomenon under investigation to note the exact exchange as well as other contextual information (age, sex of speaker, location, etc.) as soon as possible after the exchange has taken place. This helps the investigator to collect a very large database from a wide range of speakers and across various settings, and therefore allows for statistical analysis, which serves as support for claims made in the study (Kasper and Dahl, 1991).

Though, carefully taken, field notes allow for the collection of indispensable contextual information (Kasper, 2000). There are several potential limitations with such instruments. Since most field workers do not audiotape or videotape any of their conversations, their data quality is subject to their memory and observational skills, and possibly the conscious or unconscious bias of the observer. Trying to recall linguistic data several hours after the event will lead to "*data that is limited in both quality and quantity*" (Labov, 1984:30).

d) Recall Protocols

In recall protocols, one of the introspective methods for obtaining data in SL/FL research, subjects are prompted to recall and verbalize their thoughts during an event. The recall prompts generally include a stimulus such as a video or audio-tape or written drafts of a composition. For example, immediately after completing an oral communicative task with a native speaker, learners might be asked to verbalize what they were thinking during the original interaction, and to describe the situation/setting in which it occurred and exactly what was said. While this task does target natural data, researchers who use it have to deal with limitations in human memory, since while listeners can accurately recall the propositional content of a sentence, they will not reliably recall its syntactic structure unless specifically instructed to do so. They also fail to yield the interactional features related to a particular speech event, and thus lack a correspondence to natural data. Another problem is that subjects are selected on the basis of convenience, and not on principles of random selection (Yuan, 2001).

e) Think-aloud Protocol

The development of the think-aloud protocol is usually attributed to Ericsson and Simon (1984) and it has been widely used in cognitive psychology research subsequently, often to investigate problem-solving. It consists of observing respondents working on a problem while encouraging them to "think-aloud" and say what they are thinking and wondering at each moment. By asking respondents to say whatever they are looking at, thinking, doing, and feeling, as they go about their task, this approach enables access to the thought processes or decision-making of someone performing a specific task (Gass and Selinker, 2008).

Observers are asked to objectively take notes of everything that respondents say, without attempting to interpret their actions and words. The purpose of this method is to make explicit what is implicitly present in subjects who are able to perform a specific task. The observer can use two distinct scenarios: 1) he specifies a definite task to be accomplished by the subject and this will allow him to concentrate on a specific task he or she is interested in, and 2) no task is specified, and the respondent is free to choose his or her own task which allows the observer to concentrate on naturally occurring problems.

The main advantages of this method are four-fold: 1) rapid qualitative respondent feedback (e.g., if compared with questionnaires), 2) direct observation of what the subject is doing, and hearing what he or she wants, or is trying to do, will allow for a broad range of data, 3) if the subject gets into difficulties, the observer is there and has the chance to clarify the situation, and 4) high degree of flexibility with the observer's presence that allows to direct the dialogue meaningfully.

### **3.4 The Method of the Present Study**

In what follows, we will justify our choice of the methodology for data collection and provide an account of how the data were collected. We will end with an outline of the framework employed in the analysis of the data.

### **3.4.1 Data Collection**

Data collection methods constitute a very important area of concern, because it is a “powerful determinant of the final product” (Kasper and Dahl, 1991:216). Since this study is interested in finding out how nonnative speakers improve their pragmatic knowledge through peer-assistance in real-time interactions, then DCTs, role plays, field observation, and recall protocols are inappropriate. If the sequential organization of actual language use is under focus, a preferred method of data collection would involve the audio- and videotaping of spontaneous, naturally occurring data. For this reason we will use naturalistic observation through videotaping as a procedure for data collection. This choice is by no means an attempt to present recordings of naturally occurring data as being the most suitable for any and all research questions; nor is it our intent to claim that other data collection procedures are of dubious value. It is simply argued that compared to data collection instruments routinely used in CA studies, the other data collection instruments discussed above are inappropriate for studying actual language use.

To limit the scope of this study, only the link between Tlemcen university of Algeria and East Carolina university of USA will be considered. The idea behind such choice is that this is the only link where we could have an English native/nonnative interaction situation. The videoconferencing allowed us to record the students’ interaction without their awareness. The observation was cross-sectional, i.e. at two single points in time: the beginning and the end of the link. Though, contrary to longitudinal observation, this type of observation may obscure important patterns of variation over time and across individuals, but it is thought that it will provide reliable information about general patterns among large bodies of learners by pooling data from large numbers of subjects.



More importantly is to determine the data collection techniques appropriate to this study. Since we are concerned with the linguistic production of EFL learners, performance data are collected with a focus on only linguistic data, i.e., no non-verbal data. In our situation, the interactions are all naturalistic and will not include any elicited data. Video-taping the class, fortunately part of the class itself, is the best means to provide a rich ethnographic observation of naturalistic data. The videos were, then, translated into transcripts that we would pool from the instances of help that knowing about the target culture might provide to learning the language of that culture.

### 3.4.2 Analysis

The present study, following a sociocultural approach, will examine the data qualitatively to discover how learners support each other's learning of the target language (Ohta, 1995, 2000a, 2001). Learners were recorded as they transacted interactive tasks through their weekly videoconference links, and the transcribed data will be analyzed for the features relating to assistance and pragmatic development. Shea notes that:

*“the quality of conversational participation can be seen as a critical locus for the development of second language proficiency (even for advanced speakers) because the native speaker's response is a critical means of constructing the nonnative speaker's discourse.”*

(1994: 378)

Shea means that native speaker interlocutors can open up zones of proximal development for learners, i.e., assisted performance requires a more competent interactional partner (Vygotsky, 1978).

It has been suggested in previous studies that the analysis of transcripts from online communications could give insights into the actual learning that takes place in this environment (cf. Henri, 1992; Hiltz, 1990; and Mason, 1992). Therefore, video recordings were transcribed and examined for instances of peer assistance that might help boost the pragmatic development of our EFL learners. In so doing, two main ideas were taken in consideration. The first one was Ohta's (2006) conception of assistance as *assess, tailor, adjust, and withdraw*. The second one was Blum-Kulka's (1991) and Ellis' (1997) charts which pointed out three broad phases in the development of pragmatic competence. These three phases are: 1) a message-oriented stage, in which learners rely on context clues to interpret speaker's intentions; 2) an interlanguage-oriented stage, where a range of communicative strategies are used with varying degrees of success; and 3) an interculturally-oriented stage, in which learners approximate closely to native speakers, although they may still retain some of their cultural habits.

The study examines data qualitatively because sociocultural approaches prioritize qualitative research methodology and pay close attention to the settings and participants in interactions. From a sociocultural perspective quantification risks sacrificing the richness of the interaction that occurs, eliminating the subjectivity of both researcher and study participant, i.e., when interactions are reduced to tables and figures, other researchers are left without a way to see what really transpired or validate findings for them.

Sociocultural approaches are unable to show causation or produce generalizable results, for generalizability is a goal of experimental and quasi-experimental research. A descriptive work focuses on intensive analysis of small groups of subjects, hoping to build a robust picture of SLA processes through the accumulation of such small studies, and therefore, preserving the human experience and avoiding reductionism.

### **3.4.3 Conversation Analysis**

The present research is about the discourse structure of online conversation to first study its quality in terms of input, and second to highlight the main instances of pragmatic development through the successive video links. Therefore, few words about conversation analysis are in order, here.

Conversation analysis is a research method that takes conversations in real-life settings as the object of study, and as a window on to the roles, social relationships, and power relations of participants with a view to determine participants' methods of: turn-taking, constructing sequences of utterances across turns, identifying and repairing problems, and employing gaze and movement (Levinson, 1983).

A turn, in CA, is a time during which a single participant speaks, within a typical, orderly arrangement in which participants speak with minimal overlap and gap between them (Levinson, 1983). An utterance, on the other hand, is a complete natural unit of speech bounded by the speaker's silence. In a dialogue, each turn by a speaker may be considered an utterance.

Linguists sometimes use utterance to simply refer to a unit of speech under study that they call a TCU (turn construction unit). It was introduced by Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974) as a system to handle conversational turn-taking and describe pieces of conversation which may comprise an entire turn. This system consists of two parts: a turn

construction component and a turn allocation component, where the end of a TCU, called a TRP (transition relevance place), marks a point of where the turn may go to another speaker or the present speaker may continue with another TCU.

CA is associated with the pioneering research of Harvey Sacks (1992) who had been examining a corpus of recorded telephone calls to the Los Angeles Suicide Prevention Center. Soon, the goal of analysis became to investigate the nature of conversational turns - how they were designed, what they did, where in interaction they occurred, how they were connected to prior turns, and their implications for subsequent turns - and to describe the underlying organization of the way interaction unfolded on a turn-by-turn basis (Schegloff, 1992a).

Conversation analysis, therefore, intends to record patterns of conversation in order to detect underlying rules that enable communication to proceed in a largely orderly fashion according to the type of relations that persons have to each other with regards to their involvement in a speech event (Arnoff and Rees-Miller, 2001; Crystal, 1985). It focuses on the structure of verbal interactions, usually in dyads or very small groups. The method normally involves making tape-recordings or video recordings of conversations, that are then analyzed to study (e.g., the number of times one person interrupts another, how conversations are initiated, how turns to talk are allocated, or counting the duration of pauses and silences) (Heritage, 1987)..

Sacks' initial observations on interaction were drawn from his analysis of the calls to the Suicide Prevention Center and recordings of therapy sessions with juvenile offenders. However, he and his colleagues, Schegloff and Jefferson, soon began to

examine recordings of what might be termed mundane conversation. Their work began with the assumption that turns -lengthy utterances, phrases, clauses, or even single words - were systematically designed objects which performed some activities in interaction. The goal of analysis, then, was to investigate the nature of these objects - how they were designed, what they did, where in interaction they occurred, how they were connected to prior turns, and their implications for subsequent turns - and to describe the underlying organization of the way interaction unfolded on a turn-by-turn basis

In our study, the CA transcript is a more conventional transcript that does not need to capture a lot of prosodic features of the interaction. There will be no International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) transcription, no stress or pitch representation, and no emphasis (through word underlining or capitalization). Instead, the following conventions will be used:

### Transcription Symbols

- [ point of overlap onset
- = no gap between lines (latching utterances). When the same speaker continues on the next line latching signs are not used.
- , comma indicates a gap between utterances which is too short to time, more like a very short pause
- ? rising intonation not necessarily a question
- . full stop, stopping fall in tone, not necessarily end of sentence
- (...) indicates a fading away which is unintelligible
- ☺ laughter, especially when "All ☺"
- ( ) inability to hear what was said

(word) dubious hearings or speaker identification

(( )) transcriber's descriptions rather than or in addition to transcriptions

- \* Indicates that identity of speaker(s) is uncertain
- vertical dots in left hand margin indicate that intervening turns at talk have been
- omitted.

### **3.5 Conclusion**

This chapter reported the methodology employed for data collection and analysis in the current research. It began with a brief overview of the methodologies used in previous ILP studies to provide a background to the design of the present study. Firstly, a critical review of the methodologies used in relevant ILP studies was provided. Then the design of the current study was grounded in the findings of this review with respect to the data collection procedures and instruments proposed, i.e., this is a cross-sectional study, focusing on EFL pragmatic development, and using naturalistic data for a qualitative analysis. It ended with a detailed description of data collection procedures, and data analysis of this study along with a review of conversation analysis.

## **Chapter Four DATA ANALYSIS**

### 4.1 Introduction

### 4.2 Results and Discussion Concerning First Research Question

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##### 4.2.1.1 Grammatical Cohesion

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## **4.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, we present the results of our study and a discussion of their implications on the four research questions and corresponding hypothesis stated in the general introduction. Each section will be dealing with the results related to one research question to explore the development of pragmatic competence with specific regard to conversational competence and how this latter may be influenced by online video encounters with native speakers.

## **4.2 Results and Discussion Concerning First Research Question**

Kasper (1996, 2001) advocates that the acquisition of pragmatic aspects requires the same three conditions as any other type of knowledge in the target language, namely those of appropriate input, opportunities for output and provision of feedback. Making use of this assumption, we will try to answer the first research question: *Does online classroom conversation generate enough opportunities for learners' production of pragmatically appropriate language?*

Having face-to-face conversations with native speakers is commonly believed to enhance non-native SL or FL learners' communicative competence, namely their interactional capacities. We will, therefore, look through the examples provided by the Virtual Classroom video recordings to see how this type of classroom provides a native-like speaking context.



We will first look briefly at the generated conversation and some of the features that contribute to its cohesion. We will then look at its discourse structure to see to which extent this conversation is rich in terms of input. We will end up by looking at the opportunities afforded to practice the target language.

### **4.2.1 Grammatical and Lexical Cohesion**

According to Halliday and Hasan's (1976) classification of cohesive devices, there are grammatical cohesive devices and lexical ones. They play a decisive role in discourse organization and contribute much to its construction, i.e., cohesion helps us to make the difference between just a collection of utterances that do not relate to each other and a discourse that presents unity among the different chunks. In this context, Thornbury and Slade state:

*A cohesive relation is one in which the interpretation of one element in the discourse presupposes, and is dependent upon, another. The connection that is created is integrated into the fabric (or 'texture') of the discourse.*

(2006: 108)

#### **4.2.1.1 Grammatical Cohesion**

Grammatical Cohesion is achieved through the use of grammar to help bind/stick the utterances together. It is the enabling system of ties or links within a discourse that makes it possible to interpret its elements as meaningful and relevant. Grammatical

cohesion is brought about by the use of grammatical techniques or processes such as reference, substitution, and ellipsis (Moon, 1998).

a) Reference

The Oxford English Dictionary defines the verb 'to refer' as 'to send for information' or 'to seek information' which means that the reader or hearer can only make complete sense of the word or structure they are looking for if they look elsewhere in the text or speech to get more information.

Referring is usually done through the use of demonstratives and pronouns. Personal pronoun reference is achieved by replacing nouns with pronouns where they can either be *I, you, he, she, it, we, you, they* or variants such as *me, him, her, us, and them*. Demonstrative reference (called also *deictics*) is achieved by the use of *the, this, that, these, those, here* and *there* as 'verbal pointers' or 'deictic terms', to show where something is. Deictic terms, just like the personal pronouns, can also be used in the *cataphoric* (referring forwards) or *anaphoric* (referring backwards) way.

We will look at some examples of reference and try to show where the reference could either be backward or forward, i.e. *anaphoric* versus *cataphoric*. In the following examples **that** is an anaphoric reference:

1-ECU#1: *yes I like, I like the environment a lot*

*... and I like also to play the guitar*

... *that's what I do*

... *I'm in, I'm in a club **that** is called the NAACP and I can explain to you what **that** is if you'd like.*

2- TUA#10: *I'm number 10*

... *I'm sorry ((for last time)), I was absent.*

ECU#10: ***that's** ok*

3- TUA#13: *because.. before we enter the college.. we pass the baccalaureate exam*

ECU#12: *ehhh no we don't have **that***

In the following examples **that** is cataphoric:

1- ECU#8: *yeah **that's** what I'm hoping for*

... *I hope I can just count on myself to get it done.*

2- ECU#11: *is **that** daily?*

...*every day you study 9 to 10 hours?*

3- ECU#12: ***they** are growing and **they** should be growing*

...*I think **there** shouldn't be countries that are suffering so much that their citizens cannot live*

... *I think **that's** a good thing **that** you guys are trying to better yourself by going to college and hopefully you get a job*

*... as a person you need to know who do you want to be and how you want to live and focus on that and not about other people.*

In example 3, above, we see that reference is also achieved through the use of other devices like **they** and **there**. These, and other pronouns, serve to achieve conversation cohesion, which contributes to the sense that talk is jointly constructed, contingent, and on topic, as shown in the following examples:

1-ECU#5: *yes **those** are the sports we do have*

2-ECU#4: ***this** is the same here*

3-ECU#14: *ok*

*...emm, are **they** hard your classes?*

4-ECU#11: ***this** is my first year*

*...ehh, **it** is hard*

5-ECU#13: *religion is part of our culture as American*

*... because I know there are a lot of Americans who have different religions*

*... **there** is Christianity, Judaism*

*...**there**'re plenty of people who are Muslims over here*

*... I have various friends who are Muslim and we all form such different parts and societies*

*... for example my boy friend is Indian and he, **his** life style is extremely different*

... and getting to know *his* mother was extremely interesting.

Though the American students' turns were rich with *anaphoric* and *cataphoric* references, reference were most of the time *endophoric*, i.e. internal to the context. *Exophoric* reference (i.e. reference outside the situation or context) was difficult to be used for audio problems, where students from both sides were struggling to make themselves heard let alone understood.

b) Ellipsis and Substitution

According to Thornbury and Slade (2006) substitution and ellipsis (a form of substitution whereby a previously mentioned element is omitted) are used to align successive speakers' utterances in order to indicate agreement, sympathy, and their use serves an important interpersonal function. The speaker replaces certain parts of his speech, especially long phrases, by shorter expressions or even single words (e.g. *do* to replace verbs and *so* substitutes whole clauses) in order to shorten the speech, avoid unnecessary repetitions, and make once words more economic.

The following examples will show how these are achieved. What is between brackets represents the missing part:

1-ECU#4: *yeah, do you have pizza men?*

... *do you guys?*

(do you have pizza men)

2-TUA#8: *I'm the partner of Hopkins Wes*

*... do you hear me ?*

ECU#8: *yes I do* (hear you)

3-TUA#8: *why you don't like the dorms?*

ECU#8: *eh,em not enough privacy, ehh not very nice, not very big so I'm struggling to  
get my own place* (I don't like the dorms because)

4-TUA#8: *...do you miss your family?*

ECU#8: *I do, but at the same time I like to get away of them a little while.*  
(miss my family)

5-ECU#9: *do you?* (drink alcohol)

TUA#9: *no, no it's forbidden*

*...it's forbidden in our religion*

ECU#9: *do you drink alcohol?*

6-TUA#14: *no it is free, it's free of charge*

ECU#14: *ok*

*... not here* (it's not free)

7-ECU#5: *yes those are the sports we do have*

*... we also have social organizations for students, as well*

TUA#4: *yes we do have things like that*

(things is a substitution for social organizations)

From these examples, we can see that ellipsis (omission of elements altogether) and substitution (swapping elements) are used to have the effect that talk is jointly constructed through the successive borrowings from, and additions to, other speakers' previous utterances. It shows that speakers start to know each other quite well and do not need to say every word specifically, i.e., ellipsis is used to create such a close atmosphere. This is the case among friends who have shared meanings and references and it hardly ever happens that the omission of certain elements confuses them.

#### **4.2.1.2 Lexical Cohesion**

Halliday and Hassan explain lexical cohesion as "*the cohesive effect achieved by the selection of vocabulary*" (1976: 274), i.e., the relationship between words. Lexical means by which links are made across stretches of discourse include the use of repetition, synonyms and lexical chains of topically related items. We will see in the following extracts below that there are even cases of parallelism where the repetition of the syntactic units is larger than the individual words, making the conversation rich with lexical cohesive devices.

##### *a) Repetition*

One way of making the speech cohesive, is word repetition. Instead of repeating the same word over and over again, it can be replaced by a word with the same meaning, which is another way of making the conversation hang together. As it is often very

difficult to find two words with exactly the same meaning, words which are close in meaning are used as well. This can be seen in the following examples:

1-ECU#4: *ok*

... *do you have a job?*

...*do you work?* (Repetition through paraphrase)

2- ECU#4: *yeah, do you have pizza men?*

... *do you guys?* (Repetition through ellipsis)

... *Do you people eat pizza in Algeria?* (Repetition through adjustment)

3- TUA#13: *do you pass the baccalaureate exam in order to enter the college?*

...*do you have the baccalaureate exam?* (Repetition through paraphrase)

Repetition can accomplish a wide range of discourse-pragmatic actions. Repetition of questions, like in the above examples, exhibit different levels of directness, i.e., decrease directness. In the following examples, *allo-repetition* (called also *other-repetition*) contributes to the development, maintenance and coherence of conversation (Tannen, 1989). It is a strategy that enables communicating positive involvement and interest in conversation:

1- TUA#9: *I told you that, I'm fond of reading books*

ECU#9: *ok , you like reading books?* (allo-repetition)



2- TUA#8: *good luck*

*... well I think you have asked me about veil and I explained why I put and the  
Muslim girls put veil  
...so what do you think?*

ECU#8: *what do I think about your*

*... the veil? (allo-repetition)*

As far as our excerpts are concerned and to which level the conversations are rich in terms of input, Tannen (1989) asserts that these *allo-repetitions* serve to indicate participatory listenership, justify listenership, request for confirmation or clarification and even to indicate surprise.

