The Acquisition of Pragmatic and Intercultural Communicative Competences through Telecollaboration

Doctoral thesis
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A mi madre, Pilar, e a mio padre, Tobia
“As much as we like to differentiate ourselves, to feel like individuals and rave on about expression and freedom and the experiences that are unique to each one of us, we are all made of the same stuff. We laugh and cry in much the same way, we learn words and then forget them, we meet people from places and cultures different from our own and yet somehow we understand the lives they are living. Language wraps its understanding and punctuation around us all, tempting us to cross boundaries and helping us to comprehend the impossibly difficult questions that life relentlessly throws at us.”

Lost in translation, Ella Frances Sanders
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Abstract

The study presented in this dissertation revolves around the application of telecollaboration projects for the acquisition of Spanish-speaking students’ pragmatic competence and intercultural communicative competence (ICC). In particular, it aims to demonstrate how these two competences are inextricably interrelated, and one cannot be acquired without the other. For this reason, participants of the study presented here were aerospace engineering students since they are likely to engage in intercultural dialogue in their future professional lives. Lack of these two competences could result in cultural misunderstandings which could, in turn, affect their professional careers.

In order to foster participants’ pragmatic competence and ICC, three different six-week telecollaboration projects were coordinated. The first was with first language (L1) or highly proficient English speakers from the University of Bath (UK), the second with L1 or highly proficient speakers from the University of Hawai’i (US), and the third with L1 English speakers from Morgan State University (US). In order to test the validity of the implementation of these three projects, a control group which did not take part in any telecollaborative encounter was set. Participants of the three intercultural exchanges engaged in both synchronous and asynchronous sessions. In the former students carried out a series of role-plays centred on the speech act of apologies, and were held on Zoom. On the other hand, the latter consisted of two cultural discussions conducted on the social network MeWe. Students in the control group carried out the role-plays with their classmates in a traditional face-to-face setting but did not engage in any cultural discussions. Data was gathered through these tasks, as well as pre- and post-test on apologies, a final project questionnaire, and a final presentation carried out by the three experimental groups. A mixed-methods approach was adopted.

The results demonstrate that the three groups of students who participated in the telecollaboration projects outperformed those in the control group in terms of apologies acquisition. Although pragmatic results were not statistically significant, the descriptive statistics revealed that the three groups improved from pre- to post-test. In particular, the first group obtained better results than the others. Besides, instances of ICC development were identified. The findings also demonstrate that there is an empirical relationship between the gains obtained in terms of pragmatic competence and ICC, thus showing the strong connection between these two competences.
Resumen

El estudio presentado en esta tesis gira en torno a la implementación de proyectos de telecolaboración para la adquisición de la competencia pragmática y la competencia comunicativa intercultural (CCI) de estudiantes hispanohablantes. En particular, el objetivo es demostrar cómo estas competencias están inextricablemente relacionadas, y una no puede ser adquirida sin la otra. Por esta razón, los participantes del estudio aquí presentado fueron estudiantes de ingeniería aeroespacial, ya que es probable que participen en diálogos interculturales en sus futuras vidas profesionales. La falta de estas dos competencias podría resultar en malentendidos culturales que a su vez podrían afectar su carrera profesional.

Para fomentar la competencia pragmática y la CCI de los participantes, se coordinaron tres proyectos telecolaborativos de seis semanas cada uno. El primero fue con hablantes del inglés como primera lengua (L1) o hablantes expertos de la Universidad de Bath (Reino Unido), el segundo con hablantes del inglés como L1 o hablantes expertos de la Universidad de Hawái (EE. UU.), y el tercero con hablantes del inglés como L1 de la Universidad de Morgan State (EE. UU.). Para probar la validez de la implementación de estos tres proyectos se estableció un grupo de control que no participó en ningún encuentro telecolaborativo. Los participantes de los tres intercambios interculturales participaron tanto en sesiones síncronas como asíncronas. En las primeras, los estudiantes realizaron una serie de juegos de rol centrados en el acto de habla de las disculpas, desarrolladas a través de Zoom. Por otra parte, las segundas consistieron en dos debates culturales llevados a cabo en la red social MeWe. Los estudiantes del grupo de control realizaron los juegos de rol con sus compañeros y compañeras de clase en un entorno tradicional, cara a cara, pero no participaron en ningún debate cultural. Los datos se recogieron a través de estas tareas, por medio de pre- y post-test sobre las disculpas, un cuestionario de final de proyecto, y una presentación final que prepararon los tres grupos experimentales. Se adoptó un enfoque de métodos mixtos.

Los resultados demuestran que los tres grupos de estudiantes que participaron en los proyectos de telecolaboración excedieron a aquellos del grupo de control en cuanto a la adquisición de disculpas. A pesar de que los resultados pragmáticos no fueron estadísticamente significativos, los estadísticos descriptivos revelaron que los tres grupos mejoraron de pre- a post-test. En particular, el primer grupo obtuvo mejores resultados que los demás. Además, se identificaron ejemplos de desarrollo de la CCI. Los resultados también demuestran que existe una relación empírica entre los logros obtenidos en cuanto a competencia pragmática y CCI, demostrando así la fuerte unión existente entre estas dos competencias.
Resum

L’estudi presentat en aquesta tesi gira al voltant de l’aplicació de projectes telecol·laboratius i l’adquisició de la competència pragmàtica i la competència comunicativa intercultural (CCI) d’estudiants hispanoparlants. En concret, l’objectiu és demostrar com aquestes dues competències estan inextricablement relacionades, i una no pot ser adquirida sense l’altra. Per aquesta raó, els participants de l’estudi presentat ací eren estudiants d’enginyeria aeroespacial, ja que és probable que participen en diàlegs culturals en les seues futures vides professionals. La manca d’aquestes dues competències podria resultar en malentesos culturals que, alhora, podrien afectar les seues carreres professionals.

Per a fomentar la competència pragmàtica i la CCI dels participants, es van coordinar tres projectes telecol·laboratius de sis setmanes cadascun. El primer va ser amb parlants d’anglès com a primera llengua o parlants experts de la Universitat de Bath (Regne Unit), el segon amb parlants d’anglès com a L1 o parlants experts de la Universitat de Hawaii (EE.UU.), i el tercer amb parlants d’anglès com a L1 de la Universitat de Morgan State (EE.UU.). Per a testar la validitat de la implementació d’aquests tres projectes, es va establir un grup de control que no va participar en cap encontre telecol·laboratiu. Els participants dels tres intercanvis interculturals van participar tant en sessions síncrones com asíncrones. En les primeres els estudiants van realitzar una sèrie de jocs de rol centrats en l’acte de parla de les disculpes, i es van desenvolupar a Zoom. D’altra banda, les segones consistien en dos debats culturals realitzats a la xarxa social MeWe. Els estudiants del grup de control van realitzar els jocs de rol amb els seus companys i les seues companyes en un entorn tradicional cara a cara, però no van participar en cap discussió cultural. Les dades es van recollir a través d’aquestes tasques, així com pre- i post-test sobre les disculpes, un qüestionari de final de projecte, i una presentació final que van preparar els tres grups experimentals. Es va adoptar un enfocament de mètodes mixts.

Els resultats demostren que els tres grups d’estudiants que van participar en projectes de telecol·laboració van excedir els del grup de control quant a l’adquisició de disculpes. Encara que els resultats pragmàtics no siguen estadísticament significatius, els estadístics descriptius revelen que els tres grups de control van millorar de pre- a post-test. En concret, el primer grup va obtindre millor resultats que els altres. A més, es van identificar casos de desenvolupament de la CCI. Les troballes també demostren que existeix una relació empírica entre els guanys obtinguts quant a competència pragmàtica i CCI, la qual cosa demostra la forta connexió entre aquestes dues competències.
Riassunto

Lo studio oggetto di questa tesi riguarda l’applicazione di progetti di telecollaborazione per l’acquisizione della competenza pragmatica e la competenza comunicativa interculturale (CCI) da parte di studenti ispanofoni. In particolare, l’obiettivo è quello di dimostrare quanto queste due competenze siano collegate, e come l’una non possa essere acquisita senza l’altra. Per questo motivo, i partecipanti selezionati per lo studio erano studenti di ingegneria aerospaziale, in considerazione della probabilità che questi hanno nel corso della propria carriera di trovarsi a partecipare a dialoghi interculturali. La mancanza di queste due competenze potrebbe risultare in fraintendimenti culturali che, a loro volta, potrebbero incidere sul loro percorso professionale.

Per migliorare la competenza pragmatica e la CCI dei partecipanti, sono stati coordinati tre progetti di telecollaborazione della durata di sei settimane ciascuno. Il primo è stato con anglofoni L1 o esperti dell’Università di Bath (Regno Unito), il secondo con anglofoni L1 o esperti dell’Università di Hawaii (Stati Uniti), e il terzo con anglofoni L1 dell’Università di Morgan State (Stati Uniti). Per testare la validità dell’implementazione di questi tre progetti, è stato stabilito un gruppo di controllo che non ha partecipato a nessun incontro telecollaborativo. I partecipanti dei tre scambi interculturali hanno invece partecipato sia a sessioni sincrone che asincrone. Nelle prime, gli studenti hanno realizzato tramite la piattaforma di Zoom una serie di giochi di ruolo centrati sull’atto linguistico delle scuse. Le sessioni asincrone invece, consistevano in due dibattiti culturali condotti sul social network MeWe. Gli studenti del gruppo di controllo hanno realizzato i giochi di ruolo con i loro compagni di classe in un contesto tradizionale, faccia a faccia, ma non hanno partecipato a nessun dibattito culturale. I dati sono stati raccolti attraverso un questionario pre-sessione ed un questionario post-sessione di lavoro, ma anche tramite un modulo finale e una presentazione conclusiva realizzata dai tre gruppi sperimentali. È stato adottato un approccio basato su metodi misti.

I risultati dimostrano che i tre gruppi di studenti che hanno partecipato ai progetti di telecollaborazione hanno superato quelli del gruppo di controllo nell’acquisizione della capacità di scusarsi. Infatti, nonostante i risultati pragmatici non siano statisticamente significativi, la statistica descrittiva rivela un miglioramento delle competenze dei tre gruppi partecipanti a seguito dello svolgimento delle sessioni di telecollaborazione. In particolare, il primo gruppo ha ottenuto risultati migliori rispetto agli altri. Inoltre, sono stati identificati esempi di sviluppo della CCI. I dati rilevati mostrano inoltre una correlazione tra il miglioramento della competenza pragmatica e quello della CCI, dimostrando lo stretto legame vigente tra queste due competenze.
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<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACMC</td>
<td>Asynchronous Computer-Mediated Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAI</td>
<td>Computer-Aided Instruction</td>
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<td>CAL</td>
<td>Computer-Assisted Learning</td>
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<td>CC</td>
<td>Communicative Competence</td>
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<td>CELL</td>
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<td>DCT</td>
<td>Discourse-Completion Test</td>
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<td>Hearer</td>
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<tr>
<td>IFID</td>
<td>Illocutionary Force Indicating Device</td>
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<tr>
<td>ILP</td>
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<td>L1</td>
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TELL  Technology-Enhanced Language Learning
TL    Target Language
VE    Virtual Exchange
INTRODUCTION

The spread of technology-mediated communication in everyday life has shaped human interaction during the past two decades, so why should we not teach language learners how to appropriately communicate in virtual environments? It is precisely thanks to the use of technology that intercultural contact frequently takes place. This makes it imperative to incorporate the teaching of intercultural norms in the foreign language classroom. The teaching and learning of these two competences, namely pragmatic competence and intercultural communicative competence (ICC), for technology-mediated communication is the main focus of this dissertation.

Hymes (1972) referred to pragmatic competence as the ability to know “when to speak, when not, and as to what to talk about with whom, when, where, in what manner” (p. 277). In order to master this ability in a foreign language, speakers need to sound natural, and be appropriate (Sawin, 2022), while at the same time being accurate. That is, they need to use the formulas that expert speakers would use, be able to communicate the message in a given context, and be linguistically proficient. Since pragmatics is the study of meaning in interaction, context plays a central role (Thomas, 1995), and culture is part of that context (Ishihara & Cohen, 2010). Therefore, not only do language learners need to master pragmatic competence in order to be proficient speakers of their target language (TL), but they also need to know how to communicate with culturally different people. In order to teach students how to do that, the paradigm has switched from the native speaker model to the intercultural speaker model. That is, to the model of a speaker who is able to establish and maintain relationships with speakers from different cultures (Byram, 1997). In addition, the boundaries between ‘native’ and ‘non-native’ speakers are becoming fuzzy, especially with the spread of English as a lingua franca (Ishihara & Cohen, 2010).

Up until now, language teaching has often neglected these competences, and students often complain that, after many years of language learning, they travel to the TL country and find it difficult to understand what is going on around them. This may be because instructed formal contexts usually lack social contact with the TL community (Sawin, 2022). Technology can be of great help to bridge the gap, although its mere use does not guarantee pragmatic and intercultural learning. For instance, self-directed language learning applications such as Duolingo or Babbel are still limited (Knight et al., 2020) because, like textbooks, they lack exposure to real language use (Sawin, 2022). The lack of research into teaching and learning second language (L2) pragmatics is reflected in the vast existing body of literature related to Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL). In his systematic review of topics researched within CALL, Gillespie (2020) did not mention pragmatics, while Dooly and Vinagre (2021) barely discuss the gains in terms of socio-pragmatic competence through virtual
exchange. The same happens in Avgousti’s (2018) systematic review on intercultural communicative competence and online exchanges, where little attention was paid to pragmatic competence, and Barbosa and Ferreira-Lopes’ (2021) bibliometric study on emerging trends in telecollaboration and virtual exchange, where pragmatics was not mentioned, but ICC was identified as the most researched topic instead. In support of this stance, Sykes and González-Lloret (2020) claimed that the field of digitally-mediated L2 pragmatics development is still in its adolescence, although it is increasing (González-Lloret, 2022). Notwithstanding, telecollaboration offers a number of advantages to the teaching and learning of interlanguage pragmatics (ILP), as it allows exposure to authentic discourse through intercultural and multimodal (i.e., using different channels) interactions (Sykes, 2017). Although chapter 4 will explain what telecollaboration is, it can be anticipated that, generally speaking, it is an intercultural online exchange where culturally and geographically distant people interact to carry out a number of tasks and co-produce a final product (Sykes, 2017; Dooly, 2017). What is more, technology-mediated learning offers students the opportunity to interact with TL speakers without travelling (Taguchi & Roever, 2017).

Having said this, although all language learners should be trained in both pragmatic and ICC, engineering students are said to particularly need these skills in their future professional lives (Seiz Ortiz et al., 2015) together with a mastery of the English language, which is key to successful communication in an international world (Gimeno-Sanz, 2013). As claimed by González-Lloret (2021), it is through technology that students are likely to establish numerous social connections, and it is in online spaces that they will create their identity as L2 speakers. Therefore, providing language learners with opportunities to use technology during their L2 teaching and learning is currently more important than ever (Gonzalez-Lloret, 2021). For this reason, this thesis is based on three telecollaboration projects aimed at developing Spanish Aerospace Engineering students’ L2 pragmatic competence and ICC. In particular, pragmatic competence was operationalised focusing on the speech act of apologies. These were selected as they are said to be a characteristic of English-speaking societies (Leech, 2014), while Halenko (2021) claimed that being pragmatically appropriate in a British context can be problematic for students from positive politeness cultures such as Spain, although not all the participants of this study interacted with British counterparts. Furthermore, apologies rarely appear in language classrooms (Sawin, 2022), thus it is important to teach Spanish learners to perform this speech act, the use of which is different in English. This leads to the other main objective of this dissertation: the relationship between pragmatics and ICC. The existing link between these two competences has been acknowledged by a number of authors (Shively & Cohen, 2008; Sykes, 2017; Jackson, 2019 among others), but studies that empirically demonstrate their
interrelation in a telecollaborative exchange project have not been found with the exception of Chun (2011).

Participants of the present study were four different groups of students from the Universitat Politècnica de València (Spain). The first was chosen as the control group, thus they did not engage in an intercultural telecollaboration project, but rather carried out the task related to apologies in a face-to-face setting. The other three groups collaborated with students from the University of Bath (UK), University of Hawai’i (US), and Morgan State University (US), with whom they engaged in synchronous Zoom sessions where they carried out the task related to pragmatic competence (apologies), and in asynchronous cultural discussions through the social network MeWe where a number of cultural topics were explored. In addition to this, students were free to discuss any topic they wished to in the synchronous Zoom sessions before or after completing the assigned task.

This dissertation sought to identify 1) if interaction with L1 or highly proficient speakers of English through a telecollaboration project helped Spanish-speaking students in their performance of apologies and in acquiring ICC (as defined by Byram, 1997, 2021), and 2) if there is an empirical relationship between the acquisition of pragmatic competence and ICC. In order to explore a wide range of aspects involved in telecollaboration projects focusing on L2 pragmatics and ICC, the following research questions have been proposed:

1. Will there be any differences in terms of apology performance between the four groups of participants? If so, which ones?
2. Will there be any differences in the post-test questionnaire between the four groups of participants? If so, why?
3. Will the topic discussed in the cultural discussions on MeWe affect the acquisition of participants’ ICC (as defined by Byram, 1997, 2021)? If so, how?
4. Will there be any preferred cultural topic discussed in the synchronous Zoom sessions? If so, which one(s)?
5. Will there be a relationship between the acquisition of pragmatic competence (apologies) and the acquisition of ICC (as defined by Byram, 1997, 2021)? If so, in what way?
6. Will students be satisfied at the end of the telecollaboration projects? If so, in what way?

The following is a brief description of the contents of this dissertation. The structure is mainly divided into three parts: the first provides the theoretical foundations of the study (from chapter 1 to chapter 4), the second presents the methodology followed (chapter 5), the results obtained (chapter 6) and its discussion (chapter 7), while the third one includes the conclusion (chapter 8) and the appendices with the materials used to carry out the study. More specifically, within the theoretical
framework, chapter 1 will look into the field of pragmatics and the main concepts related to it, as well as Speech Act Theory (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969), Politeness Theory (Brown & Levinson, 1978, 1987) and Cooperative Principle (Grice, 1975). It will also examine the speech act under study, that is, apologies, as well as the data collection method employed in this dissertation. Chapter 2 will examine the main models of communicative competence, from Hymes’ (1972) to Celce-Murcia (2007), while chapter 3 will explore how the concept of communicative competence evolved into that of intercultural communicative competence. Thus, chapter 3 will analyse the main models of ICC, namely, Byram’s (1997, 2021), Fantini (2005), and Deardoff (2004, 2006). In addition to this, the concept of “intercultural speaker” will be reviewed, as well as ways of teaching and assessing ICC. Chapter 4 will start with a general overview of CALL, followed by an explanation of what is Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC), and telecollaboration in particular. A relatively new concept within Pragmatics and CALL will also be introduced in chapter 4, that is, cyberpragmatics (Yus, 2001). The chapter will end by reviewing how to assess online interaction according to the Council of Europe (2020). Turning to the experimental part of the thesis, chapter 5 will present a thorough examination of the methodology employed to carry out the study. Here, each group of participants will be described, as well as the instruments and materials used, including the two main tasks carried out by the students. Also the data analysis procedure will be fully described in the methodology section. Chapter 6 will present the main findings obtained. It will be subdivided into findings related to pragmatic competence and those regarding ICC, although the chapter ends with the results obtained from the correlation between students’ pragmatic and intercultural gains and a case study. Chapter 7 will discuss the results of the study in relation to previous research in the field, and it will answer the research questions. Finally, chapter 8 will draw a general conclusion, including the limitations of the study and its pedagogical implications.
1. PRAGMATICS

Pragmatics arose in the 1960s as a branch of linguistics that rejected Chomsky’s (1965) competence theory of mental faculty and took into account form, meaning, and context (Leech, 1983). Authors such as Leech (1983) talked about a new paradigm, which was started by the philosophers Wittgenstein (1953), Austin (1962), Searle (1969), and Grice (1975). In this new paradigm performance, rather than competence, was given much more importance. According to Leech (1983), this new paradigm included the following defining characteristics:

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

(Adapted from Martínez-Flor & Usó-Juan, 2010, p. 5)

From that moment pragmatics has been defined in several ways. Leech (1983) defined it as “the study of how utterances have meanings in situations” (p. X) and as “the study of meaning in relation to speech situations” (1983, p. 6). Thomas (1995) devoted a whole chapter to define pragmatics and in the end she presented a view of “pragmatics as meaning in interaction, since this takes account of the different contributions of both speaker and hearer as well as that of utterance and context to the making of meaning” (Thomas, 1995, p. 23). While according to Verschueren (1999) it is the examination of language use considering its characteristics and processes and a broad cognitive, social, and cultural viewpoint on language use forms. Besides, Yule (2010) claimed that it is “the study of the ‘invisible’ meaning, or how we recognize what is meant even when it isn’t actually said or written” (p. 128), in other words, “the study of the speaker meaning, […] of contextual meaning, […] of how more gets communicated than is said, […] of the expression of relative distance” (1996, p. 3). Crystal’s (1997) definition is considered one of the most significant (Martínez-Flor & Usó-Juan, 2010), and it is the one preferred by the author of this thesis as it considers the effect of the linguistic choices made by the speaker and emphasises the idea of using language to act, that is, to perform actions. According to him pragmatics is:

The study of language from the point of view of users, especially 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. (Crystal, 1997, p. 301)
Based on Yule’s (1996) and Crystal’s (1997) definitions, Sykes (2018) stated that “pragmatic ability refers to one’s capability to express communicative intentions and interpret the communicative intentions of others” (p. 120). Although many authors recognized the importance that culture plays in this field, Verschueren’s second definition of pragmatics is the only one which mentions it. Pragmatics is the study of meaning in interaction (Thomas, 1995), depending on the context where we speak and the culture to whom we address, and it is one of the abilities a competent speaker should possess in order to be considered like that (Ishiara & Cohen, 2010).

As previously mentioned, Leech (1983) argued that the three main aspects that pragmatics deals with are context, meaning, and form. Yule (2010) affirmed that some aspects of meaning are related to context and speakers’ communicative intentions. First, context plays the main role here because, depending on it, an utterance may have different interpretations. Also, in order to understand somebody else’s utterances, we need to share some background knowledge (Bach, 1994; Yule, 1996). Leech (1983, p. 13) defined context as “any background knowledge assumed to be shared by s and h and which contributes h’s interpretation of what s means by a given utterance” (where s stands for speaker and h for hearer). Yule (1996, 2010) distinguished between linguistic context or co-text, which refers to the words used in the same utterance, that is, the linguistic part, and physical context, which is the physical location of the words we hear or read. The latter is said to have more impact on the interpretation of an utterance. The interpretation depends therefore on the context in which the utterance occurs (Grundy, 2000), and on the socio-cultural conventions that may vary from language to language (Yule, 1996).

Second, “language is the major instrument in attempts to construct meaning in a world which does not have meaning in itself” (Verschueren, 1999, p. 8). Yule (2010) argued that “words themselves don’t refer to anything. People refer” (p. 131). For that reason, meaning is said to have a central place in language, and it may vary in different contexts (Grundy, 2000; Leech, 1983; Verschueren, 1999; Yule, 1996), which is one of the main characteristics of pragmatics. Moreover, Verschueren (1999) argued that meaning is a defining feature of pragmatics, but it should not be considered as the counterpart of linguistic form because, instead, it is constructed in the process of language use. Some aspects of meaning are related both to context and to the communicative intentions of the speakers (Yule, 2010). Meaning is constructed on the assumptions made based on background knowledge. Leech (1983) stated that “meaning in pragmatics is defined relative to a speaker or user of the language” (p. 6) and that pragmatics has given attention to meaning in use, instead of meaning in the abstract. If we do not share the same socio-cultural context or the same background knowledge of the speaker, we may not understand what his or her utterance means, and
this may lead to misunderstandings. This results in a further distinction that some authors (Bach, 1994; Grice, 1968; Yule, 1996) made between sentence meaning, which is the meaning of the words we use, and speaker meaning, which is what we imply with the use of those words. Thus, also the users of language are particularly significant (Martinez-Flor & Usó-Juan, 2010).

In the first place, Leech (1983) claimed that pragmatics is a formal-functional paradigm. He argued that grammar and pragmatics are complementary domains. He understood the former as “the abstract formal system of language”, and the latter as “the principles of language use” (Leech, 1983, p. 4). Taguchi and Sykes (2013) argued that the construct of pragmatic competence has two dimensions: the comprehension of form-function-context mappings and the skills needed to recover and use that in interaction. Both fluency and accuracy in the use of form-function-context mappings are significant elements of pragmatic competence, and this is why they should be taught in L2 or FLT (Taguchi & Sykes, 2013). Learners find difficult to perform sociolinguistic functions because the mappings vary across cultures (Taguchi, 2010). This is why Leech made a distinction between general pragmatics and the areas of sociopragmatics and pragmalinguistics, general pragmatics being “the study of linguistic communication in terms of conversational principles” (1983, p. 11). Turning to sociopragmatics and pragmalinguistics, the former are the behaviours and social parameters of the TL culture, while the latter are the linguistic norms of the language that we use for interpreting and conveying meaning (Cunningham, 2017; González-Lloret, 2018, 2019, 2021; Leech, 1983; Rodríguez Peñarroja, 2015; Sykes, 2017; Taguchi, 2007). On the one hand, sociopragmatics has to do with the relation between social structure and linguistic action because it deals with status, degree of imposition and social distance as social factors that affect the type of linguistic acts that the speaker performs and the way in which they are performed (Martinez-Flor & Usó-Juan, 2010). On the other hand, pragmalinguistics makes reference to the resources that speakers use for conveying communicative acts, which include pragmatic routines, pragmatic strategies and modification devices (Martinez-Flor & Usó-Juan, 2010). These two components take us back to Verschueren’s (1999) view of pragmatics, according to which pragmatics “studies people’s use of language, and a form of behaviour and social action” (p. 6). Learners should possess both sociopragmatic skills and pragmalinguistic abilities (Sykes, 2018) in order to be pragmatically successful (Halenko, 2021) in intercultural interactions and relationships (Jackson, 2019). Unlike grammar errors, pragmatic mistakes in L2 interaction may be taken as impoliteness and, thus, cause misunderstandings or conversation breakdowns, as well as be less tolerated than other types of errors (Celce-Murcia et al., 1995; Godwin-Jones, 2019a; Gónzalez-Lloret, 2018, 2019, 2021; Huang, 2014), and they may occur despite the linguistic proficiency of the L2 speaker (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984). Seiz-Ortiz et al.
(2015) claimed that “differences in communicative conventions across cultures can cause people to interpret messages in very different ways from what the speaker or writer intended” (p. 4).

Up to this point, one can observe that the term utterance instead of sentence has been employed. On the one hand, one of the main traits of pragmatics is that utterances are a form of act or activity, that is, speech acts. On the other hand, rather than refer to the verbal act in itself, utterances can refer to the product of the verbal act (Leech, 1983). In this sense, pragmatics studies the utterance meaning or illocutionary force. The next section will better explore speech acts.

1.1. Speech Act Theory

As discussed in the previous section, what the speaker intends to convey through an utterance is the meaning of that utterance. The action that the speaker performs with an utterance is defined as a speech act (Yule, 1996, 2010). Sykes (2018) defined speech acts as “a communicative act, performed through speech, which demonstrates how meaning and action are related to language” (p. 403). The two seminal works in this area are How to Do Things with Words by Austin (1962), and Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language by Searle (1969). First, a chronological review of them will be provided, and then Leech’s criticism in his work Principles of Pragmatics (1983) and Thomas’ critique in Meaning in Interaction (1995) will be discussed.

The main idea underlying Austin’s (1962) work is that constative utterances differ from performative utterances because the former can be evaluated in terms of truth and falsehood (i.e., a descriptive statement that describes if something is true or false), while the latter are evaluated as felicitous or infelicitous (i.e., depending on whether or not they satisfy certain conditions). He also explained that they are labelled as performatives because ‘perform’ is the verb that we usually employ with the noun ‘action’. In his words, when talking about performatives “to utter the sentence […] is to do it” (Austin, 1962, p. 6). Nevertheless, he subsequently found that this distinction was problematic, and proposed that “all utterances contain both constative and performative elements” (Vershueren, 1999, p. 22). In addition, Austin claimed that when we utter a sentence, we perform three different acts:

1. locutionary act: “the act of ‘saying something’” (Austin, 1962, p. 94), that is, speech itself;
2. illocutionary act: what the speaker intends to say when s/he utters the words;
3. perlocutionary act: the consequential effects that the speaker’s words have on the hearer.
Besides, he distinguished between pure performatives (i.e., *I apologise*), not pure or half descriptives (i.e., *I am sorry*), and descriptives (i.e., *I repent*). In this way, Austin proposed a theory based on performative verbs (Rodríguez Peñarroja, 2015). In addition, he distinguished five general classes of explicit performatives, based on their illocutionary force:

1. verdictives: characterised by the giving of a verdict
2. exercitives: characterised by the exercising of authority and control
3. commissives: characterised by promising or undertaking
4. behabitives: have to do with social behaviour (e.g., apologising)
5. expositives: in general are expository

From this list, he elaborated a more extensive list of verbs for each of the above-mentioned categories. Furthermore, he also made a distinction between explicit performatives and primary performatives. The former are speech acts that describe the type of act that is being performed by the speaker, and are uttered in the 1st person singular, present indicative active. The latter are all other kinds of utterance.

Drawing from Austin’s (1962) work, Searle (1969) proposed his theory. In a similar way to Austin, Searle (1969) claimed that “talking is performing acts according to rules” (p. 22). In addition, Searle enumerated four conditions that have to be satisfied for a speech act to be felicitous:

1. propositional content condition
2. preparatory condition
3. sincerity condition
4. essential condition

Moreover, Searle differentiated illocutionary acts and illocutionary verbs. He disagreed with Austin’s claim of an existing correspondence between speech acts and verbs, and suggested that there is no need to have a performative verb in a sentence in order to have an illocutionary act. Searle (1969) categorised illocutionary acts as follows:

1. assertives
2. directives
3. commissives
4. expressives
5. declarations
Although both Austin (1962) and Searle (1969) were pioneers in the fields of pragmatics, their works also received some critiques. One of the authors who disassociated himself from their Speech Act Theory was Leech (1983). This is why he talked about the *Performative Fallacy* and the *Illocutionary-Verb Fallacy*. Leech argued that the performative, instead of being something that underlies every utterance, is quite unusual. In Leech’s (1983) words, a parformative occurs “when a speaker needs to define his speech act as belonging to a particular category” (p. 181). Taking a descriptive approach, he also argued that performatives are a kind of reported-speech utterance, hence, they have a metalinguistic character: performatives label themselves to both make clear their illocutionary force and categorize it. In this way Leech (1983) claimed that the Performative Fallacy is an error because we cannot attribute to every utterance containing a performative verb a categorical structure that is possessed only by a scarce number of special metalinguistic utterances. Finally, Leech (1983) pointed out at Ross’ (1970, as cited in Leech, 1983) *Performative Hypothesis* according to which “in its underlying structure, every sentence has a higher clause with the properties of a performative” (Leech, 1983, p. 192).

Thomas (1995) also identified some issues with Austin’s speech act theory. She categorised performative utterances in metalinguistic performatives, ritual performatives, collaborative performatives, and group performatives. The focus here is on the first category, as the speech act of apologies is included in Thomas’s work. According to Thomas (1995) these type of performative utterances “do not appear to depend on any external conditions for their success” (p. 36), in the sense that for a metalinguistic performative to be felicitous and be true the speaker does not need the collaboration of the hearer. However, she claimed that they “seem to operate in broadly the same way in all languages and cultures and [which] apparently have no felicity conditions” (Thomas, 1995, p. 37). This is a debatable statement, as there is general agreement (e.g., Cohen, 1996) on the fact that the performance of any speech act is influenced by the culture where it is performed in terms of syntax, strategies to be used and situations where the speaker is expected to perform the speech act.