Repetition, in general, helps the participants not only convey referential meanings, but also, simultaneously establish relationships among interactants. They frame the way they position themselves in relation to what is said as well as in relation to other participants in the interaction (Tannen, 1989). This can be illustrated in the following examples:

1- ECU#5: *eh..hehehe*

*... I'm on dance thing*

*... I practice dances*

(repetition with adjustment)

2- ECU#3: *it's an open discussion*

*... so we can talk about anything*

... we can talk about anything you would like to. (self-repetition with adjustment)

3- ECU#4: what are your views on gays individuals in your society?

TUA#1: please jonathan?

ECU#4: how do you feel about men having other men partners in physical relationships?

... and women having other women in physical relationship such as homosexuals? (Repetition through adjustment)

4- ECU#8: em,

...what is the general opinion or general feelings towards premarital sex?

...does it happen, does it happen a lot or is just kept quiet? (repetition through

... and is it looked down upon? adjustment)

... sex before marriage (Repetition through adjustment)

... is that looked down upon? (Self-repetition)

c) Topically related items:

The use of topically related items is an indicator of topic consistency, and contributes, then, significantly to the sense that speakers are talking to topic, and that the talk is therefore coherent (Thornbury and Slade, 2006). In the following examples, different topically related turns are identified; the items have been underlined:

1-ECU#5: American football is a lot different from soccer

... American football here 22 people are on the field at a time wearing protecting gear like helmets and pads

... in our football you can touch the ball or you can throw it, in soccer you just kick it

2- ECU#4: ok

... kindergarten to the fifth grade little kids school, primary school, and then we got the middle school through 6 grade to 8 grade

.. and after the 8 grade we got the high school for 4 years and then some people go to college and some people go to military and some people start working

3- ECU#5: first you have to graduate high school, with a diploma or a certificate

... and then you have to take a test called the SAT

... and then you have to fill all those papers

In the three examples, we can see that the items used help enrich the vocabulary repertoire of the Algerian students with new words to describe the same topic. Whether graduation or American football, these were few examples of how might this type of conversation engender as topics for discussion along with their topically related items.

#### **4.2.2 Interaction in Conversation**

Another characteristic of appropriate input, that the virtual classroom may provide, and as equally important as cohesive utterances, is interactivity across turns. By interactivity we mean:

*what roles speakers take on, how they position other interactants into particular roles, how turn taking and topic change occurs in contexts where one person is not in control (as for example in an interview), and the different kinds of feedback strategies that participants use*

(Thornbury and Slade, 2006:113)

To start with, the most important and significant concept is that of adjacency pairs. A speaker, by taking part in a conversation, the first thing to learn is how to pair utterances adjacently with the second utterance identified as related to the first. He/she will have, then, to perform the different exchanges as question/answer, complaint/denial, offer/accept, request/grant, compliment/rejection, challenge/rejection, and instruct/receipt (Sacks, 1992). Let us check some example from our virtual class and try to identify some of these exchanges:

1- TUA#3: *Ok ECU#3, are you still practicing basketball?* (Question)

ECU#3: *...ehhh, I like to play with my friends* (Answer)

2- TUA#2: *what about your hobbies?* (Question)

ECU#2: *ehhh... I want to read* (Answer)

*...and ..eh.. what else I want to do*

*... I want to do laundry, I love laundry hehehehe*

3- TUA#1: *so what are the activities you practice outside, outside your lectures?*

*...and you didn't tell me what you study* (Question)

ECU#1: *ok ... I study geology* (Answer)

*...and geology is the study of rocks and minerals on the earth*

4- ECU#13 : *alright.*

*...how do you like the dorms?* (Question)

TUA#13: *ehh... isn't good because you are far from your family* (Answer)

*... I miss my family*

5- TUA#8: *do you miss your family?* (Question)

ECU#8: *I do, but at the same time I like to get away of them a little while* (Answer)

6- TUA#12: *((family)) what does it mean to you?* (Question)

ECU#5: *family to me is that comfort zone* (Answer)

7- TUA#8: *ok Wes, what are your ambitions?* (Question)

ECU#8: *as right now, complete college, get my education first and then work toward my future* (Answer)

8- TUA#12: *how did you find the experience with us?*

*... Was it useful for you?* (Question)

ECU#13: *yes*

*... the experience was very useful for all of us I think* (Answer)

9- TUA#3: *how do you consider the notion of family in the American society?* (Question)

ECU#3: *yes my mum, my sister, me and my dog* (Answer)

10- ECU#1 : *do you listen to any music from the united states?*

*...and if so who do you listen to?* (Two Questions)

TUA#6: *yes of course, we know American music through TV* (Answer)

All the above examples, whether from the first or last link, fit into the Question/Answer category exchange. Most of the time these questions were asked to try out different subjects during conversation to discover what topic their partners feel comfortable discussing (Searle, 1996). The answers, on the other hand, give more information as clues to what the interlocutor might want talking about. This can be seen in the following examples, which characterize instances when one exchange is being extended to another one:

1- TUA#4: *I heard a lot about the American football and soccer*

*... could you give me the difference between the .. the two of them* (Question)

ECU#5: *American football is a lot different from soccer*

*... American football here 22 people are on the field at a time wearing protecting gear like helmets and pads* (Answer + Instruct)

*... in our football you can touch the ball or you can throw it, in soccer you just kick it*

TUA#4: *ok, you know that soccer in Algeria is called football* (Receipt)

*...you know now where's the miss understanding*

2- TUA#3: *ok, I wanted to know about your experience in the primary school* (Question)

ECU#4: *ok*

*... kindergarten to the fifth grade little kids school, primary school, and then we got the middle school through 6 grade to eighth grade*

*.. and after the 8 grade we got the high school for 4 years and then some people go to college and some people go to military and some people start working*

(Answer + Instruct)

3- TUA#10: *I'm number 10*

*... I'm sorry ((for last time)), I was absent.*

(Request)

ECU#10: *that's ok*

(Grant)

*... I was just wondering if it's a popular decision to go to college* (Question)

4- ECU#9: *what's your favorite thing about college?*

(Question)

*TUA#9: I told you, I'm fond of reading books and revising with my friends in the library*

(Answer)

ECU#9: *can you repeat that please?*

(Request)

TUA#9: *I told you that, I'm fond of reading books*

(Grant)

5- TUA#8: *ok I have a question*

*... what are the stages you go through to enter the college?* (Question)

ECU#5 : *first you have to graduate high school... with a diploma or a certificate*

*... and then you have to take a test called the SAT*

*... and then you have to fill all those papers*

(Answer + Instruct)

*... did you get all that?*

6- ECU#1 : *ok*

*... this one is about friends*

(Question)

*... how do you pick your friends and what characteristics are important for you to*

*have friendship?*

*TUA#7: well relation, eh friendship is eh*

*TUA#1: based*

*TUA#7: is based eh on trust, honesty, respect, love* (Answer)

*... so between friends there must be those characteristics*

*... what about you?* (Question)

*7- ECU#13: is there too much freedom in our society?* (Question)

*TUA#12: yes* (Answer + Challenge)

*ECU#13: I think that like the little freedoms that our government gave us I do not think that there's too much of that.* (Rejection)

The extension, of one exchange into another, shows the interrelated communicative stages between the speaker and the receiver (Crystal, 1997). In example 1 above, TUA#4 asked about the American football. ECU#5, being American, could not only answer but could also instruct, and he was perceived though by TUA#4. The same thing happened in example 2, when ECU#4 was answering TUA#3 about schooling in USA. The rest of the examples show how the speaker builds his turn on his partner's preceding turn, making it, either a request, a question, or a challenge. The following chunks are just examples of some of the other types of exchanges that a conversation of this type may allow for:

*1- ECU#4: you got a question for me or you want me to start?* (Offer)

*TUA#1: if you want to start it's a pleasure to listen to you* (Accept)



2- TUA#1: *can I see you Jonathan, coz I'm not seeing you* (Request)

ECU#4: *can you see me now?* (Grant)

TUA#1: *sorry*

*... yeah*

3- TUA#12: *as Arabs we are considering the family as a whole, you know,*

*... we live in families even if we are above 18 while you since the 18 you quit the family* (Challenge)

ECU#5 : *eh, well not everybody quits the family* (Rejection)

To account for the interactivity in the above examples, we need to go beyond the analysis of the vocabulary and structure of the turns and give functional labels to the different roles the speakers have assumed or assigned to each other. A functional interpretation of interaction is outside the scope of this study, therefore, we have just identified the different moves and exchanges (Martin, 1992; Slade, 1996) that occurred in our conversations to show their richness in terms of linguistic input. There was no need at this level, to describe the way interactants negotiate the exchange of meanings in dialogue (Halliday, 1994).

### **4.2.3 Output (Practice of the Target Language)**

We have seen, from the above examples that our virtual classroom could afford an authentic input and opportunities to practice the target language by allowing our students to interact with each other and with native speakers. Language input is authentic, which means that it is not designed for a teaching purpose. It is provided by the native speakers

of the target language and has authentic communicative purposes and the more opportunities that learners have to communicate, the better their language learning would be (Ellis, 1994).

We will turn on now to see if our interactions could as well provide our students with opportunities to practice the target language by interacting with their native partners. According to Swain (1985), opportunities to produce language are not only important for practicing but also for learning structures of the language. She means that the effort of composing new utterances is more likely to drive learners to test their hypotheses about target language syntax.

Learners need, then, opportunities for ‘pushed output’ to acquire language and through online conversation, these opportunities are maximized with more equal participation than with face to face communication. By ‘pushed output’ Swain (1985, 1995) denotes pushing learners to produce output that is precise, coherent and appropriate that can induce learners to engage in the kind of bottom-up processing necessary for extending interlanguage grammar. There are potentially many ways of ‘pushing’ learners to produce such output but here we will be concerned with just one – the use of referential questions which require our students to provide information, give an opinion, explain or clarify. This will be illustrated in the following examples:

1)TUA#4: *about your question about the activities outside the class organized by our college*

*... well it depends on the purpose and colleges*

*... eh but as I know, our university organize eh... concerning sport something eh*

( )

*...I think our majors are related somehow*

2) ECU#4: *What..in college what's your grading scheme like?*

*... what do you have to get to give like an A*

*... what's the grading like in your college?*

TUA#1: *we have marks*

*...from 0 to 20, so if you get 15, it's the best mark*

*... 15, 16, 17 it's the best*

3) TUA#9: *I told you, I'm fond of reading books and revising with my friends in the library*

ECU#9: *can you repeat that please?*

TUA#9: *I told you that, I'm fond of reading books*

4) ECU#5: *you have to graduate high school, with a diploma or a certificate*

*... and then you have to take a test called the SAT*

*(( ... what about you?))*

TUA#8: *well in order to go to the college you must first have your baccalaureate exam*

*... and it's the key to allow you to enter to the university*

5) TUA#1: *so I'm going to answer your question*

*... well it exists but very secretly and discretely*

*... and for me I think that it's an unnatural relationship*

*... I find it weird and bizarre*

*... and I'm always asking myself how people ( )*

In these examples we can see that the questions were nearly all opinion questions. They may have multiple answers, and require a higher level of thinking from our students. Opinion questions are open-ended questions that are ideal for developing skills such as inferring (example 1), predicting, verifying and summarizing (example 3 and 4), as well as eliciting more language (example 5). If we look at our students' performance we can notice that their attempts at target language production will help in the acquisition of new syntactic structures that they struggled to come up with.

In the following examples, though the questions look as yes/no questions, the aim behind was to elicit our students' culturally-based opinions. The answers were not for practice sake but rather learners were forced to process syntactic structures in their effort to compose new utterances:

1) ECU#13 : *alright.*

*...how do you like the dorms?*

TUA#13: *ehh...isn't good because you are far from your family*

*... I miss my family*

2) ECU#9: *do you drink alcohol?*

TUA#9: *no, no it is forbidden in our religion*

3) ECU#1 : *do you listen to any music from the united states?*

*...and if so who do you listen to?*

TUA#6: *yes of course, we know American music through TV*

*... hehehe they are (pointing to her group) speaking about, Akon, Beyonce, Chakira*

4) ECU#13: *but, but name an artist who is in Algeria that is very popular*

*... I wanna listen to some Algerian dance, hehehehe*

*TUA#6: what did you say?*

*ECU#13: an artist*

*TUA#1: it's not obligatory to be an Algerian just an Arab one*

*... I have a web site may be*

*... it will be helpful for you*

The last example, number 4, was not really a separate question, but a follow-up to the exchange in example 3. Under the communicative pressure to name one Algerian artist, that TUA#6 couldn't do, TUA#1 took the floor and tried to keep the interaction on without losing the flow of conversation providing, then, for an ideal context to practice language by providing more opportunities to pay attention to the form and the content of the message.

In the following last examples, pressed by the 'pushed output' (Swain, 1985), our students collaborated to produce an output that is more precise, coherent and appropriate, which engaged them in a kind of bottom-up processing necessary for extending their interlanguage grammar.

1) *ECU#14: ok*

*...is school a lot of money?*

*TUA#14: no*

*TUA#9: it's free*

*TUA#14: it's free*

*TUA#9: of charge*

*TUA#14: no it is free, it's free of charge*

2) ECU#1 : *ok*

*... this one is about friends*

*... how do you pick your friends and what characteristics are important for you to have friendship?*

TUA#7: *well relation, eh friendship is eh*

TUA#1: *based*

TUA#7: *is based eh on trust, honesty, respect, love*

*... so between friends there must be those characteristics*

*... what about you?*

From all the examples discussed above, and according to research (Beauvois, 1998; Kelm, 1996; Kern, 1995, 1996; Meagher and Castanos, 1996; Toyoda and Harrison, 2002; Warschauer, 1996a, 1996b), we may conclude that our online telecollaboration, can be used as a viable classroom alternative for meeting a range of pedagogical goals. It can increase student motivation and promote greater target language output, and therefore promote communicative competence. It can prove to be very beneficial for teaching foreign languages since it can provide learners with unlimited sources of input and opportunities to practice the target language by interacting with each other and/or native speakers.

### **4.3 Results and Discussion Concerning Second Research**

Cross-cultural conversation, by providing the opportunity of using the target language productively, promotes the development of functional language ability through

learners' participation in communicative events. It, also, allows learners develop awareness for the need to have enough knowledge and competence to be able to use English to share their home culture information with speakers from another culture. In the light of this, we will try to answer the second research question: *Does online classroom conversation affect pragmatic competence development?* To do so, we will focus on both functional language ability development and sociocultural knowledge development.

### **4.3.1 Functional Language Ability Development**

This phase of study is intended to understand collaborative learning through synchronous online native/non-native interaction in a videoconference context, and its impact on language functions development. In this study, language functions refer to the ways that individuals use language to accomplish specific tasks such as giving or receiving information, expressing and finding out opinions, expressing likes or dislikes, etc. (Wilkins, 1976). In other terms, these are "*what people want to do with the language*" (Finocchiaro & Brumfit, 1983:13). Among various taxonomies of language functions, such as Coelho (1992), the functional categories given by Finocchiaro and Brumfit (1983) (see 2.3.1 ) will be considered in our analysis. These are five language functions categories: *personal, interpersonal, directive, referential, and imaginative*.

#### **a) Personal**

Personal functions are the language functions that are used to "*offer to someone else that which is unique to himself, to make public his own individuality*" (Halliday, 1973: 6). They allow a speaker to express his own individuality (feelings, personality,

and emotions) and also known as ‘here I come’ functions (Halliday, 1992). Basically, they are used to tell others about oneself, by using language for the direct expression of feelings and attitudes, for example: ‘I am very happy’ or ‘I love sport’. In the collected data, we identified the following functions:

expressing one’s thoughts and feelings ex:	
happiness and pleasure	<p>TUA#3: I’m happy to see you</p> <p>TUA#12: yes I’m, I’m happy to see you Melissa</p> <p>TUA#14: nice to meet you today</p>
dislike	<p>ECU#4: what are you views on gays individuals in your society?</p> <p>TUA#1: I find it weird and bizarre ... and I’m always asking myself how</p> <p>TUA#8: I’m too, I don’t like the dorms</p>
Sorrow	<p>TUA#13: ehh..isn’t good because you are far from your family ... I miss my family</p>
annoyance at missed opportunities	<p>TUA#1: no, we have spring break ( ) but to pay for it</p>
expressing intellectual concern	<p>TUA#9: I told you, I’m fond of reading books and revising with my friends in the library</p>
clarifying one’s ideas	<p>TUA#3: it is, also another thing, ... family is like the mirror of the society</p>

*Table 4.1: Personal Language Functions*



From this table we can notice that language, cognition and culture all interact. By talking about their own culture, TUA students found themselves obliged to deal with their thought, rationalization, memory and other aspects of mental processes that are linked with the language, to express their own individuality. A person's individuality is usually characterized by his/her use of the personal function of communication, therefore, some of TUA students had the opportunity to express their thoughts and feelings like happiness and pleasure, dislike, sorrow, and annoyance at missed opportunities. Others could express their own ideas or their intellectual concern.

*b) Interpersonal*

Interpersonal function refers to the use of language in the interaction between the self and others. It is a social interaction between two people ("I" and "you") where the focus is on the participants. It emphasizes that language is mainly a social phenomenon, but apart from enabling communication with other people it enables to project the speaker in the desired way and to represent the speaker. With this function, interactants use language to establish or maintain interpersonal relationships to include a peer in or exclude a peer from interaction, or to impose or contest a status (Halliday, 1973). In this study, some instances of relationship-building were identified that show thoughtfulness and goodwill on the part of the TUA students. Here are some examples:

Greeting and leave-taking, expressing concern for other's welfare and identifying oneself to others	<p>TUA#6: hi chris, how are you doing?  TUA#2: goodmorning, how are you Rayan?  TUA#3: hi... hi... hi Jonathan, I'm souad  TUA#13: hi I'm your partner soumia.. how are you?  TUA#8: hi..hi marry I'm number 8  TUA#8: hello everybody there  TUA#8: hello I'm number 8  TUA#9: hello .. I'm soufian number 9  TUA#10: hello I'm number 10  TUA#5: bye</p>
-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

indicating agreement	TUA#3: that's good TUA#13: so (...)same partners in the same..(TUA Group: situation) situation TUA#1: of course
indicating disagreement	TUA#3: but I'm not ( ) agree with you .. since when you was, were born you were in the family
excusing oneself and accepting excuses for not meeting commitments	TUA#1: yeah because I think it was a mistake in my email at First .. I don't know if you received the second one, but I'm going to try to send you the new one ... just to have messages from you
complimenting someone	TUA#1: good
expressing joy at someone's success	TUA#1: goo::d .. so a pizza man
interrupting a speaker politely	TUA#3: matters .. I said basic matters
Sharing one's wishes, problems,, desires, and opinions	TUA#3: yeah .. personally my family is an important thing in my life .. eh, em I'm the youngest one, and I like my mother so much .. to be successful in my life, I consider family as the basic development in our society TUA#5: I think Ikon is the best singer TUA#1: so I'm going to answer your question .. well it exists but very secretly and discretely..and for me I think that it's an unnatural relationship ... I find it weird and bizarre TUA#1: (...) and I have pity of him of course ..but I'm not going to change my behavior with him ... the relationship will stay as it is TUA#7: (friendship) is based eh on trust, honesty, respect, love .. so between friends there must be those characteristics TUA#12: hi ..well in terms of having sex before marriage in our religion, the answer in religion, it's forbidden TUA#12: there are some parents who don't accept this, and and punish of course the girls as well as the boys ... but there are some other families who accept the fact
asking about others' wishes, problems, desires, and opinions	TUA#8: do you miss your family? TUA#3: ok, what do you suggest as a topic for today?