Thomas (1995) appeared to contradict herself in the same book, as when referring again to apologies she wrote “In many cultures it is possible to apologize on behalf on someone or something else […] In Britain you will frequently hear people saying sorry when someone bumps into them, or apologizing to overseas visitors for the weather!” (Thomas, 1995, p. 100). Additionally, in an endnote concerning apologies she added that “there is considerable cross-cultural variation in perceptions of ‘responsibility’” (Thomas, 1995, p. 116). Thus, it is not clear whether or not Thomas (1995) believed that culture affects the production of the speech act of apologies.
Thomas (1995) attributed the collapse of Austin’s performative hypothesis to three main reasons:

1. There is no formal (grammatical) way of distinguishing performative verbs from other sorts of verbs.
2. The presence of a performative verb does not guarantee that the specified action is performed.
3. There are ways of ‘doing things with words’ which do not involve using performative verbs.

(Thomas, 1995, p. 44)

The first point refers to the fact that performatives do not need to be always in the 1st person singular, as they can be both singular or plural, and they can be written as well as spoken. To explain the second statement, Thomas (1995, p. 46) used the following example:

I promise I’ll come over there and hit you if you don’t shut up!

Here, it is quite obvious that the speech act being performed is that of a threat instead of a promise, although the performative verb being used is precisely “promise”. In this sense, the action described by the performative verb in that sentence is not being performed. The third point tries to explain that we can ‘do things with words’ without the need of using a performative verb (that is what Austin distinguished between primary or explicit and implicit performative), which will be explored in the next section.

Thomas (1995) also criticised Searle’s theory of indirect speech acts (1975 as cited in Thomas, 1995) and rules of speech acts (1965 as cited in Thomas, 1995). Based on Searle’s (1969) four conditions, she identified four main problems with his work:

1. Distinguishing the type of speech act performed is not always possible
2. His rules only cover paradigm cases of speech acts
3. His rules are applicable only in very limited circumstances which may exclude normal instances of speech act and at the same time fail to eliminate its anomalous use
4. He “treats speech acts as if they were clearly-defined categories with clear-cut boundaries” (Thomas, 1995, p. 103), while instead their boundaries are blurred and some speech acts can ‘overlap’

According to Thomas (1995), Searle tried to deal with pragmatics in a way which would be more appropriate to grammar. Searle (1969) postulated a set of rules, while Thomas believed that pragmatics is “constrained by maxims or principles” (pp. 107-108).
1.1.1. Indirect speech acts

Up to this point explicit performatives have been explored, that is, direct speech acts. Nevertheless, there is another category of speech acts: indirect speech acts or implicit performatives. We talk about indirect speech acts when the illocutionary force is not the one expected by the speech act that we use.

For instance, we usually use the syntactic structure of an interrogative in order to make a question:

*Can you pass me the salt?*

If we understand this question literally and understand the relationship between structure and function, the answer would be *Yes* or *No*. Hence, we would have a direct speech act. However, our background knowledge helps us in understanding that this interrogative utterance is probably a *request*. Thus, this is an indirect speech act. In addition, Yule (1966) claimed that “whenever there is an indirect relationship between a structure and a function, we have an indirect speech act” (p. 55).

Grundy (2000) claimed that this kind of speech acts are doubly pragmatic in the sense that the meaning conveyed is not an entailment and that it is conveyed implicitly. In addition, speakers are the ones who decide how to encode the meaning of their utterances. On this basis, it can be stated that utterances seem to have two levels of meaning, that is, literal meaning (what the words of the utterance literally mean) and understood meaning (what we really mean with our utterance) (Atkison et al., 1988 as cited in Grundy, 2000). Indirect speech acts are commonly used because based on social conventions they are considered to be more polite than direct speech acts, at least in the English language (Yule, 1996, 2010). Politeness will be discussed in section 1.6.

Although there is no substantial difference in meaning between explicit and implicit performatives, there may be a stylistic difference between a performative utterance and its non-performative counterpart (Thomas, 1995). For instance, *I apologise* is usually used in more formal situations than *I'm sorry*. In addition, Thomas (1995) claims that “some informants said they would use it when *I'm sorry* seemed too weak” (p. 52). The next section will review the speech act of apologies more deeply.

1.2. Apologies

Apologies are the speech act under study in this dissertation. They have been selected because their performance in FLT contexts implies many difficulties because of the differences that exist
among different cultures. It has to do with the issue of universality, that is, the extent to which pragmatic rules of a language can be specified and acquired by learners of an L2 (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984). Thus, since apologies are a characteristic of politeness in English-speaking societies (Leech, 2014), this section is going to analyse this type of speech act and the strategies that students of English should learn to master, at least, one pragmatic aspect of the English language.

Apologies are a post-event speech act, which means that something has occurred before (Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993; Usó-Juan & Martínez-Flor, 2014). In other words, the performance of this kind of speech act implies that the speaker (i.e., the one who is performing the apology) has committed an offense or violated a social norm (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984). This is why Bergman and Kasper (1993) defined an apology as a “compensatory action to an offense in the doing of which S was causally involved and which is costly to H” (p. 82). According to Blum-Kulka and Olshtain there are three preconditions for an apology to occur:

a. S did X or abstained from doing X (or is about to do it).
b. X is perceived by S only, by H only, by both S and H, or by a third party as a breach of a social norm.
c. X is perceived by at least one of the parties involved as offending, harming, or affecting H in some way.

(From Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984, p. 206)

In order for the apology to take place, the speaker (s) must acknowledge the need to apologise, and through its performance s/he recognizes both preconditions b and c. In line with this, Deutschmann (2003) defined apologies as “a speech act used to remedy a transgression” (p. 44).

Also, according to Deutschmann (2003), a prototypical apology situation is made up of four components:

1. the offender: the person who performs the apology because feels responsible for a certain act
2. the offended: the person who has been offended (although he or she may not perceive himself or herself as such)
3. the offence: the incident
4. the remedy: this is the most important part, and it is composed of three sub-component:
   a. the offender’s recognition of the offence
   b. the offender’s acceptance of responsibility
   c. the offender’s expression of regret

Figure 1 below exemplifies the main components of an apology (Deutschmann, 2003, p. 46):
Nevertheless, Deutschmann (2003) also mentioned three types of apologies that are not prototypical:

- ‘formulaic’ apologies: they are used when there is a minimal or almost non-existent offence. They are “more a matter of routine” (p. 46) (e.g., apologies for social gaffes)
- ‘formulaic apologies with added functions’: they are used when there is a minimal offence and they have another function apart from repairing the offence (e.g., request and attention cues)
- ‘face attack’ apologies: they are used when the remedy is questionable (e.g., sarcasm)

Furthermore, apologies are a type of expressive (Searle, 1969) and convivial speech act (Martínez-Flor & Usó-Juan, 2014) in the sense that their purpose is to re-establish the balance between speaker and hearer, as well as to keep social conventions (Leech, 1983). In addition, Austin (1962) included apologies in the behabitives speech acts, which “have to do with attitudes and social behaviour” (p. 151).

Based on the Cross-Cultural Speech Acts Realization Project (CCSARP) (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984, p. 207), in order to perform an apology, the speaker has to follow five different steps:

1. an explicit illocutionary force indicating device (IFID) (i.e., a formulaic expression of regret), being the most common in English (be) sorry, or an utterance that refers to one or more elements of a specific situation
2. an explanation or account of the cause which brought about the offence
3. an expression of the speaker’s responsibility for the offence
4. an offer of repair
5. a promise of forbearance
On the same line, Leech (2014) made reference to the CCSARP (1984) but labelled the IFID as the *head act*, and the other four strategies as *satellite speech events*. Moreover, he claimed that apologies may also occur with *internal modifiers* (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Trosborg, 1995 as cited in Leech, 2014) such as *very* or *terribly*, or *external modifiers* such as exclamatory events which may either precede or follow the head act. Modifiers intensify or soften the meaning of the speech event.

Furthermore, Leech (2014) claimed that formulaic devices such as *sorry*, *pardon*, *excuse me* often occur alone and that they have been *pragmaticalized*, which means that they have lost their grammatical meaning and have acquired a weakened meaning, thus becoming a pragmatic particle. In spite of the fact that most apologies are routine and formulaic, Leech (2014, p. 125) presented his own taxonomy of the three main strategies of apologies used in the English language:

- expression of speaker’s regret, e.g., *(I’m) sorry, I regret*, etc.
- asking hearer’s pardon or forgiveness, e.g., *excuse me, pardon (me)*
- using a performative utterance, e.g., *I apologize, I beg your pardon*

The first one is said to be the most commonly used, while the third one is the least employed by English-speakers. Also Deutschmann (2003) affirmed that *sorry* is the most used strategy according to the analysis of the BNC (British National Corpus). Figure 2 below illustrates Deutschmann’s (2003) findings.

![Figure 2: Expressions of apologies encountered in the sub-corpus (Deutschmann, 2003, p. 51)](image)

As it has been mentioned before, *sorry* often occurs alone, in particular it occurs as *sorry about, I’m sorry, sorry to*. Besides, its two most frequent usages in the BCN are either as a declarative or as an interrogative. Contrarily to *sorry*, which may be used in informal contexts, *I regret* is seen as more
formal (Leech, 2014). Referring to the second strategy, *pardon me* and *excuse me* are mostly used as routine apologies, thus, it is used for mild offences such as sneezing or interrupting someone. On the other hand, *I apologise* or *I beg your pardon* are quite more formal than the two previous strategies mentioned, and the latter is often used for asking repetitions such as *pardon me*. In addition, they are infrequently used if compared to the two previous strategies, and in particular, *I beg your pardon* is mainly a British form (Leech, 2014). One should also bear in mind that apologies usually evoke another speech act. In other words, after the speaker has performed the apology, the hearer can either accept the apology (i.e., the polite option) or reject it. In Leech’s (2014) words “as with other politeness-sensitive speech acts, there is a preference for the polite option” (p. 130).

Based on Blum-Kulka and Olsthain (1984), Leech (2014) and Martinez-Flor (2016) the following taxonomy is proposed.

*Table 1: Proposed taxonomy on apologies*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IFID/head act</td>
<td>Expression of S’s regret</td>
<td>*(Be) sorry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>I regret</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Asking H’s pardon or</td>
<td><em>Excuse me</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>forgiveness</td>
<td><em>Pardon me</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Using a performative utterance</td>
<td><em>I apologise</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>I beg your pardon</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expression of responsibility</td>
<td>Explicit self-blame</td>
<td><em>It was my fault</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Denial of fault</td>
<td><em>It wasn’t my fault</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explanation of why the fault occurred</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>I can’t attend your party</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>because I have to study</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offer of repair</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>I’ll pay for the reparation</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promise of forbearance</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>It won’t happen again</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apology intensification</td>
<td>Concern for the H</td>
<td><em>I know it is important for you</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intensifier/modifier</td>
<td><em>Adverbials: very, terribly, really, so, etc.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Repetitions: I’m really, really sorry</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Taking the above-mentioned components of speech act realisation into account, it is important to point out at the fact that apologies are also a face-threatening act for the offender since “it implies
the acceptance that something wrong has been done, whether on purpose or not” (Martínez-Flor & Usó-Juan, 2014, p. 120). Contrarily, they are a face-saving act for the hearer because they procure comfort to his or her negative face (Martínez-Flor & Usó-Juan, 2014). This is why the main aim of apologies is “to restore positive face after a FTA [face-threatening act]” (Rodríguez-Peñarroja, 2015, p. 67). This will be discussed in depth in section 1.6. In addition, in their book Teaching Invisible Culture. Classroom practice and Theory, Lo Bianco and Crozet (2003) propose five ‘axes’ to teach culture. One of them is “approaches to understanding politeness” (Crozet, 2003, p. 40). This makes clear that politeness is embedded in culture, and for that reason both culture and politeness should be taught in the FL class.

1.3. Conditions for the acquisition of speech acts

In their book Speech Act Performance. Theoretical, empirical and methodological issues Martínez-Flor and Usó-Juan (2010) included a thorough explanation of the three main conditions needed for the learning of speech acts. These are appropriate input, opportunities for output and provision of feedback.

They stated that “input refers to the language samples learners are exposed to” (Martínez-Flor & Usó-Juan, 2010, p. 10) and it depends on the setting where learners are exposed to it. For instance, cross-cultural communication is a valuable opportunity to develop L2 and FL learners’ pragmatic competence (Martínez-Flor & Usó-Juan, 2010). This is why it is believed that students may benefit from a telecollaborative exchange. In addition, LoCastro (2003 as cited in Martínez-Flor & Usó-Juan, 2010) distinguished between three types of input language learners may be exposed to, namely teacher talk, teaching materials and their peers. In particular, teacher talk refers to the special register that teachers use in class, which is adjusted to the learners’ needs. Using appropriate teaching materials is needed in order to provide students with appropriate input since textbooks which are usually used in the language classroom provide scarce examples of authentic speech act realisations. It is suggested that language teachers should use real speech as a source of pragmatic input, like the use of synchronous and asynchronous computer-mediated communication (SCMC and ACMC) whose benefits on learners’ pragmatic competence will be illustrated in chapter 4. Also, Martinez-Flor and Usó-Juan (2010) claimed that audiovisual materials are a good source to present authentic pragmatic input. Based on this, part of the explicit instruction that the Spanish-speaking participants of this study received consists of a series of videos from a TV series. The third type of input is that of their peers. In addition, collaboration and interaction between classmates play a significant role in fostering students’ pragmatic competence (Ohta, 1995, 1997 and Alcón, 2002 as cited in Martínez-Flor & Usó-Juan, 2010).
The second condition required for the development of learners’ pragmatic knowledge is *pushed output*, which “refers to the production that is characterised by precision, coherence, and appropriateness” (Martínez-Flor & Usó-Juan, 2010, p. 13). In addition, language learners need to be provided with opportunities to practice the TL such as group and pair work. Trosborg (1995 as cited in Martínez-Flor & Usó-Juan, 2010) argued that role-plays are a good method to gather speech act data and states that:

> Role play interaction allows for the development of personalized, creative talk. Face-to-face interaction between two persons is a natural communication situation, and it provides a fairly intimate setting in which the learner can practice with a minimum of stress. (p. 469)

In addition, she believed that role-plays approximate natural communication. The advantages of using role-plays for the acquisition of speech acts will be better discussed in section 1.5 in this chapter.

The third condition needed for the acquisition of pragmatic knowledge is *corrective feedback* and it “refers to the data learners receive with information about what is not allowed in the TL” (Martínez-Flor & Usó-Juan, 2010, p. 14). Feedback allows students to reflect on their output and correct themselves. Besides, it can be provided both explicitly, which means that the interlocutor says what the error is, or implicitly, which implies the use of different techniques. Martínez-Flor and Usó-Juan (2010) claimed that language learners should be provided with corrective feedback on both form and meaning.

### 1.4. Interlanguage Pragmatics

Although nowadays we all live in a globalized world where the use of technology and the contact with other cultures occurs every day and frequently, research in how we could take advantage of it in order to learn how to interact appropriately with people from different backgrounds is quite scarce. Some authors (Sykes, 2017; Sykes & González-Lloret, 2020) argue that the field of ILP in CALL is still in its adolescence, which is bewildering if we think that one of the crucial components of communicative competence (Hymes, 1972) is precisely pragmatic competence (González-Lloret, 2019).

The correct and appropriate use of the TL is currently one of the goals of FLT (Khaerudin, 2012), as well as providing students with opportunities to practise the performance of speech acts in the TL (Martinez-Flor & Usó-Juan, 2010), thus, this dissertation aims to illustrate how FL students’ pragmatic competence can improve in technology-mediated environments through telecollaboration. According to Sykes (2017), ILP is the approach to figure out and define how meaning is conveyed...
and understood in multilingual exchanges, as well as “the ability to communicate and interpret meaning in a learned language” (Sykes, 2018, p. 121).