	<p><b>TUA#3:</b> how do you consider the notion of family in the American society?</p> <p><b>TUA#3:</b> so family is the basic ...so give me your opinion</p> <p><b>TUA#6:</b> up to now we have spoken more about serious things ... what do you think about speaking about something ra, rather funny ..such as music or movies</p> <p><b>TUA#11:</b> what do you think about us?</p> <p><b>TUA#12:</b> ((family)) what does it mean to you?</p> <p><b>TUA#9:</b> how do you live the experience with us?</p> <p><b>TUA#10:</b> concerning culture, do you consider that a culture is part of religion or the religion is part of culture?</p> <p><b>TUA#8:</b> how do you consider the American Muslims and how do you accept them? ..within your society.</p> <p><b>TUA#12:</b> what's your idea about the third world nations especially Algeria and if ever is this idea changed now?</p>
apologizing	<b>TUA#10:</b> I'm sorry ((for last time)), I was absent
changing an embarrassing subject	<b>TUA#1:</b> it's not obligatory to be an Algerian just an Arab one ... I have a web site may be .. it will be helpful for you
Arguing and debating	<p><b>TUA#12:</b> what I have noticed about the western societies that your, you are considering the individual more than the family itself ( ) ....as Arabs we are considering the family as a whole, you know, ... we live in families even if we are above 18 while you since the 18 you quit the family ... you leave and you construct your own life</p> <p><b>TUA#12:</b> these are the positive sides .. what do you think about the negative sides of your freedom, your society? ..is there negative or positive sides?</p>
extending an invitation	<b>TUA#11:</b> from this experience do you want to visit Algeria
making promises	<b>TUA#9:</b> at any time whatever you want

*Table 4.2: Interpersonal Language Functions*

If we look at the above table we notice that most of the interpersonal functions cover the field of emotional states, identification of speakers, their wishes and anything else relevant and communicated between the speaker and the hearer and characterizing one for the other. TUA students got the opportunity to practice the most important sociological use of language, which serves to establish and maintain people's status in a society. For example, greeting and leave-taking, expressing concern for other's welfare, identifying oneself to others, indicating agreement/disagreement, excusing oneself and accepting excuses for not meeting commitments, complimenting someone, expressing joy at someone's success, sharing one's/asking about others' wishes, problems,, desires, and opinions, apologizing, changing an embarrassing subject and extending an invitation all serve to maintain interactants' relationships within their new community, i.e., the virtual classroom. Their language was, then, used to socialize; i.e., to form, maintain, sustain and change interpersonal relations.

c) Directive

By directive functions we mean that language is used to direct, influence and manage one's or others' actions (sometimes stated as 'to get things done'), i.e., language is used for the purpose of causing (or preventing) an action. The directive value explains the speakers' feelings or wish addressed towards hearers. In that case, the speaker employs an imperative sentence to address to an interlocutor to obtain what he needs. The following table will summarize the different directive functions expressed one at a time by different TUA students, to direct, influence and manage their or other's actions.

Requesting permission	<p><b>TUA#1:</b> it's ok Leo ... so I have a question for you</p> <p><b>TUA#4:</b> I have a question for you please</p> <p><b>TUA#10:</b> I have a question</p> <p><b>TUA#3:</b> ok, I have a question for you</p> <p><b>TUA#9:</b> Marry ..I wanna ask you a question</p>
granting permission	<p><b>TUA#1:</b> yeah sure ... it's up to you Leo</p> <p><b>TUA#1:</b> if you want to start it's a pleasure to listen to you</p>
requesting information	<p><b>TUA#1:</b> so what are the activities you practice outside, outside your lectures? ...and you didn't tell me what you study</p> <p><b>TUA#4:</b> I heard a lot about the American football and soccer ... could you give me the difference between the.. the two of them</p> <p><b>TUA#3:</b> ok, I wanted to know about your experience in the primary school</p> <p><b>TUA#8:</b> why you don't ((like the dorms))?</p> <p><b>TUA#10:</b> how is the police system in America?</p> <p><b>TUA#13:</b> do you pass the baccalaureate exam in order to enter the college? ...do you have the baccalaureate exam?</p> <p><b>TUA#9:</b> do you have any difficulties, do you face any difficulties in the campus?</p> <p><b>TUA#8:</b> what are the stages you go through to enter the college?</p> <p><b>TUA#8:</b> what kind of extra activities do you practice outside the school?</p> <p><b>TUA#8:</b> what kind of dance do you practice?</p> <p><b>TUA#3:</b> =so where is your father?</p> <p><b>TUA#5:</b> do you listen to Arabic music?</p> <p><b>TUA#8:</b> ok Wes, what are your ambitions?</p>
giving instructions	<p><b>TUA#8:</b> would you mind repeating that, please? ... your speaking so quickly</p> <p><b>TUA#10:</b> can you speak slowly and loudly</p>
making suggestions in which the speaker is included	<b>TUA#8:</b> I think you can learn plenty of things from campus
asking for help	<b>TUA#8:</b> no, I'm afraid I didn't catch that, could you repeat?
making suggestions	<b>TUA#12:</b> .. about your excessive freedom

*Table 4.3: Directive Language Functions*

The examples, in the table, show that directive functions, also called conative functions centre the message on the addressee. In that case, the speaker wants to produce a certain effect on his interlocutor: to get something from him/her (in the case of an order or a command for instance), or to implicate him. In fact, TUA students used declarative sentences where the speaker is the possessor and transferor of information, and interrogative sentences where the speaker is seeking and checking existing information, and it will be a response strategy to comment or express the opposite opinion. No imperative sentences were used because of the type of relationship between TUA and ECU students, such as degree and status. The declarative and interrogative sentences were used to request/grant permission, request information, give instructions, ask for help, and make suggestions.

*d) Referential*

Referential functions refer to the use of language to seek, gather, process and impart information. By being oriented toward the context, a referential function has an informative character putting the emphasis on description, instruction, declaration, explanation or classification. The referential function, called also denotative (Jakobson, 1990), works on the basis of shared knowledge about the world, the text object or a particular culture. The ones that have been identified in our conversations will be summarized in the following table:

creating questions	<p><b>TUA#3:</b> Ok Kayla, are you still practicing basketball?</p> <p><b>TUA#2:</b> what about your hobbies?</p> <p><b>TUA#2:</b> what about your hobbies?</p> <p><b>TUA#8:</b> have I answered your question ... your last question?</p>
interpreting information	<p><b>TUA#3:</b> just for pleasure?</p>
identify things in the school	<p><b>TUA#1:</b> we have a lot of courses ... we have translation, language studies, sociology, biology, laws, medicine</p> <p><b>TUA#4:</b> eh cultural clubs...cultural organization .... for students</p> <p><b>TUA#14:</b> we have 10 classes... in second year</p> <p><b>TUA#14:</b> we study 3 hours a day</p>
talking about things in the environment, community, etc.	<p><b>TUA#4:</b> about your question about the activities outside the class organized by our college ... well it depends on the purpose and colleges ... eh but as I know, our university organize eh... concerning sport something eh</p>
discussing possibilities of doing something	<p><b>TUA#1:</b> It's a little bit hard to have a vacation just on your own here in Algeria and to pay for it ... but for example I can go to see members of my family far from home so I can call it vacation .. Just when you change a little bit a routine or your environment we can call it a vacation here</p>

*Table 4.4: Referential Language Functions*

If we look at the examples in the above table we will notice that all the referential functions rely on previous knowledge shared between sender and receiver, and form the basis for any new information that is given in the conversation. This is what we can see with functions like: creating questions, interpreting information, identify things in the school, talking about things in the environment and community, and discussing possibilities of doing something. In spite of the difference between the Algerian culture and American culture, TUA students had the opportunity to practice these functions,

aided to a certain extent by the fact that English language around the world has been presented as a language that serves a mere denotative function, i.e., it is used to talk about the world in an unproblematic way (Jakobson, 1990).

e) Imaginative

The imaginative function serves to create imaginary systems or ideas. It is also known as the 'let pretend' function where telling a story, joking, writing a novel, poetry, or tongue twisters are all applications of the imaginative function. The imaginative function is one in which the speaker uses language to create a make-believe environment. It is often signalled with words like pretend or make up, or through dramatic role assignment. Contrary to our prediction, imaginative language was rarely used in our conversations. We only identified three cases in the whole corpus. Here are the three statements:

story-telling, narrating events	TUA#3: ok (...) ... I was crying all the time ... I was shouting and the difficult that I found it was that when my mother said to me get up now you have your lectures, I was crying too
expanding ideas suggested by others	TUA#9: It's very dangerous I think?
creating rhymes	TUA#12: hello ... and what have you learnt about us, with us , from us

*Table 4.5: Imaginative Language Functions*



As we can see, TUA students have used language for creative purposes to entertain and for personal enjoyment. By using story-telling and narrating events, expanding ideas suggested by others, and creating rhymes TUA students did not mean to refer to the ability to create rhyme or tell stories and narrate events, but the ability to manipulate language in a creative way. Though, their use of these functions was to play with words and meanings simply for joy, they still could have the opportunity to practice one of the most important language functions, which are difficult to use even among the native speakers themselves.

### **4.3.2 Sociocultural Knowledge Development**

The need for our students to develop sociocultural competence derives from the close relationship between culture and language. Language and culture are closely tied to one another and have a big influence on both verbal and non-verbal communication. In the case of verbal communication, the significance of the length of a pause or a change in tone, and the degree of formality in one's speech depend on and can vary by culture (Chun, 1998).

On the other hand, components of non-verbal communication such as one's body language like whether or not they maintain eye contact, and how close someone stands to the person with whom he/she is speaking, also hold different meanings depending on the culture with which a person identifies himself/herself (Cohen & Olshtain, 1981). Speakers, who are unaware of their interlocutors' communication standards, frequently, try to employ the norms of their own cultures and might, consequently, give the impression of having a rude or distrustful nature (Allwright, 1995).

As already mentioned before, this study is about language learning and use as determined and shaped by social and cultural factors, the qualitative approach is ideal for providing insights into such contextual conditions and influences. The main objective, through the use of the examples that are to come, is to make sense of a set of cultural meanings in the observed interactions, and that there is a variety of daily and intellectual contexts that must often be taken into consideration in order to understand the meaning of something that is said.

As stated in the list of abbreviations, we will refer to the American students as ECU (East Carolina University) and Algerian Students as TUA (Tlemcen University of Algeria). In the following example a wrong information was given, unnoticed though, because a cultural misunderstanding.

*ECU#2: How many hours do you study per night or per week?*

*TUA#2: In fact, I study all, ehh the whole of the days in the week except the Thursday  
And Friday.*

*ECU#2: Wow, that's a lot. That's good!*

The American student was asking about how many hours her Algerian partner studies revising and preparing for her classes, but it was perceived by the Algerian as the number of hours she studies at the university. The reason behind the misunderstanding is that, it is not a common question among Algerian students, where teaching is quite different from USA, i.e. more lecturing from the teacher leading to more dependency from the students.

Though, the information was wrong, but still it was an opportunity for the Algerian students to know about the meaning of study hours and generated a long discussion with their teacher, after the link, about why American students need to work hard outside university. The error was, therefore, not linguistic but cultural. Knowing

about it, later, allowed them to add something to their cultural background knowledge about their partners so that about similar subjects they will be more aware to interpret and use language effectively.

In the following example, it was the American student himself who provided the explanation to his Algerian partner.

*ECU#1: Ok, my question is, what is the popular major at your college, and why do you think it's popular?*

*TUA#1: popular major?*

*ECU#1: What's the course study that a lot of college kids like to study?*

The word major is never used in Algeria. The word we use instead is the French word 'spécialité', and *Major* is used only as the antonym of *minor*. Therefore, this linguistic item couldn't be properly understood without reference to the cultural context enveloping it.

During times of the discussion and out of the need to know about American sport, Algerian students initiated the talk and asked questions.

*TUA#4: I have a question for you please?*

*ECU#5: I'm listening.*

*TUA#4: I heard a lot about the American football and soccer, could you give me the difference between the two?*

*ECU#5: American football is a lot different from soccer. American football here, 22 players are on the field at a time, wearing protecting shields like helmets and pads...in our football you can touch the ball or you can throw it, in soccer you just kick it.*

Initiating a talk is something vital for learning how to take the turn and hold the floor for a while before giving it back. It develops, also, self-confidence especially after being perceived properly and responded to accordingly. In this example, talking about football did not only provide a cultural knowledge about what makes the difference between soccer and football, but also opened the door to introduce some new uses of common words like *protecting shields, helmet and pad*.

In another example, the Algerian student did even require his/her American partner to slow down his/her pace.

*TUA#8: Would you mind repeating that, you're speaking so quickly?*

*ECU#8: I said I don't like the dorms, so next year, I'm gonna live off-campus, in a house.*

*TUA#8: Why don't you like the dorms?*

*ECU#8: Ehh..emm, not enough privacy, not very nice, not very big, so I'm struggling to get my own place.*

Asking for repetition, though sometimes because of audio problems, in many times it was a strategy to ask for explanation through rephrasing. In this example, by providing *off-campus*, the word *dorm* could be understood and even used in the second question.

Talking about the family is a very interesting topic. The students from both sides were so eager to know the structure of each other's families.

*TUA#3: How do you consider the notion of family in the American society?*

*ECU#3: My mom, my sister, me and my dog, my closest family. I respect my mom. I don't go against her most of the time on purpose. We are very close friends. We can talk about anything and come to her for everything. We are like best friends and that's to me what my family is,*

In this example, we can see that the *dog* is clearly stated to be a member of the family. It will allow the Algerian students, who live in a society that rarely pets dogs and if so never considers them as members of the family, to be very careful and respect this cultural difference. Being aware about that will avoid both of them to fall in misunderstanding. In another example, one very important characteristics of the American family was learnt:

*TUA#8: Do you miss your family?*

*ECU#8: I do but at the same time I like to get away of them a little while, but yes I miss my family.*

This question was then followed by some remarks on the American people as being too individualistic and the Algerians as more family-prone. This is something true about both of them, and they did not only admit it but accepted it as a cultural difference not subject to true or false.

In the following last example, religion was questioned. Though a very critical issue, they could bring it to the table and ask about it.

*TUA#8: How do you consider the American Muslims and how do you accept them?*

*ECU#13: Yeah! I honestly think that there are many people who really, emmm for me Personally seeing an American Muslim is just like seeing an American Jew or an American Christian. That's just their faith and it doesn't even really come up as a problem.*

Talking about each other's religion and learning how to accept each other's differences is very crucial for socio-cultural competence development. People are very supportive of

their convictions and faiths, so any critical remark may close down any discussion, no matter how linguistically fluent is the interlocutor.

From the aforementioned examples we can see that ECU/TUA interactions could open the door to a cross-cultural understanding. Students from both sides were given the opportunity to recognize, interpret, and correctly react to their interlocutors, in situations that were open to misunderstanding due to cultural differences. By being introduced to the life and traditions, as well as, knowledge of the history and literature of each other's community, the Algerian students could develop a cultural background knowledge that will allow them to interpret and use English effectively, i.e. intercultural interaction is very effective for developing SL or FL learners' socio-cultural competence, which is an essential component of communicative competence.

#### **4.4 Results and Discussion Concerning Third Research Question**

According to Blum-Kulka (1991) and Ellis (1997), pragmatic competence develops gradually through three stages. The learners move from a message-oriented stage where they rely more on context clues to interpret speaker's intentions, to an interlanguage-oriented stage where a range of strategies are used with varying degrees of success. The last stage, interculturally-oriented and where learners approximate closely to native speakers, is rarely achieved even after years of exposure.

Building on this assumption and using sociocultural theory suggestion that interactions with a more capable other are essential for the continuing development of communicative -including pragmatic- competence, we will try to answer the third research question: *how does learners' awareness of pragmatically appropriate language*

*develop?* To do so, we will examine our excerpts to see if there is any evidence of pragmatic development brought by the assistance our learners receive through collaboration or interaction with their English speaking partners.

We will use the following steps in assistance, developed by Ohta (2006), to see if the American students were able to assess their Algerian partners' needs, find appropriate assistance, and adjust the source of help if needed.

	<b>Other-management</b>
Assess	Helper assesses learner needs
Tailor	Helper provides developmentally appropriate assistance
Adjust	Helper adjusts assistance in response to learner needs
Withdraw	Helper provides less assistance as learner skill grows

*Table 4.6 Assistance Steps (adapted from Ohta 2006:159)*

#### **4.4.1 Message-Oriented Stage**

ECU#3 : *what shall I say, ...ehh.* (Assess)

ECU#3: = *what do you like to do for fun?* (Tailor)

TUA#3: *this is just ( )*

... KAYLA ...do you hear me?

- \* : *yeah*
- TUA#3: *what do you suggest?*
- ECU#3: *... what did she say?*  
*... what do you like to do for FUN*
- TUA#3: = *yes, what d..do you suggest*
- ECU#3: *like..eh... [reading, or sport]* (Adjust)

ECU#3's question *What do you like to do for fun?* was tailored and came after erring about what to say, as a sign of a phase of assessment of what type of question that might help her partner. She, then, ended up with an adjustment that includes some examples. ECU#3 was obliged to illustrate with examples, as contextual clues, to help her partner deduce the intended meaning. This excerpt is from the first link, where we can assume that the Algerian students were still in their message-oriented stage.

Contextual clues may include examples, synonyms, definitions, antonyms, explanations, and restatements. In the following example we can see a case of definition:

- ECU#1: *ok my question is, what is the popular major at your college?* (Assess) (Tailor)  
*... and why do you think it's popular?*
- TUA#1: *popular major?*
- ECU#1: *or what's the course study that a lot of college kids like to study?* (Adjust)



ECU#1's question was tailored and then adjusted after bumping up with her partner's linguistic limitations. Her adjustment was in the form of a definition of the word *major*. ECU#1 was even obliged to carry on another adjustment by providing examples:

TUA#1: *can you just specify a little*

*...because we are specialized in studying English as a foreign language*

\* : *English*

ECU#1: *no she said specify, specify*

*... in college do most students study like biology or science, some study like history or business*

*...what do most kids study?*

(Re-Adjust)

The use of two contextual clues, as definition and examples, can be, also, attributed to the first stage of pragmatic development. Another example of definition is the following:

ECU#1: *ok ... I study geology* (Tailor)

*...and geology is the study of rocks and minerals on the earth* (Adjust)

In this example we can notice that ECU#1 moved right away to define the word *geology* based on the last experience with the word *major*. This shows that the reliance was heavy on contextual clues to avoid misunderstanding.

Another example of a message-oriented stage is in the following example, where ECU#4 restated the meaning of his question using different words, based always on his assessment that his Algerian partner linguistic limitations may not allow her to understand *grading scheme*. He moved directly to adjusting through restatement.