However, one of the first definitions of ILP is that of Kasper and Dahl (1991) who defined it as “referring to nonnative speakers’ (NNs’) comprehension and production of speech acts, and how their L2-related knowledge is acquired” (1991, p. 5). In the same line of thought, Kasper and Blum-Kulka (1993) incorporated linguistic action into the definition, saying that ILP is “the comprehension and production of linguistic action, including discourse regulation”, similarly, Kasper and Schmidt (1996) defined ILP as “the study of the development and use of strategies for linguistic action by nonnative speakers” (p. 150), and later Kasper and Rose (1999) referred to ILP as “the study of nonnative speakers’ use and acquisition of L2 pragmatic knowledge” (p. 81). Furthermore, being a branch of second language acquisition (SLA), the subjects under study in ILP are “nonnative speakers, users of a second language [and] learners” (Bardovi-Harling, 2010, p. 220). Lately, Bardovi-Harlig (2013) used the term L2 pragmatics to refer to the field of research entirely dedicated to the development of learners’ L2 pragmatic system from an acquisitional point of view. Moreover, Bardovi-Harlig (2013) claimed that all L2 pragmatics studies can be framed within ILP, but not all ILP studies belong to L2 pragmatics. To make things clearer, recently González-Lloret (2019) explained that

The field of L2 pragmatics examines how learners of another language communicate and interact with others given the context of the interaction; the relation between participants; physical setting; their linguistic, social, cultural, and historical background; and their ideologies and identities. (p. 2)

Some authors (Kecskes, 2012; Jackson, 2019) are also interested in cross-cultural pragmatics and intercultural pragmatics. The former refers to a “comparison of language use in different cultures” (Jackson, 2019, p. 486), while the latter “is concerned with language use in intercultural interactions” (Jackson, 2019, p. 486). More specifically, in Kecskes’ (2012, p. 67) words

Intercultural pragmatics […] is concerned with how the language system is put to use in social encounters between human beings who have different first languages, communicate in a common language, and, usually, represent different cultures.

Also, according to him, intercultural pragmatics’ research interests differ significantly from the concerns of ILP because the former is concerned with the comprehension of interculturality and the

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1 These definitions have been included for the sake of completeness. However, it is not the one used as a reference in this dissertation because it refers to the old-fashioned concept of “native speaker”. Nowadays the paradigm has moved beyond that model.
sociocognitive approach (Kecskes, 2012). Nonetheless, for the purpose of this study González-Llort’s (2019) definition of L2 pragmatics will be taken as a reference in that she highlighted the main aspects that differ from face-to-face settings and virtual environments, that is, the context of interaction, the physical setting, and the relationship between participants as well as their background.

Other authors such as Meier (2010) talked about the significant role that cultural values and beliefs mediated by perceptions of context play in speech act performance. She believed that the understanding of how cultural values and beliefs may have an impact on speech act performance is key “to understand what is meant by what is said” (Meier, 2010, p. 76). The author exemplified the speech-act culture connection in the following way:

![Diagram](image)

**Figure 3: Culture, context, language connection (Meier, 2010, p. 77)**

As it can be observed from Figure 3, cultural values and beliefs give information of the context and its variables, which at the same time may affect the linguistic choices the speaker uses, and in turn, communicative choices reinforce the cultural values and believes by which they are informed. During interaction, the speaker may use an ineffective linguistic choice, and this will lead him or her to reframe the context and re-examine his or her own perceptions of its variables. In other words, the speaker will negotiate with the interlocutor. Of course, since in intercultural communication interactants share less background knowledge, this process will be even more necessary. What makes a speaker an intercultural speaker is the flexibility and sensitivity s/he will show in an interaction with a speaker from a different culture (Meier, 2010).

Since “pragmatics is inherently the place where language and culture meet and is encompassed in numerous approaches to operationalizing models of intercultural communication” (Sykes, 2017, p. 119) and “L2 pragmatic competence and intercultural competence are closely related” (Jackson, 2019, p. 487), chapter 3 will deal with this relationship and with the concept of intercultural communicative competence.
1.5. Role-play as a data collection method in ILP

Negotiation of meaning, which is a cognitive process that occurs in real interaction, was the perspective adopted and explored by Thomas (1995). It consists of “participants’ interactional adjustments to respond appropriately and to understand what was not overtly communicated” (Herraiz Martinez, 2018, p. 30). This idea strengthens psychologist Vygotsky’s (1978) Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which defined interaction and cooperation with peers as an effective and successful way to develop an individual’s learning skills. It is argued here that when interaction and cooperation with peers occurs, also negotiation of meaning takes place.

In line with this, role-plays are commonly used to collect data in FLT and ILP (Beltrán-Palanques, 2013; Félix-Brasdefer, 2018) in that they can trigger negotiation of meaning (Kasper & Dahl, 1991). For this reason, this section has been included in this chapter. The oral data elicited through this research method can be more fruitful compared to written data collection methods such as Discourse Completion Tasks (DCTs) since “the data obtained includes pragmalinguistic production, paralinguistic phenomena as well as repetitions, omissions, false starts, pauses, turn taking behaviour and so on” (Rodríguez Peñarroja, 2015, p. 192). All these features can be observed in the participants’ role-play performance.

Crookall and Saunders (1989) defined role-plays as “a social or human activity in which participants ‘take on’ and ‘act out’ specified ‘roles’, often within a predefined social framework or situational blueprint (a ‘scenario’)” (pp. 15-16). These two authors also claimed that “the interaction between participants in the role-playing performance is a simulation of a social situation” (Crookcall & Saunders, 1989, p. 16). Role-plays elicit oral responses (Kasper & Dahl, 1991; Félix-Brasdefer, 2010) and they can be either closed or open (Kasper & Dahl, 1991). The difference between the two modalities is that in closed role-plays there is no interaction between participants, that is, the learner does not receive a reply from an interlocutor; while in open role-plays the actor’s role is specified although the outcome of the interaction is not predetermined (Kasper & Dahl, 1991; Félix-Brasdefer, 2010). Therefore, it can be claimed that open role-plays are more advantageous than closed role-plays since thanks to its interactive nature they allow to identify further features of spoken production (Beltrán-Palanques, 2013) and involve as many turns and discourse phases as necessary (Kasper, 1999). Table 2 below summarises the main advantages and disadvantages of using open role-plays as a data collection method.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pair face-to-face interaction with another participant is possible (Félix-Brasdefer, 2010, 2018)</td>
<td>Lack of authenticity (Scarcella &amp; Brunak, 1981; Sykes and González-Lloret, 2020)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Can be audio taped or video recorded (Scarcella and Brunak, 1981; Félix-Brasdefer, 2010, 2018; Rodríguez Peñarroja, 2015)</td>
<td>Its transcription can be time-consuming (Kasper &amp; Dahl, 1991; Félix-Brasdefer, 2010; Martínez-Flor &amp; Usó-Juan, 2010) as well as its coding (Leech, 2014)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contextual parameters such as the setting/topic of conversation (Scarcella &amp; Brunak, 1981), the degree of social distance and social power between the participants, the degree of imposition (Kasper, 1999), age and gender of the participants, learning environment, proficiency level (Félix-Brasdefer, 2010, 2018) can be controlled</td>
<td>The interaction and the action performed in a role-play do not have any pragmatic consequence for the participant, as opposed to what would happen in real life (Golato, 2003)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Real-life situations performance is possible (Yen et al., 2013)</td>
<td>There is a drastic difference from real conversations between what is said and how (Golato, 2003)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The conversational interactions obtained are more complete because role-plays elicit both conversational openings and closing (Scarcella &amp; Brunak, 1981)</td>
<td>The participants may provide beliefs about roles they have never played in real life (i.e., they are imaginary) (Golato, 2003)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speech act behaviour in its full discourse context can be examined (Kasper &amp; Dahl, 1991; Félix-Brasdefer, 2010)</td>
<td>It is difficult to determine whether they validly represent conversational practices in authentic contexts (Kasper, 1999)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Since the outcome needs to be negotiated (so they involve negotiation of meaning), the resulting interaction is “real” in the context where it is performed (Kasper &amp; Dahl, 1991)</td>
<td>They cannot be compared to speech act data elicited from natural discourse (Félix-Brasdefer, 2010)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The way speech act performance is organised can be observed (Kasper &amp; Dahl, 1991)</td>
<td>They do consider the way social norms in real interaction can influence learners’ linguistic performance (Herraiz Martínez, 2018)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allow comparative studies because they are replicable (Kasper &amp; Dahl, 1991)</td>
<td>Learners know that it is a simulated situation (Roever, 2015)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal functions (e.g., politeness) and interactional functions (e.g., coordinating speaker and listener contributions through turn-taking and backchanneling) can be observed (Kasper, 1999)</td>
<td>Facilitative and inhibiting effects of the environment are absent in role-plays (Roever, 2015)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The way contextual parameters that influence the selection and realization of communicative acts can be observed (Kasper, 1999)</td>
<td>Do not represent real-life spoken interaction (Leech, 2014)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data occurring in real time face-to-face interaction can be collected (Rodríguez Peñarroja, 2015)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Designing contexts and roles to elicit specific speech events and communicative acts is possible (Kasper, 1999)

The speakers can interact in a realistic way (Leech, 2014)

Close to real conversation as they show characteristics of spontaneous discourse (Bandovi-Harlig, 2013)

As it can be observed from Table 2 above, although there exist some disadvantages in using role-plays as a data gathering procedure, the literature review reveals that the number of advantages is higher. Additionally, Roever (2011) suggested that it would be interesting to perform role-plays with ‘online interlocutors’ and to analyse to what extent interaction is affected by the communication channel. For these reasons, it is believed that it is the most appropriate data gathering method for the study presented in this dissertation.

1.6. Politeness and The Cooperative Principle

The publication of Brown and Levinson’s (1978, 1987) Politeness Theory made the concept of politeness one of the central topics in pragmatics. Many definitions of the concept emerged, for instance, Lakoff (1989) defined it “as a means of minimizing the risk of confrontation in discourse” (p. 102), while Yule (1996) said that it was “the means employed to show awareness of another’s person’s face” (p. 60), a definition which he further explored in 2010. Grundy (2000), instead, defined it as “the exercise of language choice to create a context intended to match the addressee’s notion of how he or she should be addressed” (p. 145). All of them agree on the fact that, thanks to politeness, the speaker should be able to maintain social harmony with the interlocutor by employing adequate linguistic and pragmatic forms.

Goffman’s (1967) concept of face underlines Brown and Levinson’s politeness theory. According to Goffman (1967), face is “the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact” (p. 5). Thus, face is our public self-image and it can be either positive or negative (here the term negative means just the opposite of positive). The former represents our desire of belonging and to be accepted by a group, while negative face is our desire of being free from imposition and of independence from others (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Yule, 1996, 2010). For the purpose of this dissertation, it is important to bear in mind that the concept of face, as well as the appropriateness of politeness markers, vary across cultures (Kasper, 1990).

Brown and Levinson also talked about face-threatening act (FTA), which are those acts that “run contrary to the face wants of the addressee and/or of the speaker” (1987, p. 313). When talking
about this, we refer to act as “what is intended to be done by a verbal or non-verbal communication, just as one or more ‘speech acts’ can be assigned to an utterance” (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 313). Thus, threatening another person’s self-image is considered an FTA, while lessening this threat is described as a face-saving act (FSA). These two concepts have to do with face as wants, that is, those basic aspects of face that every member of a group wants to satisfy (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Figure 4 below illustrates the strategies proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987, p. 316) for the performance of an FTA:

![Figure 4: Possible Strategies for Doing FTAs (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p. 316)](image)

The first step during interaction is to decide whether or not to commit the FTA. In the case that the speaker decides to do the FTA, according to Brown and Levinson (1987) there are different strategies oriented at minimising an FTA:

1. when the speakers go on record (i.e., the communicative intention is unambiguous) in doing the act, they are making clear their communicative intentions
2. when the speakers go off record (i.e., the communicative intention is ambiguous) in doing the act they perform the act indirectly

Furthermore, the first strategy can also be performed in three different ways:

1. do the act baldly, which is the most direct approach
2. do the act through positive politeness, which is oriented to the hearer’s positive face
3. do the act through negative politeness, which is oriented to the hearer’s negative face (apologies are an example of negative politeness)

It is important to point out that the performance of a certain type of act or another depends, on the one hand, on concepts such as imposition, social distance, and power, which are considered external factors. On the other hand, imposition and the degree of friendliness are said to be internal factors that have to be negotiated during the interaction. These two types of factors influence what we say and the way in which it is interpreted (Yule, 1996) and they are based on the evaluation of the
circumstances that the speaker makes (Rodríguez Peñarroja, 2015). This is why Grundy (2000, p. 146) states that “politeness phenomena are one manifestation of the wider concept of etiquette, or appropriate behaviour”. Additionally, as Beltrán-Palanques (2013) pointed out, “following Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987), a direct relationship between politeness and directness can be identified” (p. 18).

Although central to pragmatics, both Brown and Levison’s Politeness theory (1978, 1987) and Leech’s Principles of pragmatics (1983), have also received heavy criticisms. In The Pragmatics of Politeness (2014) Leech summarises the critiques that Brown and Levinson received. The first has to do with the issue of universality, as different authors claim that it possesses a Western, or even anglophone, bias. It is argued that it represents Anglo-Western individualism as opposed to Eastern collectivism, not only generally speaking but also in relation to the concept of face. Another shortcoming that has been identified within this theory of politeness is its emphasis on FTAs, which reinforces the Western bias. Leech’s Principles of pragmatics (1983), was also interpreted as containing universal claims about “principles of politeness” and “universal maxims” (in the plural form) by some authors such as Wierzbicka (2003, as cited in Leech, 2014), although Leech (2014) assures that he never made such claims. Brown and Levinson (1987) themselves acknowledged that although there are some universal principles of politeness, its application differs among cultures and subgroups. Leech (2014) clarified that the Politeness Principle (PP) “is a constraint observed in human communicative behaviour, influencing us to avoid communicative discord or offence, and maintain or enhance communicative concord or comity” (p. 87) and it is a goal-oriented approach. Since, according to Leech (1983), the PP and the Cooperative Principle (CP) are complementary, the following lines shall review the pragmatic implications of the latter.

Grice (1975) talked about conversational implicatures and the CP, being implicatures “what a speaker means but does not say” (Bach, 1994, p. 11), and “additional conveyed meaning” (Yule, 1996, p. 35). As Thomas (1995) said, “Grice’s theory is an attempt at explaining how a hearer gets from what is said to what is meant, from the level of expressed meaning to the level of implied meaning” (p. 56) (bold in the original). Additionally, Grice (1975) and Thomas (1995) distinguished between conventional implicature and conversational implicature. Although both types of implicature “convey an additional level of meaning, beyond the semantic meaning of the words uttered” (Thomas, 1995, p. 57), the difference lies in the fact that in the first case “the same implicature is always conveyed” (Thomas, 1995, p. 57), while in the second one “what is implied varies according to the context of utterance” (Thomas, 1995, p. 57). As conversational implicatures depend on context (Grice, 1975; Grundy, 2000), in order to make sense of them, some cooperative principle has to be taken into account (Yule, 1996). In line with this, Grice (1975) claimed that our
talk exchanges are characterised by some cooperative efforts in a mutual accepted direction. According to Grice, the CP causes the speakers to make their conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which they are engaged (1975, p.45).

In order to accomplish the CP, Grice (1975) proposed four categories that speakers should consider, namely quantity, quality, relation, and manner. These four categories comprise a system of supermaxims and different maxims which will help in the accomplishment of the CP. The supermaxims are the following (adapted from Grice, 1975, pp. 45-46):

- **Quantity** is made up of two maxims:
  - Make your contribution as informative as is required (for the current purpose of the exchange)
  - Do not make your contribution more informative than is required
- **Quality** is related to the supermaxim “Try to make your contribution one that is true” and to two specific maxims:
  - Do not say what you believe to be false
  - Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence
- **Relation** relates to a single maxim: “Be relevant”
- **Manner** includes the supermaxim “Be perspicuous” and four maxims:
  - Avoid obscurity of expression
  - Avoid ambiguity
  - Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity)
  - Be orderly

These principles are assumed in normal conversations (Yule, 1996). Nonetheless, speakers might fail to fulfil a maxim: a speaker may violate a maxim, which is the unostentatious non-observance of a maxim; they may opt out of observing a maxim if they are “unwilling to cooperate in the way the maxim requires” (Grice, 1975, p. 49); the speaker may also face a clash, which happens when two maxims clash with each other; or flout a maxim when the speaker blatantly fails to fulfil the maxim, so they generate an implicature (Grice, 1975). The means by which the hearer understands the meaning of an utterance where a maxim has been flouted is the conversational implicature, which means that s and h share contextual knowledge (Rodriguez Peñarroja, 2015). Later, Grice added a fourth category, which is infringing a maxim. This is what occurs when a speaker does not observe a
maxim because of imperfect linguistic performance, rather than a desire to generate a conversational implicature (Thomas, 1995).

As it happened with Austin’s and Searle’s speech act theories, Grice’s CP also received some critiques. One of them came from Thomas (1995), who identified five main issues. The first one is related to the intentionality of non-observance. According to her, sometimes the hearer cannot determine the intentionality of the non-observance of a maxim and, thus, cannot know if the speaker is generating any implicature. The second problem, which is closely related to the first one, concerns the distinction between types of non-observance (i.e., violating, flouting, etc.). Thomas (1995) claimed that this “raises once again the issue of what the speaker has implied” (p. 90). The next point, which is again closely connected with the former, has to do with the different nature of the maxims. Thomas (1995) argued that it is often not possible to give the precise amount of information required or to be perfectly clear when speaking, which affects the observance of the maxims of ‘Quantity’ and ‘Manner’. Thomas (1995) believed that we can give “more or less” the right amount of information or be “more or less” clear when speaking. Apart from that, it is not always possible to determine which maxim is being invoked since the maxims of ‘Quantity’ and ‘Manner’ sometimes overlap and co-occur, and the maxim of ‘Relevance’ seems to be always (bold in the original) in operation (Thomas, 1995).

Grice’s CP (1975) focuses mainly on the speaker, whereas Leech’s PP (1983) takes into account also the hearer as it will be explained in the following lines. Leech (1983) tried to explain “why people are often so indirect in conveying what they mean” (p. 80) by elaborating a Politeness Principle (PP), which in the negative form runs as follows “minimize (other things being equal) the expression of impolite beliefs” and its corresponding positive version is formulated as “maximize (other things being equal) the expression of polite beliefs” (Leech, 1983, p. 81). Here ‘negative’ and ‘positive’ came from Brown and Levinson’s (1978) distinction between negative and positive face. Leech (1983) also postulated a set of maxims, such as Grice (1975) and Lakoff (1977), which should be accomplished to reach a polite behaviour. These are the following (Leech, 1983, p. 132):

- tact maxim: (a) minimize cost to other [(b) maximize benefit to other]
- generosity maxim: (a) minimize benefit to self [(b) maximize cost to self]
- approbation maxim: (a) minimize dispraise of other [(b) maximize praise of other]
- modesty maxim: (a) minimize praise of self [(b) maximize dispraise of self]
- agreement maxim: (a) minimize disagreement between self and other [(b) maximize agreement between self and other]
sympathy maxim: (a) minimize antipathy between self and other [(b) maximize sympathy between self and other]

Here, self is usually identified with the speaker, while other with the hearer or people we refer to with 3rd person pronouns. According to Leech, these maxims of politeness explain the asymmetry of politeness in the sense that “what is polite with respect to h or to some third party will be impolite with respect to s, and vice versa” (1983, p. 107).

In particular, the tact maxim is said to be the crucial kind of politeness in the English-speaking society. It comprises two parts: the negative one “minimize the cost to h”, and the positive one “maximize the benefit to h”. Besides, Leech (1983) affirmed that the first four maxims deal with bipolar scales, that is, the cost – benefit and praise – dispraise ones, and for this reason they go in pairs. Instead, the other two maxims deal with the agreement and sympathy scales which are unipolar. Despite the link between scales, each maxim deals with a scale different from the others. Bearing this in mind, Leech (1983) stated that “Polite and impolite beliefs are respectively beliefs which are favourable and unfavourable to the hearer or to a third party, where ‘favourable’ and ‘unfavourable’ are measured on some relevant scale of values” (p. 81). For this reason, Leech (1983) compares the CP and the PP saying that the CP’s social function is to facilitate the participants of a conversation to communicate assuming that both are being cooperative, while PP’s social function is the maintenance of social balance and friendly relationships that help us in the assumption that the speakers are being cooperative. In other words, communication will not flow unless we are polite with the interlocutor. According to Thomas (1995), the main flaw in Leech’s PP is that “there appears to be no motivated way of restricting the number of maxims” (p. 167) in the sense that new maxims could be formulated in order to explain every little regularity in language use. However, she also acknowledged the importance of this approach as it allows to “explain cross-cultural differences in the perception of politeness and the use of politeness strategies” (Thomas, 1995, p. 168) (bold in the original). As a response to Thomas’s critique (1995), Leech (2014) postulated a “single superconstraint” referred to as the General Strategy of Politeness (GSP): “in order to be polite, S expresses or implies meanings that associate a favourable value with what pertains to O or associates an unfavourable value with what pertains to S” (p. 90). Here O usually refers to the addressee or a third-person different from H. According to Leech (2014), politeness is concerned with conveying meanings according to the GSP.

Before Leech (1983), Lakoff (1973) too took Grice’s (1975) CP as a starting point and proposed a series of maxims in order to explain her theory of politeness, which are “make yourself clear” and “be polite” (Lakoff, 1977, p. 86). However, she also tried to create a politeness rule that “explains
communication in terms of social factors that come into play” (Savić, 2014, p. 17) which is made up of three different rules:

- **Formality**: don’t impose
- **Hesitancy**: allow the addressee his options
- **Equality of camaraderie**: make the addressee feel good

(Adapted from Lakoff, 1977, p. 88)

These three strategies are also referred to as *distance, deference,* and *camaraderie* (Margetan et al., 2014) and they differ across cultures (Savić, 2014). Furthermore, Margetan et al. (2014) claimed that contrarily to CP “Politeness Principles are mutually exclusive, meaning that applying the wrong one at the wrong time is the same with not applying any” (p. 1).

In Leech’s (1983) words “it is clear that the Cooperative Principle and the Politeness Principle operate variably in different cultures or language communities” (p. 10). For this reason, chapter 3 will deal with the concept of culture in language teaching, while chapter 2 will deal with the models of communicative competence, which are directly linked to L2 pragmatics (Halenko, 2021).

It is important to highlight that Brown and Levinson’s (1978, 1987) and Grice’s (1975) theories have been included in this dissertation to contextualise the speech act of apologies, which, as mentioned before, are an example of negative politeness and an FTA for the speaker. Therefore, the author felt the need to explain what politeness, face, and FTAs are. However, the above-mentioned theories will not be used to analyse the data collected in this study, as it is not the focus of the thesis.
2. COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE

In his work *Aspects of The Theory of Syntax* (1969), Chomsky defined the concepts of *competence* and *performance*, being the former the knowledge of language of a monolingual speaker-listener, and the latter the real use of language. He focused only on linguistic competence and claimed that social factors should not be studied under the domain of linguistics (Celce-Murcia, 2007). Nevertheless, some authors reacted to his claim of using linguistic competence as a theoretical basis for language teaching and learning (Bagarić & Mihaljević Djigunović, 2007). As Orsini-Jones and Lee (2018) pointed out, “the development of the concept of CC is [also] affected by the functional grammar developed by Halliday (1985) […] who argues that language serves for the expression of content with a focus on meaning making” (pp. 10-11). Therefore, meaning is again the key aspect as it is in the study of pragmatics.

According to Yule (2010), communicative competence (CC) is “the general ability to use language accurately, appropriately, and flexibly” (p. 194). He mentioned three main components of CC: grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence and strategic competence. In this chapter the seminal models of CC will be reviewed, as they are the foundations of the more developed concept of ICC (see chapter 3). In addition, except for Hymes (1972), Canale and Swain (1980), and Canale (1983), they all consider pragmatics an important part of their construct, thus these are therefore of particular importance for the theoretical foundations of the present study.

2.1. Hymes’ (1972) Model

Hymes (1967, 1972) first defined the term CC and did so from a sociolinguistic perspective (Celce-Murcia et al, 1995). He claimed that, apart from being grammatically competent, a speaker should also be able to use grammar in different communicative situations, which means that a speaker also needs notions of sociolinguistic competence (Celce-Murcia, 2007). He designed a framework through the following questions (Hymes, 1972):

1. *Whether (and to what degree) something is formally possible*: Hymes argued “that something possible within a formal system is grammatical, cultural, or, on occasion, communicative (Hymes, 285, p. 1967 as cited in Hymes, 1972)
2. *Whether (and to what degree) something is feasible*: it defines a part of what is grouped under the label of performance and acceptability
3. *Whether (and to what degree) something is appropriate*: it is related to contextual features
4. Whether (and to what degree) something is done: the study of CC cannot be based only on occurrences, but they cannot be ignored because structural change is not independent from probabilities of occurrence

Later, Widdowson (1983) distinguished between the terms competence and capacity. The former was defined “in terms of the knowledge of linguistic and sociolinguistic conventions” (Bagarić & Mihaljević-Djigunović, 2007, p. 95), while the latter was the ability to create meaning in a language by means of the knowledge (Bagarić & Mihaljević-Djigunović, 2007). As stated by Orsini-Jones and Lee (2018) “both Hymes and Halliday agree that we need to look at what people say in context” (p.11). Nevertheless, Hymes also received some critiques. Byram (2021) claimed that Hymes transferred his description of first language acquisition and communication between L1 speakers (or ‘natives’) into the description of FLT. This implies that the model foreign language learners should follow is that of first language speakers, which can be misleading since it does not acknowledge their social identities and cultural competence in intercultural interaction.

2.2. Canale and Swain’s (1980) and Canale’s (1983) Model

Canale and Swain (1980) elaborated the first complete model of communicative competence within the context of bilingual language education in Canada, further elaborated by Canale (1983). According to them, CC is a combination of a supported system of skill and knowledge required for communication (Bagarić & Mihaljević-Djigunović, 2007), and it is made up of four elements (Celce-Murcia et al., 1995):

1. **Grammatical competence**: the familiarity with the language code
2. **Sociolinguistic competence**: the control of the sociocultural code of language use
3. **Discourse competence**: the capacity of create cohesive texts by combining language structures
4. **Strategic competence**: the strategies used in order to compensate for communication breakdowns

It was Canale who added *discourse competence* in 1983.

In Celce-Murcia et al.’s words (1995) Canale and Swain’s CC model “has broadened the scope of language instruction and language testing, and has been used as a starting point for many subsequent studies on the issue” (p. 8).
2.3. Bachman (1990) and Bachman and Palmer’s (1996) Model

In the late 1980s, Bachman proposed his model of communicative language ability, later revisited by Bachman and Palmer (1996). The second version divided language ability into two main components: language knowledge and strategic knowledge, which are subdivided in different categories (Bagarić & Mihaljević-Djigunović, 2007; Celce-Murcia et al., 1995).

Language knowledge is broken down into organizational knowledge and pragmatic knowledge, which together enhance communicatively effective language use. On the one hand, organizational knowledge is comprised of the skills responsible for the control of formal language structures. Its subcomponents are grammatical knowledge and textual knowledge. On the other hand, pragmatic knowledge consists of being able to create and interpret discourse, and it composed of lexical knowledge and functional knowledge.

Some authors (McNamara, 1995; Bagarić & Mihaljević-Djigunović, 2007) claimed its superiority to Canale and Swain’s model (1980, 1983).


In the late 1990s, Celce-Murcia et al. (1995) presented their model of CC “as a pyramid enclosing a circle and surrounded by another circle” (p. 9) (see Figure 5). The first circle is discourse competence, while the three vertices of the triangle are sociocultural competence, linguistic competence, and actional competence. The last one, enables speakers to perform and interpret speech acts and speech acts sets. On the other hand, the circle that surrounds the pyramid is strategic competence, which allows speakers to use negotiation and problem-solving strategies, as well as to compensate for the lack in any other competence.

They compared their new model with the ones elaborated by Canale and Swain’s (1980, 1983), and Bachman and Palmer’s (1996). Regarding the first one, Celce-Murcia et al. (1995) claimed that there are two minor differences in labelling some of the competences. They used the term linguistic competence instead of grammatical competence because, according to them, it also includes lexis and phonology, apart from morphology and syntax. Besides, they prefer the label sociocultural competence instead of sociolinguistic competence to mark the distinction from actional competence and because “sociocultural knowledge is necessary for the appropriate deployment of the resources in other components” (Celce-Murcia et al., 1995, p. 11).
As for Bachman’s and Palmer’s model, Celce-Murcia et al. (1995) argued that their own model shared different similarities with it in terms of the basic components. However, in the pragmatic-sociolinguistic dimension they found differences. For instance, functional knowledge and actional competence are somehow similar, but they are elaborated from diverse perspectives. Bachman and Palmer (1996) took the perspective of Halliday’s (1973 as cited in Celce-Murcia et al., 1995) conception of functional language use, while Celce-Murcia et al. (1995) took a more pedagogical approach that entailed an elaborated representation of language functions and speech acts.

After the comparison, Celce-Murcia et al. analysed the components of their own model. First, they referred to discourse competence by saying that it has to do with the creation of a consolidated spoken or written text by selecting, sequencing, and arranging words, structures, sequences, and utterances (Celce-Murcia et al., 1995). Moreover, it is made up of several subcomponents: cohesion, deixis, coherence, generic structure, and conversational structure.

Second, they defined linguistic competence as the component that involves the essential parts of communication: “the sentence patterns and types, the constituent structure, the morphological inflections, and the lexical resources, as well as the phonological and orthographic systems needed to realize communication as speech or writing” (Celce-Murcia et al., 1995, pp. 16-17).

Third, actional competence is understood as the competence that matches actional purpose with linguistic form on the basis of the knowledge of speech acts and speech acts sets: it “is closely related to interlanguage pragmatics” (1995, p. 17). They claimed that they needed to add this competence to the four proposed by Canale and Swain’s (1980, 1983) model because language functions and speech acts are considered to be fundamental in L2 learning and, because of that, numerous taxonomies have
been elaborated, although they could not include them under any of the other four competences. They subdivide actional competence in knowledge of language function and knowledge of speech acts sets.

Fourth, sociocultural competence refers to the speaker’s ability to convey meaning in appropriate ways depending on the social and cultural context and on the pragmatic issues related to it. This implies that language is “an integral part of the individual's identity and the most important channel of social organization, embedded in the culture of the communities where it is used” (Celce-Murcia et al., 1995, p. 23). According to Celce-Murcia et al. (1995), L2 instruction does not prepare learners for the complexity of real-life communication since in most L2 programmes learners do not learn culture, context, and meaning. Furthermore, they stated that there are four sociocultural variables:

1. **Social contextual factors**: they have to do with participants’ interaction when communication occurs
2. **Stylistic appropriate factors**: they have to do with explicit instruction, in particular with politeness strategies
3. **Cultural factors**: they have to do with schematic knowledge (Widdowson, 1990)
4. **Non-verbal communicative factors**: they entail a relevant part of social meaning

Finally, strategic competence refers to the understanding of communication strategies and their use. Although Celce-Murcia et al. (1995) claimed that this part of the framework could have been greatly expanded, they distinguished five types of strategies:

1. **Avoidance or reduction strategies**
2. **Achievement or compensatory strategies**
3. **Stalling or time-gaining strategies**
4. **Self-monitoring strategies**
5. **Interactional strategies**

The novelty of this model consisted in the fact that its various components are interrelated, and that the description of this interrelation was significant for the complete understanding of CC.