ECU#4: *What,*

<i>... in college what's your grading scheme like?</i>	(Assess) (Tailor)
<i>... what do you have to get to give like an A?</i>	(Adjust)
<i>... what's the grading like in your college?</i>	(Re-Adjust)

In the second group excerpts, though students already introduced to each other in chat for the first half of the link, there are still instances of message-oriented stage interaction. The following examples will illustrate them:

ECU#10: *that's ok*

*... I was just wondering if it's a popular decision to go to college* (Assess) (Tailor)

TUA#10: *what?*

ECU#10: *how do students decide to go to college?* (Adjust)

As with the first group, ECU#10 from second group bumps up against her partner's linguistic limitations, and had to adjust her question by restating the meaning in a different structure. She did the same thing in the following example which is an extension of the first chunk:

ECU#10: *emm*

*...here the police are very good they are everywhere, what about you?* (Assess)(Tailor)

TUA#10: *what do you mean, can you repeat?*

ECU#10: *how is the police system there?* (Adjust)

In another example ECU#9 had to adjust her statement by providing an explanation of the fact of being dangerous to walk around the campus at night, when she realized that her partner's culture couldn't allow him to link it to drinking alcohol.

ECU#9: *eh, emm*

*...we actually have to be careful at night walking around.. in the campus* (Tailor)

TUA#9: *It's very dangerous I think?*

ECU#9: *we have to be careful walking around at night*

*... because it can be dangerous, people drink alcohol.* (Adjust)

#### **4.4.2 Interlanguage-Oriented Stage**

It is the second stage in the development of pragmatic knowledge of non-native speakers (Blum-Kulka 1991, Ellis 1997). It is the stage where a range of communicative strategies are being used. For the sake of our study, we will take Cohen's (2005) model of communicative strategies in conversation and Tannen's (2005) model as well, to check if these strategies are being used in the last link. For an easy recall, and far from repetition, the strategies can be summarized as follows:

Cohen's (2005) model:

- Steering the conversation away from problematic areas (Topic management).
- Expressing meaning in creative ways, e.g., by paraphrasing a word or a concept, coining words, etc.
- Creating more time for them to think.
- Negotiating the difficult parts of the communication.
- Compensating for gaps by literal translation from L1 or switching to another language.
- Conversational interaction strategies such as:
  - Asking for help, clarification, or confirmation
  - Strategies for maintaining the floor.

Tannen's (2005) model:

- Overlaps in conversation may be perceived as an interruption or as a show of enthusiastic listenership.
- Strategies for two interactional goals:
  - The need for connection (solidarity).
  - The need not to be excessively impinged on (power).

If we look at both links, the first and the last one, we will notice that the number of instances of message-oriented stage or interlanguage-oriented stage interactions are proportionate, i.e., more contextual clues and less strategies in the first link, and more communication strategies less contextual clues in the last link. We have already checked the excerpt of the first video link, let us now check the last link excerpt and have a look at some examples that confirm such fact.

*TUA#3: ok, what do you suggest as a topic for today?*

*ECU#3: it's an open discussion*

*... so we can talk about anything*

In this example we see that TUA#3 initiated a question which may be interpreted as a desire for control over conversation. This move marks power in conversation. This could be done through the successive links they had together after the first one, which was more of an introduction than anything else. She, then in the following example, learnt how to steer away the conversation and change the topic, i.e., topic management strategy:

*ECU#3: yes my mum, my sister, me and my dog*

*... my closest family*

*... ehh, I respect my mum I don't go against her most of the time on purpose*

*... we are very close, we can talk about anything and come to her for everything*

*... we are like best friends and that's to me what my family is.*

*TUA#3: =so where is your father?*

There is even a latch in the conversation that marks overlapping. This overlap is intended to show enthusiastic listenership. TUA#3, then took the floor again to speak about her own family, and because of her linguistic limitations, she had to literally translate from her L1 as a strategy to compensate for the gaps that may exist:

*TUA#3: personally my family is an important thing in my life*

*... and it's just composed of 8 persons, 4 brothers and 4 sisters*

*... and we share the same house and we are all educated persons*

*... eh, em I'm the youngest one, and I like my mother so much*

*... to be successful in my life, I consider family as the basic development in our society*

*... without the family*

*... because a person needs the help of the others*

*... don't you think?*

She ended her turn by asking for confirmation of her point of view. She re-asked for confirmation in another turn:

*TUA#3: so family is the basic*

*...so give me your opinion*

Form the other part of the American students; we see that they are no longer dealing with a contextual clues-based type of discussion but rather a more strategic one. They found themselves in situations where they had to negotiate the difficult parts of the

communication. ECU#2, in the following example, tried to explain the difference in terms of culture and not in terms of wrong or right:

*ECU#2: I wanted to say how if in your society the family is the basic*

*...I feel that in America it is the individual*

*... in America we started individualism when we start to consider more the person and how to*

*... I don't know*

*... to achieve goals more for yourself, we care about each other more than the family.*

He, then, tried to reason out the issue logically by asking a question, still as a way to negotiate the communication:

*ECU#2: eh, eh, well ok*

*... what target concerned age we start becoming more independent*

In the following example we see how TUA#6 was so smart to steer the conversation away from the problematic area, i.e., meaning of family. Asking about music and movies was a good way to show control over conversation and the right time for topic management:

*TUA#6: hi everybody*

*TUA#6: up to now we have spoken more about serious things*

*... what do you think about speaking about something ra, rather funny*

*... such as music or movies or*

*ECU#1: ok I have a question about music actually*

As we can see, ECU#1's turn was more of a confirmation than just an answer. It is a strategy to show the need for connection with the other (Tannen, 2005). TUA#6 did the same thing, by providing names of some American singers as an answer to ECU#1's question. The aim behind was to show connection:

*ECU#1 : do you listen to any music from the united states?*

*...and if so who do you listen to?*

*TUA#6: yes of course, we know American music through TV*

*... hehehe they are (pointing to her group) speaking about, Akon, Beyonce,  
Chakira*

As already mentioned, the American students moving to more strategic answers, found themselves most of the time negotiating communication and had also to express themselves in creative ways like in the following example:

*TUA#5: do you listen to Arabic music?*

*ECU#13: no, never heard of any Arabic artist*

*... I, I don't understand Arabic so if I listen to it will be just a bunch of nonsense*

*ECU Group: ☺*

*ECU#13: but, but name an artist who is in Algeria that is very popular*

*... I wanna listen to some Algerian dance, hehehehe*



ECU#13 couldn't just say that she doesn't know any Arabic artist but wanted to show her eagerness to start listening to, provided they put her on the track and name one Algerian artist for her. TUA#8 did the same and had to be strategic too, and negotiated her incapacity to name one artist, so she came up with:

*TUA#1: it's not obligatory to be an Algerian just an Arab one*

*... I have a web site may be*

*... it will be helpful for you*

This time it was ECU#4 who steered the conversation away and asked about the gay community in Algeria. Though we see that he proceeds to explaining the meaning of gay, prompted by his partner, still this is one of the few instances where the interaction was message-oriented. TUA#1, on the other side, was obliged to negotiate the difficult part of the communication:

*ECU#4: what are your views on gay individuals in your society?*

*TUA#1: please jonathan?*

*ECU#4: how do you feel about men having other men partners in physical relationships?*

*... and women having other women in physical relationship such as homosexuals?*

*.... Do you think it exists in your society?*

*TUA#1: so I'm going to answer your question*

*... well it exists but very secretly and discretely*  
*... and for me I think that it's an unnatural relationship*  
*... I find it weird and bizarre*

TUA#1 found herself in the same situation again, after being asked for clarifications from Keyla about her attitude towards a gay friend. She had to compensate for the gap that might exist because of her linguistic limitations, and translated from her L1 the fact that she will have pity of him, something that her partner, indirectly didn't like:

ECU#3 : *[ so if someone*  
*... eh if someone was close to you, was secretive about being eh, homosexual*  
*... eh would that change your view about them?*

*AT (Group discussion)*

TUA#1: ( ) *and I have pity of him of course*  
*... but I'm not going to change my behavior with him*  
*... the relationship will stay as it is*

ECU#3: *pity, ohh (low voice)*

We see, also, in the above example that there is an overlap-marked by the square bracket-which happened at the same time when TUA#1 was talking about gay people, as if ECU#3 is marking disagreement and she wanted to mark her interruption and asked about what if this gay person was a friend.

The conversation was, then, about on which basis friends must be selected. TUA#7, trying to answer that, had to use gap fillers like hesitation, to create more time for her to think, and ended up by re-directing the same question to her partner, always as gap filler. ECU#1, more engaged in the intercultural discussion, had to be more creative in expressing meaning:

*TUA#7: well relation, eh friendship is eh*

*TUA#1: based*

*TUA#7: is based eh on trust, honesty, respect, love*

*... so between friends there must be those characteristics*

*... what about you?*

*ECU#1: it's a big issue and friendship is to be able to confide in someone to talk to them about feelings*

*... so I feel trust is a big deal and also respect coz you must respect people*

*... and in a friendship if you don't respect someone then how you're gonna understand how they feel, right?*

*TUA#1: of course*

We can see, also, that TUA#1 helped TUA#7 in keeping the floor by assisting her in finding the right word. She, even, provided the confirmation that ECU#1 was looking for by the end of her turn. TUA#1 was strategic and could stay connected to the stream of discussion. This made ECU#1 do the same and show solidarity as an interactional goal when she said:

*ECU#1: so I feel the same way as you*

*... I think a lot of us feel trust is the big one and love, of course.*

With the second group the situation was nearly the same. TUA#12, trying to voice her criticism of the structure of the western family, and because of her linguistic limitations and the need to keep the floor, she had to compensate by translating sometimes from her L1 and using gap fillers other times, assisted by her group:

*TUA#12: what I have noticed about the western societies that you're, you are considering the individual more than the family itself*

*...I think we, as Arabic we are considering*

*TUA Group: Arabs*

*TUA#12: as Arabs we are considering the family as a whole, you know,*

*... we live in families even if we are above 18 while you since the 18 you quit the family*

*... you leave and you construct your own life*

*... I think it's a matter of dividing the society because I think that we must consider the family as a whole, as a group*

*... it's for the preservation of the society, and for the sake of the individual.*

TUA#12's criticism pushed ECU#5 to be strategic in his answer, and started negotiating the difficult part of the communication by using creative language and arguing that if seen through American lenses, it is the same situation as everywhere:

*ECU#5 : eh, well not everybody quits the family*

... have that we're individualistic is the fact that what we do at 18 we do like to grab a ( ) on our own lives

... it's not everybody, some people do yes forget their family but a lot of people do, just like the one need education, buy themselves, become their own people then possibly go back to their family

... yeah and they might go and make their own family

... and even if I'm far from my family I'm still very close to them.

TUA#12, again voiced another criticism, and steered the conversation away from talking about the outcomes of the link, and asked about clarifications about what she called *excessive freedom*:

ECU#13: do you have anything you want to talk about

TUA#12: .... About your excessive freedom

ECU#13: ehh, what do you think is excessive freedom? Like what an example of that?

ECU#13 had to make sure about what does TUA#12 mean, and as an interactional goal she asked for clarifications. ECU#8 has, then, to take the floor to interrupt and show his dislike to be impinged on excessively (Tannen, 2005). He was strategic in negotiating the difficult part of this interaction, by explaining that it works both ways and that it is seen as excessive freedom in USA because there is less freedom in Algeria:

ECU#8: how we would prefer to live

.... you think we have excessive freedom and at the same time we look at you and

*think you have restricted freedom*

*...so it works both ways, and I think we both kind in love with our righteous ( )*

*because we are born into it*

*... and that's the way we were raised in our culture.*

There were many instances of steering the conversation away from the problematic areas, as students-getting to know each other better-started to voice criticism. TUA#10, in the following example, had to settle down the disagreement between TUA#12 and ECU#13 over *excessive freedom* in USA. She steered away the conversation to ask about religion and culture:

*TUA#10: hi*

*...concerning culture, do you consider that a culture is part of religion or the religion is part of culture?*

*ECU#13: religion is part of our culture as American*

*... because I know there are a lot of Americans who have different religions*

*... there is Christianity, Judaism*

*...there're plenty of people who are Muslims over here*

*... I have various friends who are Muslim and we all form such different parts and societies*

*... for example my boy friend is Indian and he, his life style is extremely different*

*... and getting to know his mother was extremely interesting.*

ECU#13 had to be very careful to talk about religion and culture, and she was very strategic in giving clarifications sustained by her as an example of openness to different

racess, religions, and cultures, since herself is dating an Indian. This encouraged TUA#8 to be very precise and ask about Muslims in USA. A question that in spite ECU#13 answered carefully, ECU#8 took the floor to explain that as there are good people in USA there are also bad ones. Strategically speaking, ECU#13 was looking only for connection and solidarity, whereas ECU#8 was less enthusiastic after all the criticisms raised by TUA#12 before:

*TUA#8: I have a question*

*... how do you consider the American Muslims and how do you accept them?  
... within your society.*

*ECU#13: yeah*

*... I honestly don't think that there are many people who really  
... em for me personally seeing an American Muslim is just like seeing an  
American Jew or an American Christian  
... that's just their faith and so it doesn't even really come up as a problem.*

*ECU#8: however, probably none of us think of anything when we see them*

*... but there are still a lot of ignorant people  
... and I know that when a lot of people see American Muslims or Muslims in  
general the thought of a terrorist comes to their mind immediately  
... and it's just hard to, for people to realize that the general image that comes up  
when you think of terrorist is Muslim  
... and, and that's in general, but eh I mean eventually the majority of American  
people know that that's not true  
... but there are still ignorant people out there and that's a common misconception.*

This interaction ended up, by an indirect invitation to visit Algeria. TUA#11 was as if checking their partners' general attitude towards them. ECU#13, out of the need to stay connected to the communication, said she would love to:

*TUA#11: I'm nassima*

*... from this experience do you want to visit Algeria*

*ECU#13: yeah*

*... I definitely would except, I don't have enough money to go over th(hhhh)ere right now so*

*... eh would it be dangerous if an American came over to Algeria?*

ECU#8, as already stated, less enthusiastic to connection to communication, asked about sex before marriage, knowing that it is looked down upon in Muslim societies. His question was still legitimate and was taken as a need for clarifications. TUA#12 had, then, to negotiate this difficult part of communication, and tried to be strategic and she avoided a yes/no answer:

*ECU#8: em,*

*... what is the general opinion or general feelings towards premarital sex?*

*... does it happen, does it happen a lot or is just kept quiet?*

*... and is it looked down upon?*

*... sex before marriage*

*... is that looked down upon?*

*TUA#12: hi*

*... well in terms of having sex before marriage in our religion, the answer in religion, it's forbidden*



*...in religion it's forbidden to have sex before marriage*  
*...but this doesn't mean that there is no practice of sex before marriage in all*  
*the Arab societies*  
*... there are some exceptions of course*  
*... and they are increasing day by day*  
*... but in our religion it's forbidden*

The last but not least instance of strategic interaction was about drugs. When ECU#13 asked about if drugs are a problem in Algeria, TUA#12 avoided a yes/no answer again, and linked the problem to worldwide and specifically Latin America, that USA is a neighbor and is suffering from more than any other country. This move can be explained by a desire to have control over conversation, i.e., power in conversation (Tannen, 2005):

*ECU#13: I have another question*

*...where you live, do you have any problem with drugs?*

*TUA#12: it's worldwide spread*

*... but I think that the American society is really suffering of this problem*  
*... because you're neighboring Latin America and the trade, drug trade is very*  
*flourishing in your area, as well as in our area also*  
*... I think that all people are suffering from drugs*

From the aforementioned examples we can see that this type of classroom facilitates discussion and emphasizes student-student interactions by attending to issues of social and cultural differences (Garrison, Anderson, and Archer, 2001). Findings show that our students boosted their performance through collaboration and the assistance they

received from their native partners helped to push their pragmatic development forward. Working together allow them to perform beyond the level that each was able to attain individually, but were they able to build upon each others' grammatical and lexical knowledge? The answer to this question will be addressed in the following section.

#### **4.5 Results and Discussion Concerning Fourth Research Question**

In a study examining the comprehension and production of requests, apologies, and commands by beginning learners of Spanish as a foreign language, Koike (1989) explicitly focused on the structure and development of pragmatic ability and their relationship to grammatical competence, and commented on the dissociation of pragmatics and grammar. She sums up the results of her study as follows:

*... since the grammatical competence cannot develop as quickly as the already present pragmatic concepts require, the pragmatic concepts are expressed in ways conforming to the level of grammatical complexity acquired.*

(1989:287)

With this in mind, we will try to answer the fourth research question: *Does learners' development of their pragmatic knowledge help them as well, improve their grammar?* To do so, Eisenstein and Bodman's (1986, 1993) study of expressions of gratitude will be taken as a model to study the interconnection between grammatical and pragmatic competence. In this study, Eisenstein and Bodman found out that advanced ESL learners provided pragmalinguistically appropriate thanking strategies with ungrammatical forms, such as

*Intensifiers: I very appreciate*

*Tense: I never forget you kindness*

*Word order: I'll pay back you*

*Idiom: This is the thing what I've wanted; Thank you. Sound is good.*

*Prepositions: That's very nice from you; I hope to see you by us*

*Word choice: I have never taken such a good dinner; It is so glad to me that I have such kind of good friend*

(Eisenstein and Bodman, 1993: 69)

### **4.5.1 Tense**

An obvious grammatical error can be seen from the wrong use of tense. In the two examples below, when talking about practicing sport TUA#3 used present continuous tense for the verb instead of present simple tense which is appropriate when talking about habits and routines.

1) TUA#3: *I'm just watching.*

*All ☺*

*TUA#3: I'm just watching, I'm not a player.*

*ECU#3: ohh..ok ..me too.*

2) TUA#3: *Ok Kayla, are you still practicing basketball?*

*ECU#3: ...ehhh, I like to play with my friends*

Though, when we want to emphasize that something is done repeatedly, we can use the present continuous, we often do this when we want to show that we are unhappy about it, including our own behavior like in: *They're constantly having parties until the early hours of the morning.*

In the two following examples, TUA#1 failed to create a question in present simple by not adding **do** to her first question, and used the infinitive instead of present perfect in the second example. She might have done that to avoid misusing the right tense for the verb.

1) TUA#1: *so what are the activities you practice outside, outside your lectures?*

*...and you didn't tell me what you study*

ECU#1: *ok ... I study geology*

2) TUA#1: *no, we have spring break ( ) but to pay for it*

ECU#4: *this is the same here*

The same thing can be said about TUA#4 and TUA#8 who failed to use the verb in the present simple tense by adding inflectional **s** to their verbs since they are used with third singular person.

1) TUA#4: *about your question about the activities outside the class organized by our college*

*... well it depends on the purpose and colleges*

*... eh but as I know, our university organize eh, concerning sport something eh*

2) TUA#8: *my brother practice also this*

ECU#5: *is your brother good?*

All the above examples are taken from the first link, which we assume are attributed to the interference of their native language or the insufficient mastery of the target language. The following example was the only serious mistake found in the second link script (though some parts of it could not be transcribed for audio defects). In this example, though TUA#11 wrongly used the present tense instead of the past for the verb **notice**, could provide the verb **think** with which the present tense is appropriate.

*TUA#11: yes I have a question*

*... because this is the last time, what do you notice about us?*

*... what do you think about us?*

### 4.5.2 Preposition

Prepositions according to Lawal (2004) indicate various relationships that include those of time, points, position, direction and various degrees of mental or emotional attitudes between words or phrases in sentences. Like other parts of speech, prepositions are frequently misused, as instances of deviation from the norm of correct usage, i.e., many students use prepositions carelessly as if they are not rule-governed. Prepositions misuse is mainly caused by linguistic interference factors, inappropriate learning and wrong application of rules.

One major error observed in our students' speech is prepositional error. TUA#13, TUA#9, and TUA#14 misused the proposition **on** and replaced it with **in** to end up sounding like translating from their L1.

1) TUA#13: *I live in the campus.*

... *do you hear me?*

ECU#13 : *you mean you live on campus?*

2) TUA#9: *yeah*

... *do you live in the campus?*

ECU#9: *yeah I live in a dorm*

3) TUA#14: *=yes Stacy*

... *do you live in the campus?*

ECU#14: *I used to not any more*

Interference factor constitutes a problem of usage to most learners of English Language. Lawal (2004), also, stresses that the correct use of preposition often poses difficulties to the learners. According to him, there are not many rules guiding the use of prepositions. He added that the only potent weapon against the problems encountered in their usage is to learn them by rote, different expressions in which prepositions occur separately.