### 2.5. Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor (2006) Model

Based on some of the previous models, Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor (2006) elaborated their own model of CC. The novelty of this framework is that they included *intercultural competence* as one of the components of CC, which was first introduced by Byram in 1997.
This model has five components, namely discourse, linguistic, pragmatic, intercultural and strategic competence. They all appear to be inside rectangular boxes, with discourse competence in the middle of the others as this component is considered to be the core element of this model. In Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor’s (2006) words “the rest of the components serve to build discourse competence which, in turn, also shapes each of the other competencies” (p. 15). This is why they claimed that all components interact with each other, so they cannot be developed in isolation. An increase in one of the elements produces an increase in the whole construct. Figure 6 below exemplifies this model of CC.

![Figure 6: Usó-Juan and Martinez-Flor (2006, p. 16) Model of Communicative Competence](image)

Discourse competence concerns the choice and arrangement of sentences or utterances to obtain a coherent and cohesive written or spoken text given a certain context. Linguistic competence refers to aspects of phonology, vocabulary, and grammar. Pragmatic competence has to do with sociolinguistic and illocutionary kinds of knowledge. Intercultural competence refers to cultural and non-verbal communicative factors, being the former sociocultural knowledge of the TL culture and of dialects, as well as cross-cultural awareness, and the latter non-verbal signs. Strategic competence, as in some previous models, refers to those strategies employed in order to avoid breakdowns in conversation. However, the novelty is that here strategic competence includes also learning strategies (Usó-Juan & Martínez-Flor, 2006).

According to the authors of this model, its aim is threefold:

1. It illustrates the relationship among the elements
2. It includes and separates pragmatic and intercultural competence
3. It stresses the role of the four skills to build discourse competence

2.6. Celce-Murcia’s (2007) Model

Twelve years after the publication of Celce-Murcia et al.’s (1995) model of CC, Celce-Murcia proposed a revision of it.

Firstly, sociocultural competence is the speakers’ pragmatic knowledge. Teaching that is a pedagogical challenge for teachers since teaching sociocultural behaviours and expectations is quite more complex than teaching linguistic knowledge. Three of the five variables proposed in the previous model are maintained in this one: social contextual factors, stylistic appropriateness, and cultural factors. Secondly, discourse competence maintains the central role and meaning explained in the previous model. Nevertheless, Celce-Murcia (2007) considered four sub-areas as fundamental for this new model: cohesion, coherence, deixis, and generic structure. Thirdly, linguistic competence includes phonological knowledge, lexical knowledge, morphological knowledge, and syntactic knowledge, as in the previous version of the model. Fourthly, formulaic competence “refers to those fixed and prefabricated chunks of language that speakers use heavily in everyday interactions” (Celce-Murcia, 2007: 47). It is considered to be the counterbalance to linguistic competence. Celce-Murcia (2007) claimed that formulaic competence was gaining a crucial role in speaker’s fluency. Fifthly, interactional competence is of extreme importance in the sense that speech acts and speech acts sets performance can be quite different across different languages. It has three sub-components significant in this revised model: actional competence, conversational competence, non-verbal/paralinguistic competence. Finally, strategic competence is made up of strategies for language learning and use, and they could be either learning or communicative strategies.

For the purpose of this model, the most important learning strategies are cognitive, metacognitive, and memory-related strategies. On the other hand, within communicative strategies achievement, stalling, self-monitoring, interacting, and social strategies are identified. As Figure 7 illustrates, there are some differences from the previous version of the model:
Celce-Murcia’s (2007) stated “if the goal of language instruction is communicative competence, language instruction must be integrated with cultural and cross-cultural instruction” (p. 51) and this is why one of the key features of this revised model is the inclusion of the cultural element in L2 teaching. This will be explored further in section 3.5 (teaching ICC). She also advocated for the use of realistic and authentic tasks, as well as the selection of accurate and authentic content for language teaching regarding the TL and TL culture. Furthermore, it is affirmed that language learners should master both linguistic and pragmatic competence. In other words, there should be a balance between language as a system and language as a formula.

2.7. Main differences between the models of CC

As pointed out by Beltrán-Palanques (2013), certain differences can be identified between the different communicative competence models mentioned. For instance, the models presented by Canale and Swain (1980), Canale (1983) and Bachman (1990) do not make clear how each component is correlated to the communicative competence construct, which is something that Celce-Murcia et al. (1995), Usó-Juan and Martinez-Flor (2006) and Celce-Murcia (2007) do instead.

Another important difference is that Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor’s (2006) model propose pragmatic competence as an independent element within the construct. As mentioned before, their model pays special attention to the intercultural competence component, which is something that except for Celce-Murcia’s (2007) model has not been done by the other authors. Finally, Beltrán-
Palanques (2013) noted that only Bachman (1990) and Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor (2006) consider the function of the four language skills.

In the words of Ryan (2012) “intercultural communicative competence enlarges communicative competence to include intercultural competence” (p. 428). For this reason, the next chapter will deal with this extended concept which goes a step beyond CC.
3. INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE

Chapter 1 discussed politeness, which, according to Orsini-Jones and Lee (2018) “underpins effective ICC” (p. 27). In line with this, Byram (2021) claimed that “Politeness is only the visible symptom of a more complex phenomenon: the differences in beliefs, values, behaviours and meaning through which people interact with each other, differences which may be incompatible and contain the seeds of conflict” (p. 6). The relation between language and culture is exemplified in Hymes’s (1975) definition of culture. In his words, “Culture is understood as a ‘speech community’: a group ‘sharing knowledge of rules for the conduct and interpretation of speech’. Such sharing comprises knowledge of at least one form of speech and knowledge of its patterns of use” (p. 51). Through this definition Hymes highlighted the central role of language in a group, since it is one of the elements that holds the group together. Thus, a language learner needs to be proficient in pragmatics in order to understand what is not actually said through context. As online environments are different interactional contexts, they are more demanding than face-to-face ones in relation to this, as there are less or no contextual cues (Levy, 2007). Seiz Ortíz et al. (2015) gave a broader definition of culture. They refer to it as

[…] the way people think, feel and act and can be defined as the set of unique characteristics that distinguish the members of one group from those of another group, and, therefore, culture in this sense does not refer to individuals, but to the members of a group that is expected to behave in a certain way. (p. 4)

Seiz Ortíz et al. (2015) also emphasised the importance of cultural orientations, that is, the particular ways of acting, thinking and judging that are considered normal in a specific culture.

There is no consensus on the terms to be used for the concept dealt with in this chapter. It has been referred to as cross-cultural adaptation, transcultural adaptation, transcultural communication, transcultural competence, intercultural competence, international competence, intercultural sensitivity, intercultural effectiveness, intercultural communicative competence (ICC), and so forth (Deardorff, 2006; Jackson, 2019; Sinicrope et al., 2007). This lack of consensus also reflects the different perspectives adopted by scholars, as well as the different disciplines involved in its definition. However, for the purpose of this dissertation intercultural communicative competence will be taken as a reference, as ICC is the most used expression (Fantini, 2009, 2020) among linguists. This discussion about whether to use a term or another arises from the increasing interest of scholars and researchers in the role that culture plays in L2 teaching. Orsini-Jones and Lee (2018) argued that “these terms are not equivalent to each other and that every definition carries different nuances and outlines different viewpoints that are not normally interchangeable” (p. 9), as did Jackson (2020).
It is argued here that humankind has always dealt with intercultural communication (Di Sarno-García, 2020) because contact among different cultures and ethnicities has always existed. When the first models of ICC were being framed, Schumann’s (1978) acculturation theory was published in his work *The Pidginization Process: A Model for Second Language Acquisition* where he presented the case study of Alberto, a young Costa Rican boy who moved to the USA, in order to explain the relationship between culture and TL proficiency, and in particular his level of acculturation. Schumann’s (1978) hypothesis was that the more a person acculturates (i.e., has contact and gets involved in the TL culture), the more s/he will be a proficient speaker of the TL. Similarly, “it has been argued that learners who identify with the speakers of the language they are learning will be more successful” (Byram, 2013, p. 55). In line with that, Sykes (2017) argued that the construct of ICC is one of the best ways to describe the inseparable relation between language and culture. González-Lloret (2019) claimed that “Intercultural competence is essential to be able to communicate within the sociopragmatics of the L2, and it pushes learners to reflect on their own sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic norms” (p. 119).

The lack of consensus on the term to be used is also reflected in the wide variety of definitions that appear in the vast literature on this topic. For instance, Deardorff (2009) broadly defined ICC as “effective and appropriate behaviour and communication in intercultural situations” (p. 479). However, there are much more complex definitions of this construct, and later in this chapter the models proposed by the same authors of some of the definitions that are presented in the following lines will be analysed.

Chen and Starosta (1996) defined intercultural communication competence as “the ability to negotiate cultural meanings and to execute appropriately effective communication behaviours that recognize the interactants’ multiple identities in a specific environment” (pp. 358-359). Byram devoted a whole book to the definition of ICC, that is, *Teaching and Assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence* (1997, lately revised in 2021). According to him, ICC is “the ability to interact with people from another social group in another language” (Byram, 2021, p. 97), as opposed to intercultural competence, which is “the ability to interact in their own language with people from another culture” (p. 96). Speakers who possess the latter rather than the former may operate in a wider range of contexts. Educational objectives are included in both kinds of competence as it is in educational contexts that most language learning originates (Byram, 2021).

Byram also claimed that

The aims of teaching languages for intercultural competence include: linguistic, sociolinguistic and discourse competence in language, combined with intercultural competences in the discovery, analysis,
While according to Fantini ICC is

The complex of abilities needed to perform effectively and appropriately when interacting with others who are linguistically and culturally different from oneself. Whereas “effective” usually reflects one’s own view of one’s performance in the LC2, “appropriate” relates to how one’s performance is perceived by one’s hosts. (Adapted from Fantini, 2005, p. 1)

Deardoff (2009) edited The SAGE Handbook of Intercultural Competence where several authors discussed this matter. For example, Spitzberg and Changnon (2009) claimed that intercultural competence is “the appropriate and effective management of interaction between people who, to some degree or another, represent different affective, cognitive, and behavioural orientations to the world” (p. 7). This definition makes reference to the three dimensions of IC that Kim (2001) refers to in her model of IC explained in her book Becoming intercultural: An integrative theory of communication and cross-cultural adaptation. Kim (2009) claimed that IC is

A culture-general and context-general concept that is applicable to all encounters between individuals of differing cultural (or ethnic) backgrounds, regardless of the particularities of the cultural backgrounds and the social situations involved. (p. 54)

Recently, Salomão and Viana da Silva (2023) defined ICC as

The ability to perceive the diversity of the other, neutralize one’s own beliefs (even if temporarily), and think in such a way as to be able to capture other perspectives. The individual with such competence should understand that cultural diversity involves not only the tolerance of difference, but also the understanding of what is behind the difference, which includes a critical evaluation of it. (p. 185)

Having reviewed the terms employed in the literature, and some of the most known definitions of this construct (mainly IC and ICC), from now on the terms intercultural communicative competence (ICC) will be used as its definition is the one preferred by the author of this thesis. Moreover, although there exist numerous models of ICC and IC, the three that are most appropriate for FLT have been selected.


In his book Teaching and Assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence (1997) Byram presented his first version of the model of ICC. Here, he claimed that it should be useful for language teachers both for teaching and assessing, although he also admitted that it may not be applicable to
all situations since FLT varies depending on the situation. Byram took as a starting point the models of CC which, as Coperías-Aguilar (2002) said, “is based on the ability speakers have in their first language” (p. 86). The novelty of this model resides in the fact that interlocutors involved in an intercultural encounter are considered to be *intercultural speakers* rather than a ‘native speaker’ and a learner pretending to be a ‘native speaker’. Thus, Byram left behind the monolingual perspective and the native speaker model. The concept of the intercultural speaker will be discussed later in this chapter. Byram (1997) also distinguished between the “tourist” and the “sojourner”. The former is somebody who does not expect fundamental changes from the experience of contact with the other culture, while the latter is somebody “whose own beliefs, behaviours and meanings are in turn challenged and expected to change” (Byram, 1997, p.1).

Byram argued that the two preconditions for ICC are knowledge and attitude, although they may be influenced by the process of ICC. This happens because of the skills a speaker brings to the interaction, that is, “skills of interpretation and establishing relationships between aspects of the two cultures [and] skills of discovery and interaction” (Byram, 1997, p. 33). Besides, he claimed that the teaching of intercultural communication should be integrated within a philosophy of political education, and that learners’ critical cultural awareness of the cultures involved should be developed. Then, Byram presented a schema of the factors, named “savoirs”, that are involved in intercultural communication.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills</th>
<th>Knowledge</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Attitudes</th>
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<tr>
<td>interpret and relate; (savoir comprendre)</td>
<td>of self and other; of interaction: individual and societal (savoirs)</td>
<td>political education critical cultural awareness (savoir s’engager)</td>
<td>relativizing self valuing other (savoir être)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Skills</td>
<td>discover and/or interact (savoir apprendre/faire)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 8: Factors in intercultural communication (Byram, 1997, p. 34)*

- *Savoir être* is concerned with attitudes of curiosity and openness, as well as eagerness to avoid scepticism and judgment regarding others and presumptions of one’s own culture
- *Savoirs* refers to knowledge of social groups and their culture in one’s and in the interlocutor’s country, as well as knowledge of the process of societal and individual interaction
- *Savoir comprendre* makes reference to the skills of interpreting and relating a document or event from another culture to one’s own and explain it
- *Savoir apprendre/ faire* has to do with skills of discovery and interaction and to put them in practice in real-time communication
- *Savoir s’engager* relates to critical awareness and political education, that is, the ability to make critical evaluations based on explicit criteria

In the first part of the model Byram included linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, and discourse competence as characteristics of an intercultural speaker (Jackson, 2019), while the second part has to do with the *savoirs*.

![Figure 9: Byram’s (1997, 2021 p.98) Model of Intercultural Communicative Competence](image)

Sykes (2017) claimed that “pragmatic abilities are fundamental to realizing each of these components” (p. 119), making clear the relationship between ICC and ILP. According to Byram (2021), Figure 8 above is an attempt to show how the different elements are interrelated.

Byram (1997) stated that subjects such as geography, history, or literature help in the acquisition of student’s ICC. He (2008, as cited in Byram 2013) advocated for a theory of intercultural citizenship, which integrates the goal of foreign language teaching to that of citizenship education by modifying and improving them. This is the reason why he argued that “nationalism and identification with a national community should be tempered and complemented, if not replaced, by identification
with internationalism and international communities” (Byram, 2013, p. 57) and that language teachers are in a favourable position to make their learners think about other cultures.

To sum up, Byram (2021) distinguished three main characteristics of his model of ICC:

- the model proposed is that of the intercultural speaker, which in contrast to the native speaker model is an attainable ideal
- the context for the acquisition of ICC is educational, thus the objectives included are also educational
- because of that, it refers to locations of learning and to the figures of the teacher and learner

More recently Byram (2021) published a revisited version of his monograph, where he responded to the critiques that the first version received. Therefore, both editions of the book were checked and used to write this doctoral dissertation. Also, this model will be used to analyse the data in this study as it is the most extensive and complete and, as mentioned above, it has been designed for an educational language context. In addition, the author agrees with the fact that the ideal model for language learners is the intercultural speaker model as opposed to the native speaker model.

3.2. Fantini’s (2005) Model

Apart from Byram’s, Fantini’s definition of ICC is one of the most complete. He adopted Agar’s (1994) concept of languaculture and renamed it linguaculture. According to Fantini, we all are immersed in our ‘native’ linguaculture (LC1), but if we have a close contact with a second linguaculture we enter into a LC2 that can affect our LC1 (Fantini, 2005, 2019). Since ICC builds on CC, he claimed that we all possess a ‘native’ CC (CC1), thus, if we get in contact with another culture and we decide to develop the CC2, we will develop ICC in the process of acquiring the CC2 (Fantini, 2009, 2019). Fantini (2019) illustrated this relationship:

![Figure 10: Interaction of CC1 and CC2 (Fantini, 2019, p. 30)](image)

He claimed that the process of acquiring ICC has no end point. However, sometimes it may encounter periods of stagnation or regression which depend on motivation and the contact with the TL culture.