Corder (2000) points out that the misuse of preposition is one of the observable errors in the students' use of English in the language classroom. Out of the various uses of prepositions; the use of prepositions after adjectives and verbs are the most commonly misused prepositions. The next example, where TUA#1' s misuse of preposition after adjective, is from the second link. It seems to be the only instance of preposition misuse. The misuse may be also attributed to the interference of the French language, by using **of** instead of **for**.

TUA#1: ( ) and I have pity of him of course

... but I'm not going to change my behavior with him

... the relationship will stay as it is

ECU#3: pity, ohh

Correct use of prepositions depends on linguistic competence and performance of the learner or speaker. The overall students' performance in the use of preposition was rated 'good' in the second link. It may indicate that students, though with a poor knowledge of prepositional rules, managed to learn how to use some of them through direct contact with native speakers, since there are not many rules guiding the use of prepositions (Lawal, 2004).

In the above example, TUA#1 did not only fail to use the appropriate proposition but also the right word by saying **have** instead of **feel**. This will be discussed in what follows.

### 4.5.3 Word Choice

Word choice is a term used to describe the words chosen by a speaker. Generally a good word choice means using words that are very specific and descriptive of exactly what you want to say. This means the extent to which a speaker can select the level of vocabulary that is suitable for the purposes of communication. The range of vocabulary

that is mastered by the speaker determines the fluency of the exchanges, i.e., the poor mastery of certain words impedes the communication because the expression becomes limited and therefore the ideas cannot be conveyed freely.

There are certain points in the exchanges where our students were unable to respond with the exact words and had some limitations in expressing certain words. The first obvious inappropriate response was when TUA#3 used the word **suggest** to ask about examples, for suggestions may include providing examples:

TUA#3: *what do u suggest?*

ECU#3: ... *what did she say?*

... *what do you like to do for fun*

TUA#3: = *yes, what d..do you suggest*

ECU#3: *like..eh...[reading, or sport] ( )*

The discussion was carried on till ECU#3 mentioned that she plays basketball just for fun. TUA#3 not used to use the word **fun**, and affected by the French language use, provided the word **pleasure** as a synonym of **fun** to make sure she understands, not aware that the word pleasure is most of the time associated to body satisfactions and not to good time in general.

ECU#3: ... *I play for fun.*

TUA#3: *just for pleasure.*

ECU#3: ... *yes.*



TUA#1, too, misused the word **specify**. She was asked about her **major**, and as she didn't know the meaning, instead of asking for explanation she asked for specification that normally comes after a vague statement. This can be seen in her saying specialized in studying English instead of our major is the English language:

*TUA#1: can you just specify a little*

*...because we are specialized in studying English as a foreign language*

*ECU#1: no she said specicify, specify*

*... in college do most students study like biology or science, some study like history or business*

*...what do most kids study?*

In the following examples both TUA#8 and TUA#12 misused their words. TUA#8 confused **me** with **I am**, whereas TUA#12, unknowingly, used *stay at home* which means not studying at all, to ask if she lives at home or on campus. She also misused the preposition **in**, as already discussed above:

1) *TUA#8: I'm too, I don't like the dorms*

*ECU#8: What did she say?*

*ECU#13: she doesn't li(hhh)ke the dorms*

2) *TUA#12: where do you live in campus orrr... you stay at home*

*ECU#12: I live on campus because I live far from here*

TUA#8 then carried on talking about the benefits of living on campus, and ended up with an inappropriate expression. Her expression *have you got me* could have been more clear if she has said *have you got that*:

*TUA#8: I have said that you can learn plenty of things from campus*

*... for example you depend on yourself, I mean the responsibility, have you got me?*

Another common mistake is with the word **pass**. Students most of the time don't make the distinction between sitting for an exam and passing an exam. TUA#13, for example, should have used *sit for* instead of *pass*, whereas TUA#8 should have used *passed* instead of *have*.

1) *TUA#13: because.. before we enter the college.. we pass the baccalaureate exam*

2) *TUA#8: well in order to go to the college you must first have your baccalaureate exam  
... and it's the key to allow you to enter to the university*

From the last link we could have the following example, where TUA#3 used **I am** instead of **I do**. She then used **was** with 'you' and could, quickly, realize her error and correct it.

*TUA#3: ( ) is very important in the American society*

*... so the family helps you in the establishment of yourself*

*... but I'm not agree with you*

*... since when you was, ehh were born you were in the family*

*ECU#2: yes.*

In the following example TUA#1 used the word **put** instead of **wear**. This is may be due to the fact of thinking that the veil is associated with the head, and everything on the head is used with 'put'.

*TUA#8: good luck*

*... well I think you have asked me about veil and I explained why I put and the*

*Muslim girls put veil*

In his first example, TUA#9, not only misused the tense, but was unclear to his partner by using the word **familiarize** which is more French than English. The appropriate word would have been **used to**. In the second example, he used **whatever** instead of **whenever** which is more appropriate since he was talking about time.

*1) TUA#9: how do you live the experience with us?*

*( )*

*TUA#9: have you been familiarized with us?*

*ECU#13: Can you repeat that?*

*2) TUA#9: at any time whatever you want*

#### 4.5.4 Word Order

In linguistics, word order typology refers to the study of the order of the syntactic constituents of a language, and how different languages can employ different orders. It differs significantly across languages (Selinker, 1972; Odlin, 2003). Most languages rely on the order of constituents to convey important grammatical information and often have some preferred word order which is used most frequently. Some others, often those that convey grammatical information through inflection, allow more flexibility which can be used to encode pragmatic information such as topicalisation or focus. It is, therefore, hard to learn word order and language learners are known to produce a range of word order errors (Odlin, 1989). The following are two good examples from our study:

1) TUA#4: *=so these are the popular sports you have?*

2) TUA#3: *ok ( )*

*... I was crying all the time*

*... I was shouting and the difficult that I found it was that when my mother said to me get up now you have your lectures, I was crying too*

*... do you hear me?*

ECU#4: *yeah I hear you*

ECU#3: *that's sad, I cried too when I went to the elementary school*

In the first example, TUA#4 relied on her intonation to make herself sound like asking a question, where she could have arranged her words in such an order to make it a question. She could have just brought the auxiliary before the demonstrative pronoun. In

the second example, TUA#3's turn was quite long, so she was lost at a certain point and ordered her words in a wrong way. She could have said *what I found difficult* instead of *the difficult I found was*.

#### **4.5.5 Idiomatic Expressions**

Idiomatic expressions are common phrases or sayings whose meanings cannot be understood by the individual words or elements. They are combinations or collocations of words which cannot be translated word for word. They are non-standard speech, slang or dialect that are natural to native speakers of a language.

Idiomatic expressions are extremely common and are found in all kinds of English, both formal and informal. There are too many that it is difficult to remember them. Language students, often, misuse them. The two following examples are the only instances of idioms in our script, the first from the first link and the second from the last one:

1) TUA#1: ... *but for example I can go to see members of my family far from home so I can call it vacation*

... *Just when you change a little bit a routine or your environment we can call it a vacation here*

2) TUA#3: ... *because a person needs the help of the others*

... *don't you think?*

*ECU#3 : yes, but I think*

TUA#1 in her example failed to provide the correct idiomatic expression which is *break a routine* and said *change a routine* instead. TUA#3, on the other hand, dropped *so* at the end of her expression making it sound unfinished. She should have said *don't you think so?*

Finally, in the following chunks students have even picked up either the wrong proposition and the wrong word or the wrong word with a wrong tense. For example, TUA#6 has used *on the afternoon* instead of *in the afternoon* and at the same time as if running short of time for processing her language, used **persons** instead of **students**.

*TUA#6: after school,*

*...because we have lectures on the afternoon,*

*...and ehh after that, there are some persons who practice ehh...sport*

TUA#2 and TUA#8 did the same thing. TUA#2 used the verb **contain** to mean the town where the college is and sounded like translating from Arabic, and also misused, as nearly all her mates, the preposition by using **in** instead of **on**. TUA#8, too, used **participant** where she should have used **member** and misused the same preposition. In the third example, TUA#11 used a continuous tense instead of simple, and was confused between **till** and **still**:

1) *TUA#2: I live in the town that contains the college,*

*so I'm obliged to live in the campus,*

2) TUA#8: *yes I have, eh I'm, I'm parti, I'm a participant in a team in the campus*

ECU#8: *=what sport do you play?*

3) TUA#11: *it depending from 5 still ( )*

ECU#11: *is that daily?*

*...every day you study 9 to 10 hours?*

One last example is the wrong use of intensifier. TUA#1 used **very** to intensify the secret aspect of premarital sex, while she could have just said *in secret*.

TUA#1: *so I'm going to answer your question*

*... well it exists but very secretly and discretely*

As has been mentioned earlier, the source of errors can be from the interference of the native language or the insufficient mastery of the second language. For the non-native speakers of English, it is common to encounter grammatical problems when they speak. Since English is different from their native language, grammar mastery can only be achieved at the later stage of learning.

However, not all kinds of expressive difficulties faced by our students needed to be assisted or corrected. For example the wrong tense for certain verbs did not stop the speech for such an error, since the error in this sense did not impede the flow of the

conversation, and both speaker and listener could get the message without any misunderstanding.

#### **4.6 Conclusion**

This chapter summarized the results of our study and discussed their implications on the four research questions, namely: 1) online classroom conversation and opportunities for learners' production of pragmatically appropriate language, 2) online classroom conversation and its impact on pragmatic competence, 3) learners' awareness of pragmatically appropriate language development, and 4) learners' development of their pragmatic knowledge in correspondence to their grammatical competence. The idea behind was to explore the development of pragmatic competence with specific regard to conversational competence and how this latter may be influenced by online video encounters with native speakers.



## **Chapter Five RESEARCH FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS**

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## **5.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, we will draw research conclusions as far as the four research questions are concerned. Then, pedagogical implications of video-based communication, especially videoconferencing, to pragmatic learning are discussed with more details. We will discuss, also, the implications for the cultural dimension of foreign language education insisting on that learners should develop their cultural awareness and look for the values and beliefs which underlie the facts and behavior which they learn about the other culture. We will proceed by discussing the instruction versus exposure studies debate that addresses the issue of whether pedagogical intervention in pragmatics leads to more effective learning than no instruction. Finally, we will look at the main limitations of this study and, then, conclude with some suggestions to both teachers and learners to make them more aware of what online intercultural encounters involve.

## **5.2 Research Conclusions**

The aim of the present study has been to explore the development of EFL pragmatic competence with specific regard to interactional competence. As the title suggests, this thesis is concerned with the effect of online cross-cultural conversation through virtual classroom on EFL learners' pragmatic competence development. It started by providing a typology of pragmatic competence development and, then, addressed the following research questions:

- 1-Does online classroom conversation generate enough opportunities for learners' production of pragmatically appropriate language?
- 2-Does online classroom conversation affect pragmatic competence development?
- 3-How does learners' awareness of pragmatically appropriate language develop?
- 4- Does learners' development of their pragmatic knowledge help them as well, improve their grammar?

As far as the first question is concerned, the interactionist theory argues that language learning may emerge out of conversation rather than simply being a pre-condition for conversation. In the light of what has been said before, we can see that this is true, in a sense. Conversation is one way, and a very good way, to obtain input and a 'pushed output' (Swain, 1985). Wells (1987, 1999) goes even further and argues that conversation can provide the matrix for all learning. In our analysis, we have seen that peers, working together, not only built upon each others' grammatical and lexical knowledge, but also were able to perform beyond the level that each was able to attain individually. Our students got feedback on, and were able to evaluate the effect of their communicative acts through engagement in interaction with their American partners who had a big role in shaping their discourse contributions, i.e., they helped them learn how to match form with function, and match language with context.

In terms of input, our conversations were authentic, which means they were “*spontaneous, spoken, dialogic (or multilogic) communication, taking place in real time and in a shared context, whose function is primarily interpersonal, and in which the interactants have symmetrical rights*” (Thornbury and Slade, 2006:37). We have seen how cohesion is achieved, both within and across speakers’ turns, contributing then to the sense that the talk was jointly constructed, contingent, and on a topic. We also looked to the basic move and exchange structure and the turn-taking mechanisms of our online conversations, and noticed an acceptable level of interactivity which may imply that our students learned, with different proficiency, how to take roles, position other interactants into particular roles, and how turn-taking and topic change occur in context.

Output is, also, a very important factor in successful second/foreign language learning. We have seen that online conversations might enhance output (speaking ability) among SL/FL language learners. The use of telecollaborations in the language classrooms, therefore, emerges as a potential candidate for improving learners’ performance, who need to be engaged in opportunities for ‘pushed output’ to acquire the target language (Kern, 1995; Warschauer, 1996; Beauvois, 1997). These opportunities are maximized in an online encounter where learners are provided with unlimited possibilities to practice the target language by interacting with native speakers. By shifting from teacher-centered classroom to student-to-student learning environment the new learning context provides learners with more opportunities to practice the language and they learn from each other as more proficient learners help the less proficient acquire the target language through collaboration.

Second research question discussed the fact that online interaction might help define our students’ expectations in conversation so that they organize their knowledge of

conversation in a certain way and use it to predict how their partners talk. We tried to show that in spite of all the difficulties that a native speaker and a non-native speaker of a language experience in understanding each other, which we often attribute to the non-native speaker, cross-cultural conversation presents enormous benefits to be gained from learning to participate in an unrestricted way. By unrestricted way we meant engaging learners in a learning arrangement known as 'telecollaboration' which has recently been on the rise, and where they can expand the range of discourse options (Belz and Kinginger, 2003).

'Telecollaboation' was, then, presented as an environment where learning takes place as an outcome of people working together towards the acquisition of knowledge, skills, or attitudes occurring as the result of group interaction (Kaye, 1992). This 'telecollaboration' may provide one of the best environments for learners to develop the kind of assistance they need in acquiring social skills. Therefore, in our study, 'telecollaboration' was explored in terms of students' intercultural interactions which are major learning factors in collaborative learning. This type of interaction provides the opportunity of using the target language productively and, therefore, promotes the development of functional language ability through learners' participation in communicative events. It, also, allows learners develop awareness for the need to have enough knowledge and competence to be able to use English to share their home culture information with speakers from another culture. In the light of this, we tried to answer the question of if online classroom conversation affects pragmatic competence development by focusing on both functional language ability development and sociocultural knowledge development

By language functions we referred to what the learner can do with language, such as giving and receiving information, asking for clarification, and expressing agreement or disagreement (McDonnell, 1992). "Telecollaboration", particularly videoconferencing, was, then, considered to afford great possibilities of negotiation of meaning in which various language functions appear like asking information, giving information and explaining, giving and requesting information which are basic functions used at group collaboration. The classification of language functions used in this study was an adaptation of Finocchiaro's functional categories that meet our purposes (Finocchiaro and Brumfit, 1983). These fall under five major categories: personal, interpersonal, directive, referential, and imaginative.

The second part of this question dealt with the development of sociocultural knowledge. We proceeded by explaining that telecollaborative approaches provide the right atmosphere for learners to develop awareness for the need of cultural knowledge of English to speak about their culture, and therefore, will develop their socio-cultural competence as one step towards communicative competence development.

Socio-cultural competence, concerned with the extent to which certain propositions and communicative functions are appropriate within a given socio-cultural context (Canale 1983), requires the cultural background knowledge as a need to interpret and use language effectively. Therefore, the main objective, through the examples we have used, was to make sense of a set of cultural meanings in the observed interactions, and that there is a variety of daily and intellectual contexts that must often be taken into consideration in order to understand the meaning of something that is said.

It is commonly believed that language function ability and sociocultural skills are acquired by learning in native-speaking countries or by having face-to-face interaction with native speakers. Unfortunately, for most language learners, these possibilities are still commonly unavailable. Therefore, and through this question, we tried to show that 'telecollaboration' learning technology has an important role to play to bridge the gap in the EFL context where native speakers' input is rare, i.e., a great advantage for using 'telecollaboration' technology is to engage language learners in intercultural interactions so that they can see how useful the sociocultural context is in improving their use of their language functions in oral production.

As far as third question is concerned, we have opted for sociocultural theory because it is particularly suited to the study of pragmatic development, i.e., sociocultural theory suggests that interactions with, a 'more capable other' are essential for the continuing development of communication-including pragmatic-competence. By engaging Vygotsky's notion of 'Zone of Proximal Development' this study tried to show that

*the quality of conversational participation can be seen as a critical locus for the development of FL proficiency because the native speakers' response is a critical means of constructing the nonnative speaker's discourse.*

(Shea 1994:378)

Findings show that our learners boosted their performance through collaboration with, and assistance from NS conversational partners. The idea behind was that the assistance our learners receive through collaboration and interaction with their more capable and expert peers will push their pragmatic development forward.

With the assumption that native speaker interlocutors can open up zones of proximal development for learners (Shea, 1994), we have seen that as our learners bumped up against their own linguistic limitations, they were assisted to move beyond them with the help of their peers, and development followed, indicating then that the notion of the ZPD and its related notions of scaffolding or assisted performance, could prove to be quite useful to research in interlanguage pragmatics. The implication of the ZPD for SLA is that what the learner can be assisted in doing is, soon, to be something that the learner will be able to do without help, i.e., what is within the ZPD is within the learner's reach but not yet fully incorporated into the learner's linguistic system.

In our study, we have tried to examine the data qualitatively to discover how learners support each other's learning of the target language (Ohta, 1995). Learners were recorded as they transacted an interactive task, and the transcribed data were analyzed for the features relating to assistance and scaffolding. In considering assistance, we tried to consider how students made use of the new forms or strategies to assist one another, and serve as resources to one another in the learning of pragmatics. Scaffolding, too, was seen as providing a supportive 'climbing frame', within which assistance was allowed and our learners could achieve a degree of communicative success that they would not have been able to achieve unaided.

As for the fourth research question, we tried to show that our learners while interacting with their American peers, they brought to that process a complete set of pragmatic behaviors from their first language or second language which they have learned. This is obviously a huge help to them. While languages are not identical in their



pragmatic behavior there are more similarities and there are differences. This means that, they were able to use a lot of their pragmatic knowledge to successfully interpret it and also successfully deliver very basic communicative messages despite their lack of grammar and vocabulary.

What they did, in effect, is to fall back on pragmatic knowledge in the first language which hopefully will match that of the target language at least enough in the early stages for them to survive. Their minimal knowledge of grammar did not really impede them that much. They managed to get done what they needed to do with low levels of grammatical/lexical knowledge on the basis that they can interpret what others are doing. This is consistent with Koike's (1989) comment on the dissociation of pragmatics and grammar for:

*since the grammatical competence cannot develop as quickly as the already present pragmatic concepts require, the pragmatic concepts are expressed in ways conforming to the level of grammatical complexity acquired.*

(1989: 287)

As we have seen in our examples, the grammatical errors may have made our students' expressions less effective, but they were not pragmalinguistic errors. Their imperfect grammar may constrain their expression of pragmatic intent, but this is not always the case, for there is ample evidence from different learner populations-children and adults, second and foreign language learners, and learners acquiring different target languages-that when performing action in the target language, beginning learners rely on a

pragmatic mode when they have not yet developed the grammatical resources that more expert speakers have. We have seen that our students, who are advanced learners of English, still produce ungrammatical utterances in their performance, but such ungrammatical features have no pragmalinguistic impact and therefore did not affect their pragmatic meaning.

This study has examined the actual participation and dynamics that occur in online discussions and their relationship to student learning outcomes, focusing on the quality of communications among participants and importantly, the links between that quality and students' performance. The aim was to investigate if online interaction with native speakers helps language learners to adjust their linguistic use with their interlocutors and learn when and how it is proper to make certain linguistic participations. A content analysis approach was used to investigate students' participations and data analysis has, to a certain extent, shown that the assistance our learners received through collaboration or interaction with their American interlocutors pushed their pragmatic development forward.

### **5.3 Research Implications**

Nowadays, a great deal of research has been produced on the effects of an online environment on the language teaching and language learning process, where Internet has been quickly and eagerly taken up by educators as both a tool and a medium for foreign language education (Crystal, 2001). CMC as example, defined by Herring (1999: 1) as "*communication that takes place between human beings via the instrumentality of computers*", has then been under focus.

The type of teaching delivered in such classrooms is referred to as network-based language teaching (NBLT), and the technologies most commonly used as either non-synchronous communication tools (such as e-mail and online discussion boards), or synchronous tools (such as web-based videoconferencing, and chats). The pedagogical implications of video-based communication, such as videoconferencing which distinguishes itself greatly from the other technologies, will be then discussed with more details.

### **5.3.1 Implications for Videoconferencing Use and Pragmatic Learning**

Face-to-face communication would add a realistic element to the process of classroom-based communication. Videoconferencing would prepare learners to employ their skills of interaction *in real time*, which also involves the ability to acquire knowledge about the target culture (Byram, 1997a). Using this technology, students will not only be able to interact and to write to their teachers or virtual classmates, but will also be able to hear and see them as well. Yet problems such as the high cost of hardware and software and the poor quality of sound and images have kept the number of language teachers, who have so far experimented with videoconferencing in their classes, very low. This study is, therefore, to add to the isolated reports of videoconferencing that are beginning to appear in the NBLT area. It is believed that after identifying what videoconferencing actually involves, the different approaches to implementing the technology in the foreign language classroom will be considered.

We tried to show, through our case study, that videoconferencing has left the teacher out of the equation completely and have enabled students to practice their language skills with native speakers from the target language. Learners involved in such

classes can improve their pronunciation, accuracy and fluency in the target language, like those involved in tandem exchanges, between students of French at Monkeaton High School in England and students of EFL in a partner school in Lille, France, who conversed every week on a one-to-one basis (Butler and Fawkes, 1999). The students were given access to desktop computers with videoconference capabilities and interacted with a prearranged partner, taking turns to speak in French and English. McAndrew, Foubister, and Mayes (1996) also engaged their English students of French in one-to-one videoconferences, to co-ordinate and prepare presentations and role-plays which they were going to have to perform together at a later date.

In our case, it was interesting to bring together Algerian and American students and allow them to compare interpretations of different topics related to their different cultures. It was an intercultural activity, that allowed our learners to check their developing theories about the target language, and culture as well and, also, reminded them not to make overgeneralisations. In the light of this, we believe that videoconference-based teaching can be particularly beneficial for foreign language learning in the following ways: 1) it supports a combination of interaction and reflection; 2) it brings about more equal levels of participation between learners; 3) it provides an authentic environment for learners; 4) it facilitates the collaborative construction of knowledge; and 5) it facilitates intercultural contact (Belz, 2001; Warschauer and Kern, 2000; Crystal, 2001). These characteristics will be discussed to show how they may contribute to the development of EFL communicative -including pragmatic- competence

### **5.3.1.1 Interaction and Reflection**

Advances in technology are constantly weakening any theoretical distinction between distance and face-to-face education, where learning is enhanced by the

application of technologies and associated teaching and learning strategies. They consider videoconferencing as one technology that has considerable potential for education and training, and is portrayed as equivalent to face-to-face in effectiveness.

McLoughlin (1995), for example, believes that the medium helps to enhance students' sense of involvement, promote dialogue and interaction and foster collaboration between students in remote locations, where (70%) of students in her study regarded the opportunity to interact important and perceived the medium to be interactive. Fulford and Zhang (1993), too, think that interaction is a vital component for effective learning, i.e., when students have the opportunity to interact with one another and their instructors about the content, they have the opportunity to build within themselves and to communicate a shared meaning to 'make sense' of what they are learning.

Mason (1994) supports the idea that the use of videoconferencing to deliver educational programs provides a high level of psychosocial support to many types of learners and that the online interaction benefits learners at the affective level and increases motivation and interest in the subject. She believes that learners have more opportunities to express their own points of view, explain the issues in their own words and to formulate opposing or different arguments, and this leads to deep-level learning and the development of critical thinking.

Videoconferencing, therefore, allows learners to interact with others and reflect on this interaction at their own pace and in real time, moving then from lower cognitive levels of learning, such as recognition and comprehension, to the higher levels of

analysis, synthesis and evaluation (Bloom, 1956; Moore, 1993). It has an important contribution to the style and quality of learning which takes place online, where each one can learn from contributions of others and thereby is engaged in an *interactional scaffold* (Kreef-Peyton, 1999). The students' reflections on their own online interactions help to focus students' performances and to make learners more aware of what was required of them (Feldman *et Al.*, 2000).

### **5.3.1.2 Equal Levels of Participation**

Videoconferencing brings about more equal levels of participation between learners than would normally a face-to-face interaction do, with respect to shy and outgoing students, high and low level status groups, and male and female participation (Sproull and Kiesler, 1991; Warschauer, 1996), e.g., students who are shy or who are not confident in using the target language with native speakers are likely to contribute more to online intercultural exchanges than in face-to-face scenarios. The social dimension is reduced (Coverdale-Jones, 1998) compared to face-to-face interaction, i.e., groups from different cultures in an online contact will interact on a more 'equal footing' than they might in a face-to-face situation, thereby increasing the potential for an intense and honest process of interaction in which neither group is dominated by the other.

Likewise, Salmon (2000:19), suggests that thanks to the egalitarian nature of online communication "*existing hierarchies and relationships can change and even fade*". She means that participants can interact together in ways which they would not want to, or would not be able to, if they were in a face-to-face environment. The best example would be in our study where (see appendix 2) students got to discuss topics

related to homosexuality in the Arab world, racism in America, premarital sex, and both parts could handle each other's different beliefs with more tolerance.

### **5.3.1.3 Authentic Input**

If there is no input, learning will never occur. When it comes to the learning of pragmatics, it becomes even more critical. As Kasper and Schmidt (1996) suggest, by definition pragmatic knowledge is particularly sensitive to the sociocultural features of a context. In foreign language learning contexts, learning occurs almost exclusively in classrooms where many teachers share the same L1 and cultural background as their students, and where only a limited range of social interactions is provided. In an online classroom, on the other hand, learners are exposed to sufficient and adequate input, e.g., more complex discourse organizations, more openings/closings, routines more complex than the typical IRF routine, and more discourse and politeness markers (Lörscher, 1986; Lörscher and Schulze, 1988).

Studies indicate, as in the case of length of residence in the target community, the length of participation in online links is positively correlated with level of achievement in various areas of pragmatic ability, e.g., conversational routines for pragmatic fluency, acceptance of L2-specific request strategies, decreased verbosity through the use of fewer external modifications, appropriate mapping of speech acts to speech events, and interpretation of conversational implicatures (Olshtain and Blum-Kulka, 1985; Blum-Kulka and Olshtain, 1986; Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford, 1993; Bouton, 1992, 1994b; House, 1996; Slaouti, 1998; Tillyer, 1996 ). Online settings, then, provide both quantitatively and qualitatively richer input than non-online foreign language learning

settings, and learners tend to show gradual convergence to NS pragmatic behavior as their length of participation in online links increases.

Furthermore, educators have begun to recognize the potential of exploiting this characteristic of the video-based links even further. They believe that engaging learners in online discussions with an authentic audience will allow them to express their own beliefs and opinions and present their own personal representations of their lives and home cultures. Therefore, engaging learners in communication with a real audience about topics which are of relevance to their own lives and cultures holds potentials for intercultural learning, i.e., if learners know that their contributions to the interaction will be taken seriously by an authentic audience, then they may reflect more about themselves and their own culture and how they wish to see this presented to the outside world. In this context Christian posits that:

*There is something compelling for students to be connected to other young people in different locations. Part of it is ...a desire to explain themselves, to make a statement about who they are as they discover themselves.*

(1997:63)

#### **5.3.1.4 Collaborative Construction of Knowledge**

The online generated interaction is seen as leading to the collaborative construction of meanings and events, by engaging participants in an interactive process which leads to the collaborative construction of knowledge rather than the traditional transfer of information from one to the other. The online discourse can be seen as being



highly suited to sociocultural approaches to language learning, as it brings learners to develop an understanding of culture through interaction and collaboration with others rather than simply through the transmission of facts figures about the target language culture by their instructor. Van Lier (1996) calls for a move away from the teacher controlled IRF (initiation, response, feedback) format of classroom interaction and instead for educators to focus more on a type of classroom interaction which he refers to as *transformation*. The word comes from the Vygotskian belief (see 2.3.1) that higher psychological functions are internalized from social interaction, and *transformation* refers to educationally transforming interaction whose content is determined by the learners themselves or is produced in response to the contributions of others.

Christian (1997) looked at the different types of interaction which occur in online learning environments and tried to identify which are the most suited to developing collaborative learning. He suggests that the value of such interaction happening in an online environment is that students are given an opportunity to discuss their lives and their views with distant partners who will not be so quick to judge and criticize them as their normal classmates might be which is not the case in normal face-to-face discussions. More important is that the generated interactions are co-constructed by both sides, native and nonnative as well. The nonnative learners, faced with their linguistic limitations when venturing new topics, collaboratively with their native partners build up their language through very special instances of help and conversation scaffolding.

### **5.3.2 Implications for the Cultural Dimension of Foreign Language Education**

Culture learning is much more than the collection of information about the high arts, history and institutions of another country, but it is based on a definition of culture

which is much more holistic and complex than that. Learners should be engaged in awareness raising activities which will help to develop a more anthropological definition of culture and should be encouraged to look beyond a cultural products and practices and look more at the significance which they hold for members of that culture, i.e., learners should develop their critical cultural awareness and look for the values and beliefs which underlie the facts and behavior which they learn about the other culture. This may help in avoiding instances of 'culture clash' as they significantly influence the outcomes of this exchange and the students' attitudes to the target culture.

In the present study, our students were aware that the video link was not only to help them find out more information about the topics which they had to discuss but also to keep the flow of interaction going whatever the difficulties. In spite of this, once being able to see and hear their partners who were thousands of miles away, sometimes some kinds of explicit culturally-based disagreements or communication breakdowns occurred. One example was when one American student asked her Algerian partner about her feelings towards a gay friend. The Algerian student, not used to meet or talk to friends who dare identify themselves as gays, tried to show some kind of tolerance but unaware offended the other side when she said that she will feel pity for him or her. Though gay issue is considered as freedom of expression in USA and a right not to be questioned, the discussion was quickly changed into another topic. Another example is when the Algerian student identified the American freedom as excessive, and therefore pushed her American partner to dislike the comment and fought back and identified the Algerian freedom as very restricted. Despite these communication breakdowns the students carried on discussing other subjects, which means that online group discussions with their special dimension of the exchange made a big impression on both sides of learners.

Despite these events, the students from both classes responded very positively, in their post surveys (part of the project), to the experience of being able to meet and interact together through videoconference sessions. The video recordings of the interaction provided a great deal of support to their statement. Our students appreciated the opportunity to engage in video communication with their American partners and found that turn-taking in this form of communication was very efficient as if in face-to-face interaction. Their responses to their partners' questions had to come 'on the spot', and therefore more honest and more insightful than the diplomatic and well-thought out responses they learn in class. A further advantage was that the videoconferencing enabled students to get to know their partners better and, as a result, made them more relaxed in their interventions through questions or comments. This medium (videoconferencing) can, therefore, be effectively employed for intercultural learning through a sociocultural (pragmatic) perspective.

### **5.3.3 Implications for Pragmatic Instruction**

The research conclusions of this study fall squarely in the instruction versus exposure studies debate that addresses the issue of whether pedagogical intervention in pragmatics leads to more effective learning than no instruction, i.e., whether instruction is better than simple exposure. Among these studies we have Billmyer's (1990) study of the effects of instruction on compliments and compliment responses, Bouton (1994a) who studied the understanding of implicature as his learning target, Lyster (1994) who examined the use of French 'tu/vous' in informal and formal contexts, Wishnoff (2000) who investigated the effects of instruction in the use of hedging devices (e.g., verb choice, quantifiers, modifiers, and conditional statements) in both formal and informal texts, and Yoshimi (2001) who focused on the Japanese interactional markers, usually used as a tone to ask for explanation (*n desu*, *n desu kedo*, *n desu ne*) which feature

prominently in the production of oral narratives. These authors believe that learners receiving instruction in pragmatics outperformed those who did not, and showed a dramatic increase in frequency of interactional markers, but no similar increase in their use by the control group was observed.

Although, exposure alone appears to have had some effect (Billmyer, 1990; Wishnoff, 2000), instruction proved superior to and outpaced exposure alone in the learning of SL/FL pragmatics. There are two types of pedagogical intervention, explicit and implicit. In most cases, learners who received explicit instruction in the form of metapragmatic information regarding the target features outperformed those who did not (Wildner-Bassett, 1984, 1986). Likewise, House's (1996) explicit group outperformed the implicit group in use of a range of pragmatic routines and discourse strategies such as the use of turn-internal gambits with interpersonal focus, managing discourse transitions, and topic initiation and change. Tateyama *et al.* (1997), too, found that beginning learners of Japanese as a foreign language role-play performance benefited more when they were provided with metapragmatic information on the various functions of *sumimasen* (*excuse me*) than when they were not.

There is considerable evidence, then, indicating that a range of features of SL/FL pragmatics are teachable. These include a variety of discursal, pragmatic, and sociolinguistic targets of instruction, such as discourse markers and strategies, pragmatic routines, speech acts, overall discourse characteristics, and pragmatic comprehension. Though, given an environment which affords ample opportunity for exposure to and meaningful use of the target language (like our virtual classroom), learners can acquire some, perhaps many, features of pragmatics without instruction, but still it appears that they could be better if they had received instruction. That is, the fact that instructed

learners outpaced their uninstructed counterparts indicates that pedagogical intervention has at least an important facilitative role, for learners in foreign language contexts. This overall outcome of studies on the effect of instruction is in complete agreement with research showing that without instruction in pragmatics, learners do not achieve sufficient ability in a range of pragmatic areas (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001).

#### **5.4 Limitations of the Study**

This study represents some limitations as follows. First, although we tried not to use ‘cross-cultural’ and ‘intercultural’ interchangeably but we fell short of that because of the difficulty we faced in drawing the boundaries between both terms, especially when associated to conversation. Though we decided to use ‘cross-cultural’ when there is more comparison across the two cultures and ‘intercultural’ when the emphasis is on the interaction between them, the task would have been easy if both terms were associated to study rather than interaction.

Second, our study was limited by the small number of students who participated in this project, and further research is needed to confirm these findings. The relatively small sample size of the sampling population may affect the representativeness of the study and, consequently, the generalizability of the results of this study may be limited.

Third, only the link between Tlemcen University from Algeria and East Carolina University from USA was considered. The idea behind such choice was that this is the only link where we could have an English native/nonnative interaction situation. It is not feasible, then, to generalize the results to other countries in the project. Therefore, it is strongly recommended to extend this study to other links with other countries, so that it

will be more evident to explain how different intercultural interactions may affect language use.

Fourth, our research method has an inherent limitation in terms of methodology. The video recordings are not enough to capture all the intricacies of intercultural encounters, though we could not have recourse to other instruments, especially that the students were no longer available to investigation. Therefore, future studies should employ other methods to collect more representative data and triangulate the observation.

Fifth, the observation was cross-sectional and limited to two single points in time: the beginning and the end of the link. This is because of the time-consuming transcription of more than one hour for each link and the resulting very long scripts which is difficult to go through for analysis. More than that, it is very difficult to compensate for the pitfalls of the video recordings and becomes so hard to go back and forth trying to figure out what was said. As for the script, the study was limited to a very basic transcription, since the analysis will not deal with any prosodic feature of the language being observed.

Finally, technical issues such as webcam anxiety and video link are factors that have an impact on students' performance. Given the difference in technological development between Algeria and the US, this may have affected the results. This study assumed that the two samples were relatively comparable. In view of the fact that Algerian students participated for the first time in such projects, comparability may be compromised. Furthermore, the unequal gender distribution for both samples may raise additional concerns about the reliability of the results.

### **5.5 Looking Forward**

This thesis has reflected upon the potential of network-based language learning, and in particular telecollaboration, for developing Virtual Classroom technologies for foreign language learners. The research has shown that EFL learners, to a great extent, pick up not only pragmatic appropriateness and linguistic skills but also cultural awareness. For this reason, it is important that both teachers and learners are made more aware of what online intercultural encounters involve.

This can be done, first of all, by providing teachers with workshops which will sensitize them and raise their awareness of what network-based intercultural learning involves and what kind of language environment it affords. Through these workshops they will be trained not only in how to find partners, but also in the other aspects of telecollaboration. Students, too, have to be taught how to engage in online telecollaboration by being exposed to training materials which focus on the skills of cross-cultural research and collaboration.

After setting up these pedagogical projects, teachers have to think about how a successful communication would take place. For learners who will be engaged in intercultural communication, successfully performing contextually appropriate language would help them achieve successful communication more easily. In addition, since the thinking process of producing a functionally appropriate language is often very complicated, in which learners may be puzzled to choose among a number of strategies coming up in mind (Cohen, 2005), the explicit teaching of pragmatics, both socioculturally and sociolinguistically, would help learners come up with more appropriate usages and also when and how to use the strategies. This could in term help learners promote their pragmatic competence.

The importance of the socio-cultural element can also be made more explicit to learners by helping them to develop their critical cultural awareness and look for the values and beliefs of the other culture. They should learn, through these telecollaborations, to engage with their partners as opposed to merely taking part in the discussion. This will bring learners to develop an understanding of the target culture through interaction and collaboration with others rather than simply through the transmission of information about the target language culture by their instructor. This sociocultural interaction is behind the internalization of higher psychological functions including language. With such developments in the field of foreign language education, both learners and teachers will benefit fully from online cross-cultural pedagogical projects.

### **5.6 Conclusion**

In this final chapter, we revisited the four research questions in order to relocate the discussion within the sociocultural sphere of online conversation. In so doing, the chapter started with a brief review of the research findings. Then, pedagogical implications of video-based communication, especially videoconferencing, in relation to pragmatic learning and cultural dimension of foreign language education were discussed. This was followed by a discussion of the main limitations of this study, and we concluded with some suggestions for further research about intercultural encounters through telecollaborative projects.



## GENERAL CONCLUSION

To conclude we will, first, return to what the present study ultimately set out to do. As the title suggests, this thesis was concerned with the impact of online conversation with native speakers on the pragmatic competence of EFL learners. It tried to look at how videoconference-based language classroom can create opportunities for intercultural interaction and therefore contribute to the development of pragmatic competence of EFL Algerian students.

In brief, this study was motivated by an increasing number of ILP studies that have attempted to investigate how learners acquire pragmatic competence in a foreign language. It, first, addressed the relationship between pragmatic competence and grammar to stress their disassociation and report that, since pragmatic failure is more serious than linguistic failure, second and foreign language researchers have increasingly come to investigate how language learners manage to understand and produce languages other than their native language.

Next, the theoretical underpinnings of pragmatic competence and sociocultural rules were briefly discussed to show that intercultural conversation presents enormous benefits to be gained from learning to participate in 'telecollaborations' where the target culture helps learners define their expectations in conversation and organize their knowledge of conversation in a certain way and use it to predict how their interactants will talk. More important is that it helps promote the development of functional language ability by pushing students to respond to genuine communicative needs in realistic target

language situations, and also provide them with the sociocultural knowledge they need to infer the social meanings or values of utterances.