Fantini’s (2009, 2019) framework comprises several components:
traits and characteristics: traits are said to be innate personal qualities, whereas characteristics are acquired lately in one’s own cultural context

three areas or domains:
- the ability to establish and maintain relationships
- the ability to communicate with minimal loss or distortion
- the ability to collaborate in order to accomplish something of mutual interest or need

four dimensions:
- knowledge
- (positive) attitudes/affect
- skills
- awareness (which plays a crucial role in cross-cultural development)

Figure 11: Dimensions of Intercultural Competence (Fantini, 2009, p. 199)

proficiency in the host language: it increases the acquisition of ICC in both qualitative and quantitative ways. This process also changes the way in which we see the world

developmental levels:
- level I: educational traveller
- level II: sojourner
- level III: professional
- level IV: intercultural/multicultural specialist

(Adapted from Fantini, 2005, pp. 1-2)
Unlike other models of ICC, although language alone is not enough, in Fantini’s proficiency in the TL is a key point in the development of ICC. Fantini (2009) argued that current instructional approaches are based

[…] on developing the learners’ ability to communicate with speakers of other languages, whether these other speakers are native or not, and this is accomplished primarily by teaching students how to perform functions such as greetings, inquiring, requesting, apologizing, and so forth. In this approach, the performance of function includes appropriate behaviours and interactive strategies that must accompany speaking the target language. In this way, the development of second cultural competencies are also assured. (p. 194)

The focus of current instructional approaches is on the teaching of speech acts, which entails the teaching of proper behaviours and useful interaction strategies. According to Fantini (2009), this is what learners of an L2 need in order to develop not only linguist but also cultural skills. This study mixes therefore both the teaching of a specific set of speech acts and cultural topics. Fantini claimed that “all three areas – language, behaviours, and interactive strategies – together form the components of speech acts whether dealing with one’s own culture or across cultures” (Fantini, 2009, p. 195).

Fantini (2019) argued that this model of ICC is a more comprehensive construct that the other existing models since it is based on a compilation drawn from more than 200 publications in different languages and covering fifty years. Nevertheless, it still understands language from the native speaker perspective.


Although Deardorff is not a linguist ‘by trade’ as Byram and Fantini, her model is one of the most widely used models of IC in the Higher Education sector, and for subjects other than languages too. Deardorff (2004, 2006) used a Delphi methodology where 23 prominent intercultural experts participated in a study whose aim was to find a definition of what IC is, and to reach a consensus on the elements that compose it. The Delphi technique is employed when experts who are geographically distant need to discuss a particular matter. She illustrated the results of this study in two visual models of IC. According to her, these two models of defining IC “could be used by administrators and others in their work in developing and assessing intercultural competence” (Deardorff, 2006, p. 254).

The first one is a pyramid model of IC where the lower levels enhance the higher ones. In this case the key point is the process orientation, which means that learners are expected to be aware of
what they are learning at each level and the process skills that they need for the development of IC (Deardorff, 2006). As in Byram’s (1997) model, here attitude is fundamental (Deardorff, 2006; Jackson, 2019), as well as skills (Orsini-Jones & Lee, 2018). In particular, Deardorff (2006) referred to attitudes of openness, respect, curiosity and discovery. Since IC is represented as a pyramid, it is seen as if there were degrees of competence. Besides, the author claimed that IC is not circumscribed to the elements included in this model.

Furthermore, as one can observe from Figure 12 above, this model is said to move from the individual level of personal attributes and attitudes to the interactive cultural level regarding the outcomes, that are appropriate and effective behaviour and communication in intercultural interaction (Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009). Both internal and external factors are emphasized in this model, and this is a unique characteristic of it (Deardorff, 2004, 2006).

Another way of displaying the results of her research was a process model of IC, represented in Figure 13 below. Although it contains the same elements of the previous one, this model “depicts the complexity of acquiring intercultural competence in outlining more movement and process orientation that occurs between the various elements” (Deardorff, 2006, p. 257). It has also different similarities with the first one. First, the critical element is still attitude; second, it maintains the unique element of both internal and external factors; third, it allows the movement from attitudes and/or
attitudes and skill/knowledge straight to the external outcomes, although the learner would not be as appropriate and effective as if the entire cycle was completed (Deardorff, 2004, 2006).

Figure 13: Deardorff's (2004) Process Model of Intercultural Competence (as cited in Deardorff, 2006, p. 256)

In line with what Fantini (2005, 2009) stated about ICC, this model shows that the development of IC is an ongoing process. Sykes (2017) believed that

Most relevant to the teaching and learning of pragmatics is Deardorff’s emphasis on cyclical work to arrive at desired outcomes as well as the critical role of the learner in making choices about interactions based on an informed set of assumptions. (p. 120)

Having reviewed the seminal models of ICC and IC, the following section shall explore the figure of the intercultural speaker.

3.4. The Intercultural Speaker

According to House (2007), the intercultural speaker “is a person who has managed to settle for the In-between, who knows and can perform in both his and her native culture and in another one acquired at some later date” (p. 19). Similarly, Coperías-Aguilar (2002) claimed that
This intercultural speaker has the ability to manage communication and interaction between people of different cultural identities and different languages, and he is also able to come out of himself and take another perspective, which will allow him to bring into the interaction different interpretations of reality. (p. 92)

In his model of ICC Byram (1997) substituted the native speaker model with that of the intercultural speaker. According to him, the intercultural speaker brings to the interaction both knowledge of their country, which is part of their social identity, and knowledge of the host country, which is a key point for mutual understanding. Byram (1997) argued that in an interaction of two people with different social identities the kind of interaction is not the same as the one that two monolingual speakers of the same country would have. The former would be among intercultural speakers. Additionally, he claimed that intercultural speakers are “interlocutors involved in intercultural communication and interaction” (p. 32) and that is one of the three fundamental features of his model of ICC. The ability to establish and maintain relationships with others is a key feature of the intercultural speaker, together with the five savoirs (Byram, 2021). The intercultural speaker is not only linguistically but also culturally competent and s/he “is not bound to specific cultures or languages, but is competent in mediating across multiple borders” (Wilkinson, 2012, p. 296).

At the time Byram coined the term and substituted the concept of the native speaker with that of the intercultural speaker it was quite revolutionary, and it was the benchmark for many other linguists and models of ICC. For instance, Coperías-Aguilar (2010) stated that taking the native speaker as a model may come into the frustration of the language learners since it is an unrealistic model to imitate, and it means also to forget about the leaner’s culture. However, she clarified that changing the learners’ goal does not mean lowering the standards, instead, it means to change the viewpoint. Thus, the intercultural speaker is seen as a mediator between the cultures that participate in the interaction (Byram, 1997; Coperías-Aguilar, 2002, 2010; Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009). Wilkinson (2012), however, argued that the figure of the intercultural speaker has also become itself idealistic.

3.5. Teaching and Assessing Intercultural Communicative Competence

After reviewing some of the most important models of ICC, it is also necessary to explain how this competence should be taught to language students in the 21st century globalised and multicultural learning environment. In line with this, Usó-Juan and Martinez-Flor (2006) claimed that “In order to foster L2 learners’ knowledge of the skills required to be successful in intercultural communication,
the development of intercultural communicative competence should be included within a communicative approach for L2 teaching” (p. 14).

First of all, in order to implement ICC in the curriculum, consideration must be given to the “inseparable nature of language and culture” (Scheu, 1997, p. 238) and the way in which students need to learn how the TL reflects the culture of the TL community/communities (Di Sarno García, 2020). Scholars should also consider teaching students that since context is the core element in pragmatics, they will need to adapt their strategies to that context, which in the field of intercultural communication is culture. In line with this, Sercu (2003) stated that “to become a competent speaker of a foreign language, learners need to acquire the necessary linguistic, pragmatic and discourse competencies to be able to communicate successfully in intercultural contact situations” (p. 2).

Furthermore, authors such as Scheu (1997) and Byram (2013) argued that a clash between nationalism and the need for internationalism is being experienced by the society. Multilingual education and intercultural citizenship are of great importance if teachers want to foster students’ intercultural competence. This is why language teachers should prepare their students to use language in the future (Byram, 2013), not only within the classroom context. Because of this, subjects such as literature, history or geography should be used to implement ICC (Byram, 1997, 2021). According to Byram et al. and Corbett (2002 and 2003 respectively, as cited in Coperías-Aguilar, 2007), teachers do not need to employ new methodologies to introduce IC, they can still use projects, group activities and role-plays; the change will be the role of language as a tool for mediating with cultural differences.

Byram (1997) claimed that some of the objectives of ICC could be implemented in the curriculum, such as discovery skills, but that others are not compatible with class work. According to him, there are three main places where ICC can be acquired: classroom, fieldwork, and independent learning. In the classroom, the presence of the teacher is central; in fieldwork the teacher is just a supervisor; while in independent learning, although the teacher may be a guide, the student is fully responsible (Coperías-Aguilar, 2007). Byram (2021) included online experiences within the category of fieldwork and as a development of the notion of study abroad, which makes more possible than in the past the interaction among students of different cultures (Jackson, 2019 as cited in Byram, 2021). Teachers should also avoid textbooks that portray a stereotypical characterisation of cultures and choose instead a textbook that offers “a complete, up-to-date, realistic and representative picture of the foreign intercultural society” (Sercu, 1995, p. 140).

Scheu (1997) believed that FLT needs to be re-oriented according to the following aspects:
• a psychological approach: students need to be psychologically prepared to assimilate cultural knowledge. They will need to start by being “aware of their own culturally restricted behaviour” (Scheu, 1997, p. 245)
• a relativistic approach: students should be provided with information about cultural norms of the TL which are similar to theirs
• socialization in the FL classroom:
  • socialization through language
  • socialization in the second language classroom
  • tertiary socialization

Scheu argued that “combined with language socialization, tertiary socialization of second language learners will result in intercultural communicative competence” (Scheu, 1997, p. 247). In line with what Fantini (2005) claimed later, Scheu (1997) believed that FL proficiency is the first requisite for communication, which at the same time is the first step for intercultural understanding. Moreover, these three approaches will also influence the selection of material and content.

Byram (2021) claimed that the need to formulate clear objectives to assess ICC within educational institutions cannot be ignored. According to him, “clearly formulated objectives are essential to proper assessment” (Byram, 2021, p. 32), as it is the case in Europe with the Common European Framework for Language Learning and Teaching (Council of Europe, 2001). Although its first version did not include scales or descriptors neither for intercultural competence nor pluricultural competence, the Companion Volume (Council of Europe, 2020) did include those scales for pluricultural repertoire. Byram (2021) said, “the distinction between pluricultural and intercultural becomes a fuzzy boundary” (p.36). Here are considered only the abilities that a B2 level language learner should include, as this is the level of the English subject participants in the study discussed in the present dissertation were enrolled on. According to the Council of Europe (2020, p. 125) the pluricultural repertoire of a B2 level student can:

• Describe and evaluate the viewpoints and practices of their own and other social groups, showing awareness of the implicit values on which judgments and prejudices are frequently based
• Explain their interpretation of the cultural assumptions, preconceptions, stereotypes and prejudices of their own community and of other communities that they are familiar with
• Interpret and explain a document or event from another culture and relate it to documents or events from their own culture(s) and/or from cultures with which they are familiar
• Discuss the objectivity and balance of information and opinions expressed in the media about their own and other communities
• Identify and reflect on similarities and differences in culturally determined behavioural patterns (e.g., gestures and speech volume or, for sign languages, sign size) and discuss their significance in order to negotiate mutual understanding

• In an intercultural encounter, recognise that what one normally takes for granted in a particular situation is not necessarily shared by others, and can react and express themselves appropriately

• Generally interpret cultural cues appropriately in the culture concerned

• Reflect on and explain particular ways of communicating in their own and other cultures, and the risks of misunderstanding they generate

The first four points represent a B2 high level, thus they can be applied also to C levels.

Byram (2021) proposed “to ignore the constraints of defining objectives always in behavioural terms externally observable and always measurable” (p. 84) as the relationship between skills, attitudes, and knowledge “leads to overlap and repetition among objectives descriptions” (p. 84). Thus, he suggested answering to the question ‘What might count as…’ instead. In order to analyse participants’ acquisition of ICC in the study presented in this dissertation, this approach will be followed. In the Introduction section a detailed description of the objectives set in this study are discussed. As Orsini-Jones and Lee (2018) pointed out, in Byram (1997) the objectives as “can-do” statements provided for the savoirs show that his model of ICC can be applied in the FL class. However, not all Byram’s objectives are suitable for traditional classes. For this reasons, new approaches to language learning and teaching are being explored (O’Dowd & Dooly, 2020) such as telecollaboration (Orsini-Jones & Lee, 2018). Chapter 4.2 will explore how telecollaboration contributes to the development of pragmatic competence and ICC as Byram (1997, 2021) defined it.

In line with Byram’s (1997, 2021) view, Fantini (2012) also considered a series of ICC components that should be assessed, such as openness, curiosity, suspending judgements, the abilities to collaborate and to establish and maintain relationships, attitudes, skills, language proficiency, etc., as seen in section 2 of this chapter. Fantini (2012) stated that

[…] assessment has to do with tracking the participants’ movement toward the educational goals and their attainment of the stated objectives. Whereas the goals point to a long-term and future direction, the objectives are what we actually expect participants to achieve within the context of the program. […] goals are not measured, unlike objectives, which are. Objectives establish the outcomes expected of participants and, when attained, move the individuals closer in the direction of the goals. This is what assessment tries to determine. (p. 393)

In addition, according to him, ICC assessment involves the combination of different strategies. For the purpose of this dissertation, the following aspects will be considered:
oral and written activities (e.g., presentations, paraphrasing, essays, journals)

- individual and interactive activities in pairs or small groups (e.g., discussions, debates, tasks, reflective activities, etc.) (Fantini, 2012, p. 395)

Authors such as O’Dowd (2012) claimed that telecollaborative exchanges can be suitable for the development of students’ awareness of some aspects of cultural knowledge, such as the target culture’s national memory and institutions, critical cultural awareness, cultural differences in communicative practices (in particular, the development of L2 pragmatic competence). Also Fantini (2019) claimed its usefulness for developing ICC. For this reason, the next chapter will explore this type of computer-mediated communication (CMC).
4. COMPUTER-ASSISTED LANGUAGE LEARNING

Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) is an interdisciplinary area (Beatty, 2010; Chambers, 2010; Chun, 2011; Gruba, 2004; Levy, 1997) of linguistics that arose throughout the 1960s and the 1970s, which includes SLA and FLT as two areas of research within it (Chun, 2011). It should be noted that “CALL is not a methodology; it is an emerging field that studies how technology is used as one (of many) tool(s) for language learning” (Chun, 2011, p. 663). Its origins date back to the 1960s (Davies, 2002). This section will provide an overview of the history of CALL in ‘formal’ settings.