Therefore, there exists a highly relevant complementarity between the intercultural focus on interaction and the socio-cultural perspective on language development, i.e., socio-cultural theory suggests a principled way towards documentation and explanation of the specific manner in which intercultural interaction fosters language development in particular contexts. Next, we explored the idea that language development is essentially a social process, where sociocultural approaches view learning as something inter-mental, embedded in social interaction. In other words, intercultural interaction fosters language development in particular contexts. This means that individuals and environments mutually constitute one another and we are linked to the environments and interactions through which language development occurs. We, then, introduced the notion of ZPD and its related notions of scaffolding or assisted performance, as very useful to research in interlanguage pragmatics.

The concept of pragmatic competence is, then, addressed with relation to language learner strategies to concentrate on the need for more support of learners in their efforts to acquire pragmatic ability by providing them with strategies for enhancing their pragmatic performance. In this respect, many learner strategies experts have demonstrated that learners who are trained to make use of language strategies produce better results in their language performance. The idea behind introducing learner strategies was to show that these strategies are not only what learners do to learn and do to regulate their learning, but also an attempt to develop linguistic and sociolinguistic competence in the target language, i.e., pragmatic competence.

We, then, explored the relation between language proficiency and performance quality of language learner strategies by reviewing the research conducted to date that links levels of language proficiency to strategy use, i.e., strategies are the causes and the outcomes of improved language proficiency. In many studies, it appears that highly proficient learners use language learning strategies more often than those with lower proficiency. This shows that there is a strong relationship between strategy use and TL proficiency.

After that, we explored how online environment like video conferencing is useful for delivering information and providing authentic, meaningful interaction through collaboration and other means of interaction in the target language. This type of environment offers means by which pragmatic competence requirements such as mastery of recognition, comprehension, and production skills can be addressed in a variety of ways relevant to the development of target pragmatics. In such an environment, peer-interaction is the most successful form since it promotes support, acceptance, and social development and embodies the idea that language has a predominant social function where language finds its use in functions relevant to the learner's immediate communicative needs.

We, subsequently, discussed online peer interaction which is, frequently, present in virtual learning environments. Results from online communication studies on language perspectives show that both learners' knowledge of language and their language production increase through online peer assistance, and learners have a higher participation rate, produce more sentences, and use a greater variety of discourse functions in online discussions than face-to-face communication.

As far as the design of the study is concerned, and since the sequential organization of actual language use is under focus, we preferred to use video recordings of spontaneous, naturally occurring data as our main method of data collection. There was no intent to claim that other data collection procedures are of dubious value. It is simply argued that compared to data collection instruments routinely used in CA studies, naturally occurring data are the most suitable.

We, also, opted for a sociocultural approach to examine the data qualitatively and discover how learners support each other's learning of the target language. Learners were recorded as they transacted interactive tasks through their weekly videoconference links, and the transcribed data were analyzed for the features relating to assistance and pragmatic development. Therefore, video recordings were transcribed and examined for instances of peer assistance that might help boost the pragmatic development of our EFL learners. The choice of qualitative approach was because sociocultural approaches prioritize qualitative research methodology and pay close attention to the settings and participants in interactions. From a sociocultural perspective quantification risks sacrificing the richness of the interaction that occurs, eliminating the subjectivity of both researcher and study participant.

Let us, now, move to the main findings of this study. In terms of input, our conversations were authentic, where cohesion is achieved, both within and across speakers' turns, contributing then to the sense that the talk was jointly constructed, contingent, and on a topic. There was an acceptable level of interactivity that allowed our students to learn, with different proficiency, how to take roles, and how turn-taking and

topic change occur in context. In terms of output, and by shifting from teacher-centered classroom to student-to-student learning environment the new learning context provided our learners with more opportunities to practice the language and they learned from each other as more proficient learners helped the less proficient acquire the target language through collaboration.

Second finding was that in spite of all the difficulties that a native speaker and a non-native speaker of a language experience in understanding each other, online conversation presents enormous benefits to be gained from learning to participate in an unrestricted way. Through our 'Telecollaboation', we showed that our learners were provided with one of the best environments for them to develop the kind of assistance they need in acquiring social skills. Their online interactions with their native partners provided them with the opportunity of using the target language productively, which promoted the development of their functional language ability. It, also, helped them develop awareness for the need to have enough knowledge and competence to be able to use English to talk about their own culture.

Through our third finding we tried to show, through examples from the class, how students made use of the new forms or strategies to boost their performance through collaboration with, and assistance from NS conversational partners. In other words, the assistance our learners received through collaboration and interaction with their more capable and expert peers pushed their pragmatic development forward. This notion of assisted performance or scaffolding is associated to the notion of ZPD where what the learner can be assisted in doing is, soon, to be something that the learner will be able to do without help. Through the examples provided by the interactions between students, we

could notice how our students moved from their actual level of knowledge (message-oriented stage) to their potential level of development (interlanguage-oriented level).

Our last finding was to stress the dissociation of grammar and pragmatic competence. The main purpose behind this was to show that our students' minimal knowledge of grammar did not really impede them that much and they managed to use a lot of their pragmatic knowledge to successfully interpret it and also successfully deliver very basic communicative messages. As we have seen in our examples, some of our students' ungrammatical utterances were not, in fact, pragmalinguistic errors and did not affect their pragmatic meaning.

All in all, the present study, tried to examine if online interactions with native speakers help language learners to adjust their linguistic use with their interlocutors and learn when and how it is proper to make certain linguistic participations. In so doing, it examined the students' participations that occurred in videoconference-based discussions and their relationship to our student learning outcomes, focusing on the links between the quality of communications and students' performance. Data analysis has, to a certain extent, shown that the assisted performance our learners received from their American partners helped them improve their pragmatic knowledge.

Finally, and despite the aforementioned limitations, we hope that this study has made an important contribution to the field of interlanguage pragmatics. By investigating the impact that technology use may have on learners' pragmatic development, this study is adding to the very small base of developmental studies on pragmatic aspects of English

language learning, especially that it concentrates on understanding pragmatic development less than understanding EFL pragmatic use. In other words, we preferred not to focus on isolated speech acts or single features of politeness theory, but to take a holistic approach by looking at the data from a sociocultural perspective.

The study has, then, recognized the need for moving away from studying speech acts within a language functions framework to the study of interaction within the sociocultural framework of context. This means that, if we want to observe the processes underlying language learning, we need to look at language use in an interactive environment, and observe how learners create the context of interaction.

This opens up a new view on the notion of learning and using a foreign language as not only learning the grammar and vocabulary of the target language, but also learning to achieve goals through what has been learnt so far. In other words, learners are no longer at the mercy of their linguistic abilities, but are actively trying to reach discursive goals through the strategies they use, especially when trying to match up their performances with a native speaker norm.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix One:

### FIRST LINK

(January 24<sup>th</sup>, 2008 at 1:00 PM GMT)

#### FIRST GROUP

TUA#3: hi.

ECU#3: hi, my name is [kayla ...and my partner

TUA#3: [hi Kayla].

... hi, welcome, how are you?

ECU#3: good, how are you doing.

TUA#3: =fine, and you?

TUA#3: ...I, I'm happy to see you: .

ECU#3: ...nnnice to see you ...too.

☺ AT

\* : pick a question.

ECU#3: what shall I say, ...ehh.

ECU#3: = what do you like to do for fun?

TUA#3: this is just ( )

... KAYLA ...do you hear me?

\* : yeah

TUA#3: what do you suggest?

ECU#3: ... what did she say?

... what do you like to do for FUN

TUA#3: = yes, what d..do you suggest

ECU#3: like..eh...[ reading, or sport] ( )

TUA#3: sport, do you like SPORT?

ECU#3: eh... basketball

TUA#3: = me too, I like football.

ECU#3: like football?

.

.

TUA#3: ° I'm just watching.

All ☺

TUA#3: I'm just watching, I'm not a player.

\* : she is not a player.

ECU#3: ohh..ok ..me too.

All ☺

TUA#3: so we share the same thing?

ECU#3: ... yes.

TUA#3: that's good.

( )

TUA#3: Ok Kayla, are you still practicing basketball?

ECU#3: ...ehhh, I like to play with my friends

.

.

ECU#3: ... I play for fun.

TUA#3: just for pleasure.

ECU#3: ... yes.

.

•  
TUA#6: hi chris, how are you doing?

ECU#6: =fine, how are you?

TUA#6: =fine, thank you.

ECU#6: good, let me ask a question which has not been finished.

= eh (TSK).

... what do you do for fun? so if you don't play sport, what do you typically do in the afternoons

... after school?

TUA#6: after school

... because we have lectures on the afternoon and ehh after that, there are some persons who practice ehh

...sport eh

... as far as I'm concerned, now I'm not practicing it, but before I was practicing a.athletism. and as I have told you, I also have practiced some full contact and for the others ( )

AT

ECU#2: I wanna ask a question

ECU#6: ok..ehh.. another student wants to ask you a question now

ECU#2: hi I'm rayan

...I'm amina's partner and I wanna say hello to everyone

...and I'm also wondering where do you live while in college, either the dormitories or you still live in your house

TUA#2: goodmorning,

ECU#2: good morning

TUA#2: how are you Rayan?

ECU#2: I'm good how are you?

TUA#2: fine thx

ECU#2: where do you live while in college?

TUA#2: can you repeat please?

ECU#2: where do you live while in college?

TUA#2: I live in the town that contains the college,

...so I'm obliged to live in the campus,

...do you understand me?

( )

ECU#2: I socialize with friends

... and.. do class work

... and.. participate in activities

...and.. I go to parties with other college students

TUA#2: what about your hobbies?

ECU#2: ehhh... I want to read

...and ..eh.. what else I want to do

... I want to do laundry, I love laundry hehehehe

... eh my friend over here says he loves long lying at the beach

TUA#2: so do you, do you live far from the beach?

ECU#2: I study an hour a night

.....what about you, how many hours do you study per night or per week?

TUA#2: in fact I study all eh the whole of the days in the week except the Thursday and Friday

... and we have in the morning and in the afternoon.

ECU#2: wow

... that's a lot, that's good

... someone else has a question



TUA#1: Leo ?

ECU#1 : hello

TUA#1: how are you?

ECU#1: good, you?

TUA#1: fine thanks

ECU#1: ok my question is, what is the popular major at your college?

... and why do you think it's popular?

TUA#1: popular major?

ECU#1: or what's the course study that a lot of college kids like to study?

TUA#1: can you just specify a little

...because we are specialized in studying English as a foreign language

\* : English

ECU#1: no she said specify, specify

... in college do most students study like biology or science, some study like history or business

...what do most kids study?

TUA#1: we have a lot of courses

... we have translation, language studies, sociology, biology, laws, medicine

( )

... (leo) I haven't received a message from you, I don't know why because

ECU#1: ok to answer your question, I tried to email you but, I might have received the wrong email address

TUA#1: =yes

ECU#1: ...but I wrote you a very long email and I'm very sorry that you didn't receive it

TUA#1: yeah because I think it was a mistake in my email at first

.. I don't know if you received the second one, but I'm going to try to send you the new one

... just to have messages from you

ECU#1: [ok

TUA#1: [ok?

ECU#1: thank you

TUA#1: it's ok Leo

... so I have a question for you

ECU#1: ok, ask away

TUA#1: so what are the activities you practice outside, outside your lectures?

...and you didn't tell me what you study

ECU#1: ok

... I study geology

...and geology is the study of rocks and minerals on the earth

TUA#1: yeah

ECU#1: and I want to study global warming, the climate changes

TUA#1: good

ECU#1: yes I like, I like the environment a lot

( )

... and I like also to play the guitar

... that's what I do,

... I'm in, I'm in a club that is called the NAACP and I can explain to you what that is if you'd like.

TUA#1: yeah sure

... it's up to you Leo.

ECU#1: I hope we can get to email each other very soon

ECU#5: hello

( )

ECU#5: hello

TUA#4: can you hear me?

ECU#5: yes I can

TUA#4: how are you?

ECU#5: I'm doing fine, how about you?

( )

TUA#4: about your question about the activities outside the class organized by our college

... well it depends on the purpose and colleges

... eh but as I know, our university organize eh... concerning sport something eh

( )

...I think our majors are related somehow

ECU#5: it is hehehehehe

... we have sport also we have football, basketball, soccer

... volleyball, track, golf

...swimming

TUA#4: =so these are the popular sports you have?

ECU#5: yes those are the sports we do have

... we also have social organizations for students, as well

TUA#4: yes we do have things like that

\* : that's ok

\* : ask her what type

ECU#5: what's types of organizations you have?

TUA#4: eh cultural clubs...cultural organization .... for students

( )

TUA#4: I have a question for you please

ECU#5: ok I'm listening

TUA#4: I heard a lot about the American football and soccer

... could you give me the difference between the.. the two of them

ECU#5: [ ok

TUA#4: [is it the same

ECU#5: American [Football

TUA#4: [and soccer

ECU#5: American football is a lot different from soccer

... American football here 22 people are on the field at a time wearing protecting gear like helmets and pads

... in our football you can touch the ball or you can throw it, in soccer you just kick it

TUA#4: ok, you know that soccer in Algeria is called football

... you know now where's the miss understanding

TUA#4: there is a confusion because in Algeria soccer is football where you cannot touch the ball

ECU#5: yes that's [ the same

TUA#4: [that's what I wanted to know

ECU#5: ok I was glad that I explained it

ECU#4: I'm number one

TUA#1: hi Jonathan

ECU#4: you got a question for me or you want me to start?

TUA#1: if you want to start it's a pleasure to listen to you

ECU#4: ok does, (who's that name)

ECU Group: Wafa

ECU#4: hey Wafa

TUA#1: hi

ECU#4: do you have any, .. did your college give you a spring break like go on a trip first spring break?

TUA#1: no, we have spring break ( ) but to pay for it

ECU#4: this is the same here

... we have to pay for our vacations, also

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TUA#1: can I see you Jonathan, coz I'm not seeing you

ECU#4: can you see me now?

TUA#1: sorry

... yeah

...It's a little bit hard to have a vacation just on your own here in Algeria and to pay for it

... but for example I can go to see members of my family far from home so I can call it vacation

.... Just when you change a little bit a routine or your environment we can call it a vacation here

TUA#1: ok

ECU#4: ok

... do you have a job?

...do you work?

TUA#1: no, not yet

ECU#4: I have to have a job, hehehe, I deliver pizzas

TUA#1: goo::d

.. so a pizza man

ECU#4: yeah, do you have pizza men?

... do you guys?

... Do you people eat pizza in Algeria?

☺ AT

TUA#1: yes sure

... what do u think of us?

ECU#4: couscous would be awesome, hehe

...I have another question for you Wafa

TUA#1: yes

ECU#4: What... in college what's your grading scheme like?

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... what do you have to get to give like an A

... what's the grading like in your college?

**TUA#1:** we have marks

...from 0 to 20, so if you get 15.. it's the best mark

... 15 16 17 it's the best

**ECU#4:** ok

**TUA#3:** hi... hi... hi Jonathan

**ECU#4:** hi

**TUA#3:** I'm soudad

.... Do you hear me.. do you hear me?

**ECU#4:** yeah I hear you

**TUA#3:** ok, I wanted to know about your experience in the primary school

**ECU#4:** about what?

**ECU Group:** (primary school)

**ECU#4:** ok

... kindergarten to the fifth grade little kids school, primary school, and then we got the middle school through 6 grade to eighth grade

.. and after the 8 grade we got the high school for 4 years and then some people go to college and some people go to military and some people start working

**TUA#3:** please Jonathan (...)

**ECU#4:** ok

...in primary school we have 5 grades, we start in the kindergarten and we go up to the 5<sup>th</sup> grade

**TUA#3:** then

**ECU#4:** ( )

... in primary school we learn basic things

**TUA#3:** yeah basic matters

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ECU#4: yeah you learn basic math, how to add and subtract, multiply, you learn how to write

TUA#3: matters

... I said basic matters

ECU#4: yeah basic things you learn to do other things

TUA#3: ok (...)

... I was crying all the time

... I was shouting and the difficult that I found it was that when my mother said to me  
get up now you have your lectures, I was crying too

... do you hear me?

ECU#4: yeah I hear you

ECU#3: that's sad, I cried too when I went to the elementary school

TUA#3: so good

... I found somebody who is like me

ECU Group: ☺ AT

TUA#3: ok thank you

ECU#4: your welcome, thank you

TUA#7: hi.... Hi...hi

ECU#9: hi I'm Brielle , I'm number 9

TUA#7: hi I'm sana I'm number 7

( )

ECU#3: ok

... I think we're switching groups now

... so we'll be on the computers, we'll talk to you on chat.

SECOND GROUP

TUA#13: hi I'm your partner soumia

ECU#13: hi

TUA#13: hi

... how are you?

ECU#13: so we have some ((questions about attending)) school

TUA#13: please repeat slowly

ECU#13: where do you live while attending school?

TUA#13: I live in the campus.

... do you hear me?

ECU#13: you mean you live on campus?

TUA#13: yes, because my house is far from the university

( )

ECU#13: alright.

...how do you like the dorms?

TUA#13: ehh...isn't good because you are far from your family

... I miss my family

ECU#13:oh same here

TUA#13: so (...)same partners in the same..(TUA Group: situation) situation

ECU#13: yea::h

... the dorm here are very messy though

TUA#8: hi

...hi marry I'm number [ 8

ECU#13: [hi



TUA#8: I'm the partner of Hopkins Wes

... do you hear me ?

ECU#8: yes I do

... we are trying to get the camera so that you can see me

TUA#8: I cannot see you

ECU#8: hi

TUA#8: hi, how are you?

ECU#8: I'm doing good, how are you?

TUA#8: fine

( )

TUA#8: could you speak slowly?

ECU#8: yeah

...this year school supports athletics or sports teams, does your college have organized teams?

TUA#8: yes I have, eh I'm, I'm parti, I'm a participant in a team in the campus

ECU#8: =what sport do you play?

TUA#8: could you say that again?

( )

ECU#8: on the campus?

TUA#8: yes

... just with my friends.

ECU#8: do you have any questions for me amel?

TUA#8: yes (...)

ECU#8: actually next year I'm living off-campus because I do not like the dorms, at all

TUA#8: I'm too, I don't like the dorms

ECU#8: What did she say?

ECU#13: she doesn't li(hhh)ke the dorms

ECU#8: girls dorms are very nice

( )

TUA#8: would you mind repeating that, please?

... your speaking so quickly.

ECU#8: I said I don't like the dorms this year

... so next year I'm gonna live off-campus.. in a house.

TUA#8: why you don't ((like the dorms))?

ECU#8: eh,em not enough privacy, ehh not very nice, not very big so I'm struggling to get my own place

TUA#8: I think you can learn plenty of things from cam[pus]

ECU#8: [yes

TUA#8: ehh, for example the responsibility

... you depend on yourself

ECU#8: can you repeat?

TUA#8: I have said that you can learn plenty of things from campus

... for example you depend on yourself, I mean the responsibility, have you got me?

ECU#8: I can't

...your talking too fast, can you repeat slowly?

TUA#8: I mean responsibility

ECU#8: yeah that's what I'm hoping for

... I hope I can just count on myself to get it do[ne].

TUA#8: [yes

...do you miss your family?

ECU#8: I do, but at the same time I like to get away of them a little while

... but yes I miss my family

... I'm pretty far away from so..from my home and college

ECU#10: just wondering if a lot of students go to college.

...is it popu[lar

TUA#10: [ hello Natasha

...hello, how are you?

.

.

ECU#10: hello.

TUA#10: I'm number 10

... I'm sorry ((for last time)), I was absent.

ECU#10: that's ok

... I was just wondering if it's a popular decision to go to college

TUA#10: what?

ECU#10: how do students decide to go to college?

TUA#10: can you speak slowly and loudly

ECU#10: do..students..go..to..college?

TUA#10: of course

TUA Group: ☺

TUA#10: I have a question

ECU#10: ok

TUA#10: how is the police system in America?

TUA Group: ☺

ECU#10: emm

...here the police are very good they are everywhere (( what about you))?

TUA#10: what do you mean, can you repeat?

ECU#10: how is the police system there?

TUA#10: the same

TUA Group: ☺

ECU#10: ok I will pass it on to somebody else.

ECU#12: kamelia

TUA#12: yes

... yes I'm, I'm happy to see you Melissa

ECU#12: I'm happy to see you, too

TUA#12: thank you

( )

.

.

ECU#12: do you have a question for me?

TUA#12: where do you live in campus orrr... you stay at home?

ECU#12: I live on campus because I live far from here

( )

TUA#13: do you pass the baccalaureate exam in order to enter the college?

...do you have the baccalaureate exam?

...before, before entering the exam

TUA#8: =the college

TUA#13:=ehh the college.

ECU#12: oh yes we have exams

TUA#13: before the college?

ECU#12: yes

TUA#13: because.. before we enter the college.. we pass the baccalaureate exam

ECU#12: ehheh no we don't have that

... what we have is the SAT

... well it was nice talking to you let me pass it on to Lorain

... have a good day

TUA#9: hi Lorain.

ECU#9: hi.

TUA#9: how are you?

ECU#9: what's your favorite thing about college?

TUA#9: can you repeat please

( )

TUA#9: I told you, I'm fond of reading books and revising with my friends in the library

ECU#9: can you repeat that please?

TUA#9: I told you that, I'm fond of reading books

ECU#9: ok, you like reading books?

TUA#9: yeah

ECU#9: do you have any questions for us?

TUA#9: yeah

... do you live in the campus?

ECU#9: yeah I live in a dorm

ECU Group: ☺

\* : everyone lives in the dorm.

ECU#9: pretty much every body lives in the dorm

TUA#9: do you have any difficulties, do you face any difficulties in the campus?

ECU#9: eh, emm

...we actually have to be careful at night walking around.. in the campus

TUA#9: It's very dangerous I think?

ECU#9: we have to be careful walking around at night

... because it can be dangerous (( people drink alcohol ))

TUA#9: in the campus?

All ☺

ECU#9: do you?

TUA#9: no, no it's forbidden

...it's forbidden in our religion

ECU#9: do you drink alcohol?

TUA#9: no, no it is forbidden in our religion

( )

ECU#14: hello it's stacy number 14

TUA#14: stacy do you hear me?

ECU#14: yes hi

... hi souhila

TUA#14: how are you?

ECU#14: good how are you?

TUA#14: nice to meet you today

ECU#14: you too.

...do you want to start or do you want me to start?

TUA#14: please, could you repeat?

ECU#14: how many classes do you have?

TUA#14: we have 10 classes... in second year

ECU#14: how many(( hours do you study per day))?

TUA#14: we study 3 hours a day

ECU#14: ok

...emm, are they hard your classes?

TUA#14: no

TUA Group: ☺

ECU#14: ok

... after school what do you want to do?

.... well, you work?

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TUA#14: no

ECU#14: what about ehh, after you graduate, no more college  
... will you work?

TUA#14: no

ECU#14: ok  
...is school a lot of money?

TUA#14: no

TUA#9: it's free

TUA#14: it's free

TUA#9: of charge

TUA#14: no it is free, it's free of charge

ECU#14: ok

... not here

ECU Group: ☺

ECU#14: do have any question?

TUA#14: =yes Stacy

... do you live in the campus?

ECU#14: I used to not any more

TUA#14: do you live in the campus?

ECU#14: no I live in an apartment, in a house

( )

TUA#8: ok I have a question

... what are the stages you go through to enter the college?

ECU#5: first you have to graduate high school... with a diploma or a certificate

... and then you have to take a test called the SAT

... and then you have to fill all those papers

... did you get all that?

TUA#8: no, I'm afraid I didn't catch that, could you repeat?

ECU#5: you have to graduate high school, with a diploma or a certificate

... and then you have to take a test called the SAT

...(( what about you?))

TUA#8: well in order to go to the college you must first have your baccalaureate exam

... and it's the key to allow you to enter to the university

...ok Ben I have another question.

ECU#5: ok go ahead

TUA#8: what kind of extra activities do you practice outside the school?

TUA#8: shall I repeat?

ECU#5: eh..hehehe

... I'm on dance thing

... I practice dances

ECU Group: ☺

ECU#5: stop it all

TUA#8: Ben, Ben please do you hear me?

ECU#5: yeah I hear you

TUA#8: what kind of dance do you practice?

... ehh, Breakdance or capoeira or

ECU#5: ehh, have you heard of stepping

TUA#8: ehh, what?

ECU Group: ☺

( )

TUA#8: my brother practice also this

ECU#5: is your brother good?

TUA#8: what, could you repeat?

ECU#5: is your brother a good dancer?



TUA#8: yes, yes, of course

ECU#5: hehehehe... that's good enough

... ok I'm gonna pass the microphone to somebody else

TUA#8:ok, thank you Ben.

ECU#11: I'm number eleven

TUA#11: hello dana how are you, I'm nassima... dana !

ECU#11: yes number 11

TUA#11: yes hello, how are you?

...I'm Nassima

ECU#11: how are you nassima?

TUA#11: how are you?

ECU#11: I have a few questions for you

TUA#11: yeah

ECU#11: about how many hours do you spend doing a home work?

TUA#11: it depending from 5 still (...)

ECU#11: is that daily?

...every day you study 9 to 10 hours?

TUA#11: can you repeat your question?

ECU#11: every day do you spend studying 9 or 10 hours?

( )

ECU#11: this is my first year

...ehh, it is hard

... our teachers are hard

... I have a lot of home work

...and I study about 2 hours a day sometimes

TUA#11: good luck in your studies

ECU#11: did you get that?

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**TUA#11:** what?

**ECU#11:** did u get that?

( )

**ECU Group:** bye

**TUA Group:** bye

**Appendix Two**

**LAST LINK**

(February 6<sup>th</sup>, 2008 at 1:00 PM GMT)

**FIRST GROUP**

( )

TUA#3: ok, what do you suggest as a topic for today?

ECU#3: it's an open discussion

... so we can talk about anything

... we can talk about anything you would like to.

TUA#3: ok, I have a question for you

ECU#3: sure

TUA#3: how do you consider the notion of family in the American society?

... how do you consider, the notion of

... do you hear me?

ECU#3: yes my mum, my sister, me and my dog

... my closest family

... ehh, I respect my mum I don't go against her most of the time on purpose

... we are very close, we can talk about anything and come to her for everything

... we are like best friends and that's to me what my family is.

TUA#3: =so where is your father?

ECU#3: my parents were divorced when I was younger , so I visit him may be

TUA#3: ( )

ECU#3: no, no I still love him very much

... eh but I don't see him as often as I would like.

TUA#3: personally my family is the most important thing in my life

... and

...do you hear me?

**ECU#3:** no, I lost it

... could you repeat that?

**TUA#3:** yeah

... personally my family is an important thing in my life

... and it's just composed of 8 persons, 4 brothers and 4 sisters

... and we share the same house and we are all educated persons

... eh, em I'm the youngest one, and I like my mother so much

... to be successful in my life, I consider family as the basic development in our society

... without the family

... because a person needs the help of the others

... don't you think?

**ECU#3:** yes, but I think

...If you think about it, there is society

... what your saying is family is the basis of everything and did you think , as American where everything is family (...)

**TUA#3:** it is, also another thing,

... family is like the mirror of the society

... do you hear me?

**ECU#2:** eh yes it's Rayan

**TUA#3:** hello Rayan

**ECU#2:** I wanted to say how if in your society the family is the basic

...i feel that in America it is the individual

... in America we started individualism when we start to consider more the person and how to

... I don't know

... to achieve goals more for yourself , we care about each other more than the family.

**ECU Group:** you don't like your family

ECU#2: no, I love my family but to me

... I am

TUA#3: (...) is very important in the American society

... so the family helps you in the establishment of yourself

... but I'm not agree with you

... since when you was, were born you were in the family

ECU#2: yes.

TUA#3: so family is the basic

...so give me your opinion

ECU#2: eh, eh, well ok

... what target concerned age we start becoming more independent

( )

TUA#6: hi everybody

TUA#6: up to now we have spoken more about serious things

... what do you think about speaking about something ra, rather funny

... such as music or movies or

ECU#1: ok I have a question about music actually

TUA#6: ok

ECU#1: do you listen to any music from the united states?

...and if so who do you listen to?

TUA#6: yes of course, we know American music through TV

... hehehe they are (pointing to her group) speaking about, Akon, Beyonce, Chakira

ECU#1: Beyonce and Chakira

TUA#5: I think Ikon is the best singer

ECU#1: I'm sorry, can you say

... what?

... who did you say?

TUA#5: I said that the best singer, American singer is Akon

ECU#1: oh!! I think you're mistaken snoop dog is pretty much the king or [rap

TUA#5: [why?

.

.

ECU#1: do you have fun questions for us?

TUA#5: marry

ECU#13: yes

TUA#5: do you listen to Arabic music?

ECU#13: no, never heard of any Arabic artist

... I, I don't understand Arabic so if I listen to it will be just a bunch of nonsense

ECU Group: ☺

ECU#13: but, but name an artist who is in Algeria that is very popular

... I wanna listen to some Algerian dance, hehehehe

TUA#6: what did you say?

ECU#13: an artist

TUA#1: it's not obligatory to be an Algerian just an Arab one

... I have a web site may be

... it will be helpful for you

ECU#4: eh hey

... this is jonathan, I have a question for you

....(...) people in your society

TUA#1: sorry?

ECU#4: what are you views on gays individuals in your society?

TUA#1: please jonathan?

ECU#4: how do you feel about men having other men partners in physical relationships?

... and women having other women in physical relationship such as homosexuals?

.... Do you think it exists in your society?

- 
- 

**TUA#1:** so I'm going to answer your question

... well it exists but very secretly and discretely

... and for me I think that it's an unnatural relationship

... I find it weird and bizarre

... and I'm always asking myself how [people

**ECU#3:** [what happens to eh

**TUA#1:** and I'm always asking myself how [people

**ECU#3:** [ so if someone

... eh if someone was close to you, was secretive about being eh, homosexual

... eh would that change your view about them?

### Group discussion

**TUA#1:** (...) and I have pity of him of course

... but I'm not going to change my behavior with him

... the relationship will stay as it is

**ECU#3:** pity, ohh:: (low voice)

( )

**TUA#1:** yes go ahead

**ECU#1 :** ok

... this one is about friends

... how do you pick your friends and what characteristics are important for you to have

friendship?

TUA#7: well relation, eh friendship is eh

TUA#1: based

TUA#7: is based eh on trust, honesty, respect, love

... so between friends there must be those characteristics

... what about you?

ECU#1: it's a big issue and friendship is to be able to confide in someone to talk to them about feelings

... so I feel trust is a big deal and also respect coz you must respect people

... and in a friendship if you don't respect someone then how you're gonna understand how they feel, right?

TUA#1: of course

ECU#1: so I feel the same way as you

... I think a lot of us feel trust is the big one and love, of course.

.

.

ECU#2: we are going to switch

... and we'll now be on the computers, and we'll finish our chat

ECU#1: it's nice talking to you

TUA#5: bye



SECOND GROUP

TUA#8: hello everybody there

( )

TUA#11: yes I have a question

... because this is the last time, what do you notice about us?

... what do you think about us?

TUA Group: in what terms, culture, religion?

TUA#11: in general

ECU#12: ah!!

...for me it has been good

... I learned a lot because I, before I actually knew nothing, so this has been a great experience

... I like you all.

TUA#8: hello everybody

ECU#5: hey yasmine

TUA#12: hello

... and what have you learnt about us, with us

TUA Group: from us

TUA#12: from us.

TUA Group: ☺

ECU#5: (...) at every step of your life which is very impressive

TUA#12: ((family)) what does it mean to you?

ECU#5: family to me is that comfort zone

... I will always have

... there's my mother and my sister and my father

... those people you can always depend on

... for whatever.

**TUA#12:** what I have noticed about the western societies that your, you are considering the individual more than the family itself

...I think we as Arabic we are considering

**TUA Group:** Arabs

**TUA#12:** as Arabs we are considering the family as a whole, you know,

... we live in families even if we are above 18 while you since the 18 you quit the family

... you leave and you construct your own life

... I think it's a matter of dividing the society because I think that we must consider the family as a whole, as a group

... it's for the preservation of the society, and for the sake of the individual.

**ECU#5:** eh, well not everybody quits the family

... have that we're individualistic is the fact that what we do at 18 we do like to grab a (...) on our own lives

... it's not everybody, some people do yes forget their family but a lot of people do, just like the one need education, buy themselves, become their own people then possibly go back to their family

... yeah and they might go and make their own family

... and even if I'm far from my family I'm still very close to them.

**TUA#8:** hello I'm number 8

... hello Wes

... are you there Wes?

**ECU#8:** hi

**TUA#8:** have I answered your question?

**ECU#8:** what did you say?

**TUA#8:** have I answered your question

... your last question?

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ECU#8: eh, yes

... I got it

... I got it right before we left.

.

.

TUA#8: ok Wes, what are your ambitions?

ECU#8: as right now, complete college, get my education first and then work toward my future

(...)

...and start my own family, and support my own family.

TUA#8: good luck

... well I think you have asked me about veil and I explained why I put and the Muslim girls put veil

...so what do you think?

ECU#8: what do I think about your

... the veil?

TUA#8: yes

ECU#8: is that what you're asking?]

ECU#8: ( )

TUA#9: hello

... I'm soufian number 9

\* : hello

TUA#9: Marry

...I wanna ask you a question

\* : go ahead

TUA#9: how do you live the experience with us?

( )

TUA#9: have you been familiarized with us?

ECU#13: Can you repeat that?

TUA#12: how did you find the experience with us?

... Was it useful for you?

ECU#13: yes

... the experience was very useful for all of us I think

... we all learnt something new that did not know before

...and it was a lot of fun getting to know people from the other side of the world

... that was very interesting

... how about you, what do you think about us?

TUA#9: it was a useful experience with you.

ECU#13: do you have anything you want to talk about

TUA#12: .. about your excessive freedom

ECU#13: ehh, what do you think is excessive freedom? Like what an example of that?

TUA#12: about your life in general

ECU#8: how we would prefer to live

.... you think we have excessive freedom and at the same time we look at you and think you have restricted freedom

...so it works both ways, and I think we both kind in love with our righteous because we are born into it

... and that's the way we were raised in our culture.

TUA#12: these are the positive sides

... what do you think about the negative sides of your freedom, your society?

...is there negative or positive sides?

ECU#13: is there too much freedom in our society?

TUA#12: yes

ECU#13: I think that like the little freedoms that our government gave us I do not think that

there's too much of that (...)

... we don't have to ask our parents for permission

... we , a lot of people do not let their parents know that they are dating people,

... and I think that was the most important part because it's so different

**TUA#10:** hello I'm number 10

**ECU#13:** hi

**TUA#10:** hi

...concerning culture, do you consider that a culture is part of religion or the religion is part of culture?

**ECU#13:** religion is part of our culture as American

... because I know there are a lot of Americans who have different religions

... there is Christianity, Judaism

...there're plenty of people who are Muslims over here

... I have various friends who are muslim and we all form such different parts and societies

... for example my boy friend is Indian and he, his life style is extremely different

... and getting to know his mother was extremely interesting.

**TUA#8:** I have a question

... how do you consider the American Muslims and how do you accept them?

...within your society.

**ECU#13:** yeah

... I honestly don't think that there are many people who really

... em for me personally seeing an American Muslim is just like seeing an American jew or an American Christian

... that's just their faith and so it doesn't even really come up as a problem.

**ECU#8:** however , probably none of us think of anything when we see them

... but there are still a lot of ignorant people

... and I know that when a lot of people see American Muslims or Muslims in general the thought of a terrorist comes to their mind immediately

...and it's just hard to, for people to realize that the general image that comes up when you think of terrorist is Muslim

... and, and that's in general, but eh I mean eventually the majority of American people know that that's not true

... but there are still ignorant people out there and that's a common misconception

TUA#11: I'm nassima

... from this experience do you want to visit Algeria

ECU#13: yeah

... I definitely would except, I don't have enough money to go over th(hhhh)ere right now so

... eh would it be dangerous if an American came over to Algeria?

( )

TUA#9: at any time whatever you want

ECU#8: em,

...what is the general opinion or general feelings towards premarital sex?

...does it happen, does it happen a lot or is just kept quiet?

... and is it looked down upon?

... sex before marriage

... is that looked down upon?

TUA#12: hi

... well in terms of having sex before marriage in our religion, the answer in religion, it's forbidden

...in religion it's forbidden to have sex before marriage

...but this doesn't mean that there is no practice of sex before marriage in all the Arab societies

... there are some exceptions of course

... and they are increasing day by day

... but in our religion it's forbidden

**ECU#8:** are people, are women who get pregnant before marriage looked down upon them?

**TUA#12:** there are some parents who don't accept this, and and punish of course the girls as well as the boys

... but there are some other families who accept the fact

**ECU#13:** I have another question

...where you live, do you have any problem with drugs?

**TUA#12:** it's worldwide spread

... but I think that the American society is really suffering of this problem

... because you're neighboring Latin America and the trade, drug trade is very flourishing in your area, as well as in our area also

... I think that all people are suffering from drugs

**TUA#12:** what's your idea about the third world nations especially Algeria and if ever is this idea changed now?

... have you changed your idea within the experience with us?

... after this experience?

**ECU#12:** they are growing and they should be growing

...I think there shouldn't be countries that are suffering so much that their citizens cannot live

... I think that's a good thing that you guys are trying to better yourself by going to college and hopefully you get a job

... as a person you need to know who do you want to be and how you want to live and focus on that and not about other people.

المخلص: تبحث هذه الدراسة في ديناميكية المناقشات على الإنترنت وعلاقتها بتحصيل دارس اللغة، والهدف من ذلك هو التحقق إذا كان التفاعل عبر الإنترنت مع الناطقين باللغة يساعد المتعلمين على ضبط استعمالها اللغوي مع نظرائهم، ومعرفة متى وكيف تكون مناسبة لجعل مشاركاتهم اللغوية أكثر فعالية و ذلك لإظهار أن المساعدة التي ترد عن طريق التعاون أو التفاعل عبر الإنترنت مع محاورهم الأمريكيين تدفع عملية التطور اللغوي إلى الأمام.

كلمات مفتاحية: البراغماتية، التفاعل عبر الإنترنت، الناطقين باللغة، المحاورين الأمريكيين.

**Resumé :** L'objectif de cette recherche est d'étudier si l'interaction en ligne avec des locuteurs natifs permet aux apprenants de langue d'ajuster leurs usages linguistiques avec leurs interlocuteurs, et d'apprendre quand et comment il est plus convenable d'apporter certaines participations linguistiques. Une analyse de données tente, dans une certaine mesure, à montrer que l'assistance que nos apprenants reçoivent grâce à l'interaction avec leurs interlocuteurs américains stimule leur développement pragmatique.

**Mots clés:** pragmatique, discussion en ligne, vidéoconférence, natif, compétence linguistique, compétence pragmatique.

**Summary:** This study examines the actual participation and dynamics that occur in online discussions and their relationship to student learning outcomes, focusing on the quality of communications among participants and importantly, the links between that quality and students' performance. The aim is to investigate if online interaction with native speakers helps language learners to adjust their linguistic use with their interlocutors and learn when and how it is proper to make certain linguistic participations. A content analysis approach is used to investigate students' participations and data analysis tries, to a certain extent, to show that the assistance our learners received through collaboration or interaction with their American interlocutors pushed their pragmatic development forward.

**Key words:** pragmatics, online discussion, videoconference, native speaker, linguistic competence, pragmatic competence.