In his work *Computer-Assisted Language Learning: Context and Conceptualization* Levy (1997) defined CALL as “the search for and study of applications of the computer in language teaching and learning” (Levy, 1997, p. 1). Although some authors find it difficult to define a term which has to do with the changing nature of computers and technologies (Beatty, 2010; Levy, 1997) CALL has been broadly defined also as “any process in which a learner uses a computer and, as a result, improves his or her language” (Beatty, 2010, p. 7). The difficulty of defining the concept is also reflected in the large number of other terms used to refer to it, as it was pointed out by Beatty (2010, p. 25) and Gruba (2004, p. 623): CAI (Computer-Aided Instruction), CAL (Computer-Assisted Learning); CALI (Computer-Assisted Language Instruction), CAT (Computer-Assisted Teaching), CELL (Computer-Enhanced Language Learning), TELL (Technology-Enhanced Language Learning), CASLA (Computer Applications in Second Language Acquisition) (Chapelle, 2001). In spite of this wide array of terms, the most used acronym is CALL (Chamber, 2009; Gruba, 2004). In addition, in their article *Why call CALL “CALL”?* Levy and Hubbard (2005) analysed the reasons why this term was still controversial at the time the article was written, but also the reasons why it is the most adequate. They argued that although other disciplines benefit from the use of computers to teach, “languages are indeed different as an object for learning” (Levy & Hubbard, 2005, p. 145) because of the interrelated dimensions that one needs to master while learning a language. Figure 14 below represents their conceptualisation of the CALL perspective:

![Figure 14: Levy and Hubbard's (2005, p. 146) conceptualisation of the CALL perspective](image)
The language learning objectives, the language learner, and the computer are at the core of this conceptualisation. The authors claimed that this is a different perspective from that of those implicated in language teaching and learning. Levy and Hubbard (2005) also highlighted the importance of using a collective label to describe what is done within the area. In addition, they believed that the term CALL must be distinguished from ICTs since the latter does not encompass research, design, and the process of “evaluating new language learning tutors and tools” (Levy & Hubbard, 2005, p. 147). Their last argument was that CALL has been used over more than twenty years (today more than thirty years) by international organisations and in the title of publications specialised in this area, so this term is considered an inclusive one rather than exclusive.

Turning to the history of CALL, according to Levy (1997) and Warschauer and Healey (1998), it can be segmented in three main periods: the 1960s and 1970s, the 1980s and the 1990s. Regarding the first decade they mention the PLATO (Programmed Logic for Automated Teaching Operations) project as one of the principal milestones in the history of this field, as well as the TICCIT (Time-shared, Interactive, Computer-Controlled Information Television), while for the 1980s they made reference to Storyboard and the ALLP (Athena Language Learning Project), and in the last decade the main projects are the International Email Tandem Network, the CAMILLE (Computer Assisted Multimedia Interactive Language Learning Environment) and the OLA (Oral Language Archive). In particular, Levy (1997) observed that the PLATO project constitutes the birth of CALL. At the beginning of the new millennium, it was very common to use machine translation tools such as the TransIt-Tiger developed the University of Hull (UK) and Coventry University (UK), framed within the Technology Enhanced Language Learning Consortium (Robberecht, 2001).

Warschauer and Healey (1998) and Gruba (2004) have subdivided the history of CALL also in different approaches, namely Structural or Behaviouristic CALL (1960s – 1970s), Communicative CALL (1970s – 1980s), Integrative CALL (1990s – beginning of the 21st century). After that, Gimeno Sanz (2015) referred to Atomised CALL for the 2010s, while Gillespie (2020) talked about Cultural CALL to refer to 2020s. Behaviouristic CALL took a behaviourist perspective, Communicative CALL adopted a cognitive constructivist view instead, while Integrative CALL lied in sociocultural theories of learning (Gruba, 2004). The first phase relied on behaviourist theories of language learning and emphasised grammatical aspects of language. This is why language practice was based on drills and repetition. In this period computers were used to deliver instructional materials to help students increase their accuracy (Warschauer, 1996; Warschauer & Healey 1998; Gruba, 2004). One of the projects developed in this phase of CALL was the PLATO (Programmed Logic for Automated Teaching Operations) project, developed at University of Illinois in 1960 and which is considered a milestone in the development of CALL (Davies, 2002). It was designed to teach languages, and in
particular Russian, through a grammar-translation method (e.g., using drills), as well as other university disciplines (Gruba, 2004; Beatty, 2010). The second phase was based on cognitive constructivist learning and on communicative approaches of language teaching. These theories stated that “learning was a process of discovery, expression, and development” (Warschauer & Healey, 1998, p. 57). At that time teachers and researchers felt that drills did not provide enough authentic communication, and thus tried to promote students’ fluency. Computers were used to “deliver visual materials for description, process word documents, or provide interactive simulations” (Gruba, 2004, p. 629). The third phase was based on sociocultural theories of learning (Gruba, 2004; Warschauer & Healey, 1998) and on the two technological developments of the decade of the 1980s – 1990s, that is, multimedia computers and the Internet (Warschauer, 1996). In addition, those two developments were then exemplified by CD-ROMs that allowed students to access different multimedia materials from a single computer. What was important was the fact that multimedia also entailed hypermedia, which meant that the multimedia resources were all connected and could be accessed following the students’ own trajectory. For instance, researchers at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) created *A la rencontre de Philippe* in the mid-1980s, first published in laserdisc format in 1993, and then released in CD-ROM format in 2006, which was an interactive programme for the teaching of French (Gray, 1992). Another example is the multimedia CD-ROM *La neve nel bicchiere* which was developed between 1992 and 1997 for advanced learners of Italian (Nutta, 2003) at Coventry University (UK) (Orsini-Jones et al., 1998). According to Warschauer (1996) and Waschauer and Healey (1998) Integrative CALL provided more authentic environments because listening was combined with seeing and the four skills were integrated in a single activity. Also, the teacher was seen as a facilitator rather than the source of knowledge, which aimed to reflect the shift in pedagogical approaches for L2 from audiolingualism and grammar translation to communicative competence and task-based language learning and teaching.

Bax (2003) criticised Waschauer and Healey’s (1998) categorisation of the history of CALL into “phases”, as according to him the correct term should be “approaches”. Bax (2003) subdivided the history of CALL into ‘Restricted CALL’ (from the 1960s to the 1980s) instead of ‘Behaviouristic CALL’, since he claimed that the software, the activities, the role of the teacher and the feedback that students received at that time were somehow restricted, but not behaviouristic. Instead of ‘Communicative CALL’, Bax (2003) termed the second approach as ‘Open CALL’ (from the 1980s to the 2000s) because, according to him, the aforementioned factors (i.e., feedback, software, etc.) were “open in all dimensions” (Bax, 2003, p. 20). Also, he argued that the term ‘communicative’ was misused to refer to that approach, as computers were not used for authentic communication due to technological limitations that were overcome only by Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC).
and the advent of the web. Finally, the third approach was ‘Integrated CALL’ instead of ‘Integrative CALL’. He made this distinction from Waschauer and Healey’s (1998) since at that time its existence was not significant, but rather it was the goal of CALL practitioners. Bax (2003) made a final reflection where he claimed that the ultimate aim of CALL should be its normalisation, in the sense that technology should be used in everyday life to an extent that it is almost invisible to us.

Davies (2002) made another different categorisation of the history of CALL. He named the first step ‘Traditional CALL’, which was characterised by error analysis and feedback, and highlighted the creation of the CLEF package for learners of French by Canadian universities. The second approach was ‘Explorative CALL’, which was learner-centred. Its main characteristic was the use of concordance programmes, such as MonoConc (Davies, 2002). The third approach identified by Davies is ‘Multimedia CALL’, characterised by the combination of sound, still images and video recordings, such as *A la rencontre de Philippe* (Fuerstenberg, 1993 as cited by Davies, 2002). The last approach identified at that time was ‘Web-based CALL’, which was born with the launch of the World Wide Web in the early 1990s.

Gimeno-Sanz’s (2015) article *Moving a step further from “integrative CALL”*. What’s to come? made a review on the advances in CALL from the point where Levy (1997) left his book. She started by talking about the CAMILLE Consortium which developed CD-ROM-based multimedia courses in the languages spoken by the participants of the project. Apart from that, the Universitat Politècnica de València (Spain) published two software packages known as *Español Interactivo* and *Español en marcha* (Gimeno-Sanz & Navarro Laboulais, 1997 as cited in Gimeno-Sanz, 2015), in the same line of what other software companies were producing at that time. However, Gimeno-Sanz (2015, p. 3) observed that “those who did not choose to upgrade their programming tool became obsolete in a very short time”. The World Wide Web is one of the reasons why that happened. Also Chapelle (2001) stated that “the Internet of the 1990s introduced universal access to CASLA materials and information as well as hybrid applications offering learners the best of both worlds” (p. 23), while Warschauer (1998) claimed that thanks to it students were for the first time able to communicate with speakers of the TL who were in another place of the world. It is in this period that the Universitat Politècnica de València (Spain) designed the *InGenio* authoring tool and content manager, which according to Gimeno Sanz (2015) allowed teachers both to design material and to exploit that created by other users. Besides, it is considered the first completely online authoring tool for CALL. In the same line of that, language teachers at that time could use other similar systems such as *Hot Potatoes* and I4ILL (Integrated Interactive Independent Internet-based Language Learning), MALTED, and the Telos Language Partner. Apart from that, the Tools for CLIL Teachers project is also worth mentioning as it is based on the concept of open access (Gimeno-Sanz, 2013, 2015).
Regarding ‘Atomised CALL’ (Gimeno-Sanz, 2015), its novelty lied in the fact that “learning is no longer technology-driven but needs-driven” (Gimeno-Sanz, 2015, p. 10), which means that the device used is no longer the core element. In this phase teachers are the ones responsible for the implementation of didactically meaningful resources that should be integrated in the language curriculum. The ‘Tools for CLIL Teachers’ project (Gimeno Sanz 2015) was developed during the phase of ‘Atomised’ CALL. Gimeno Sanz (2013, as cited in Gimeno Sanz 2015) illustrated ‘Atomised CALL’ as follows:

![Figure 15: Atomised CALL (Gimeno Sanz, 2015, p. 11)](image)

After ‘Atomised CALL’, the trend in the late 2010s is ‘Cultural CALL’, a definition coined by Gillespie (2020). Levy (2007) had already framed a pedagogical design for the teaching of culture through technology, but it had not been considered a stage in the history of CALL until 2020. Levy claimed that “the special qualities of the culture concept point to a pedagogical framework involving new technologies” (Levy, 2007, p. 112). In a similar way, Gillespie’s (2020) believed that Cultural CALL is “understanding how values […] infuse language and life” (p. 141). He also claimed that although CMC exchanges are culturally valuable, the approach towards culture should be deepened due to the fact that those aspects of language related to cultural context and content are, according to him, under-researched (Gillespie, 2020).

More recently, Colpaert and Stockwell (2022) devoted a volume to ‘Smart CALL’, which is characterised by personalisation, contextualisation, and socialisation. The first refers to the ability of technologies and settings to adapt to language learners’ needs; the second is the adjustment of technologies and settings to the language learners’ context; the third has to do with how technologies and settings allow meaningful interactions. Colpaert and Stockwell’s (2022) volume dealt with the last research trends in CALL such as the use of artificial intelligence (AI) for language teaching.
In general, Warschauer and Healey (1998) summarised the following benefits of using computers for language instruction:

1. multimodal practice with feedback
2. individualisation in large class
3. pair and small group work on projects, either collaboratively or competitively
4. the fun factor
5. variety in the resources available and learning styles used
6. exploratory learning with large amounts of language data
7. real-life skill-building in computer use

(From Warschauer & Healey, 1998, p. 59)

Additionally, they claimed that learning how to use a computer is a real-world benefit to language learners, as well as having experience with group work project. Of course, this statement has to be seen from the late 1990s perspective because nowadays students are said to be digital natives, so they will probably experience less difficulty in the use of computers than did students more than twenty years ago.

As mentioned before, this section has provided a summary of the history of CALL in ‘formal’ settings. However, Godwin-Jones (2019b) discussed the implications of what he defined as “riding the digital wilds”, which is related to CALL ‘in the wild’ (Murray et al., 2022; Thorne et al., 2021), learner autonomy and learning in ‘informal’ settings. This includes online learning opportunities through mobile devices, streaming video platforms, authentic materials (Godwin-Jones, 2019a), social networking sites, and Massive Online Open Courses (MOOCs) (Lewis et al., 2017). Although CALL in the wild is not the focus of this dissertation, it is worth mentioning that telecollaboration, which will be discussed in section 4.2, is also a way of learning a foreign language ‘beyond’ the physical boundaries of the language classroom.

4.1. Computer-mediated communication

The advancement in technology development, as well as the extensive use of Internet, has fostered the implementation of CMC in educational settings (Nguyen, 2008). CMC started in the 1960s in primitive forms (Warschauer, 1996), but became widespread in the 1990s (Lamy & Hampel, 2007) following the revolution brought about by the Word Wide Web (Warschauer, 1996). This happened because instructors felt the need to provide students with authentic input that could provide real communicative situations as well as cultural awareness (Warschauer, 1995) and it was only made
possible by the Internet. The issue of what CMC is was first addressed in the late 1980s and the early 1990s (e.g., Graddol, 1989; Henri, 1995; Herring, 1993; Kaye, 1989; Phillips & Santoro, 1989; Rapaport, 1991; Steeples et al., 1994), and from that point on it has been defined by a number of authors. As it happens with CALL, different acronyms were used, being CMC the predominant one (Lamy & Hampel, 2007). Luppicini (2007) claimed that CMC is “the process by which people create, exchange, and perceive information using networked telecommunications systems that facilitate encoding, transmitting, and decoding messages” (p. 143), while Nguyen (2008) defined it as “a transmission and reception of messages using computers as input, storage, output, and routing devices” (p. 24). An interesting definition for the purpose of this study was provided by Beatty (2013)

Computer-Mediated Communication refers to a situation in which computer-based discussion may take place but without necessarily involving learning. However, opportunities for learning are inherently present, especially in situations in which learners need to engage in negotiation of meaning with native speakers of the target language or even with peers of non-native proficiency. (p. 10)

This idea is in part supported by Chapelle (2008), who in addition argued that interaction may occur also outside the classroom. Furthermore, Sykes and Taguchi (2013) claimed that technology can enrich both teaching and research through the introduction of more control in data gathering procedures and by offering different kinds of rich input and interaction.

Furthermore, Warschauer (1997) distinguished five features of CMC, namely “(a) text-based and computer-mediated interaction, (b) many-to-many communication, (c) time- and place-independence, (d) long distance exchanges, and (e) hypermedia links” (p. 472). The first, allows both to reflect and interact, (b) allows more equal participation within the group conversation, (c) allows to receive and send messages at any time and from anywhere, (d) allows cross-cultural encounters, (e) allows to distribute and publish multimedia documents all over the world.

CMC can be either synchronous (SCMC) (i.e., simultaneous), as for example chats or videoconferencing tools, or asynchronous (ACMC) (i.e., not simultaneous), as for example e-mails (Dooly & O’Dowd, 2012). Both forms could be in written or spoken modality, and it can be also one-to-one or one-to-many. In addition, it has been argued that “In the use of these emerging technologies, such as online application resources, for language learning, we must take into account the possibility of developing aspects related to synchronous and asynchronous oral communication to improve effective communication” (Seiz Ortiz et al., 2015, p. 2).

Sykes (2005) observed that CMC “affords the possibility of presenting pragmatic-based materials in a contextualized, authentic, and personalized manner, while at the same time addressing other language skills” (p. 399). CMC offers not only a chance for improving pragmatic competence,
but also an opportunity to develop intercultural communicative competence thanks to collaborations with foreign students for those who would not be able to do that without technology (Belz, 2007). Generally speaking, “both SCMC and ACMC can offer an authentic learning environment where learners practice L2 pragmatics while engaged in real-life interactions with expert users of language” (Eslami et al., 2015, p. 100).

Telecollaboration can occur both through SCMC or ACMC tools, and connection and communication between groups of learners rather than individuals are key components. The next section will better explore the practice of telecollaboration.

### 4.1.1. Telecollaboration

Online intercultural exchanges (OIEs) (Dooly & O’Dowd, 2012) began in the mid-1990s with Warschauer’s (1995) ‘virtual connections’. According to O’Dowd (2011), they have acquired a central position in CALL. As previously discussed in relation to CALL and CMC, there is not a single ‘umbrella’ term used to refer to intercultural exchanges mediated by technology. Scholars have used terms such as teletandem (Leone & Telles, 2016) (which is still used in countries such as Brazil), telecollaboration (Belz, 2003), virtual exchange (VE) (Helm, 2018; O’Dowd, 2018), online intercultural exchanges (O’Dowd, 2007), online intercultural encounters (Kern & Develotte, 2018), internet-mediated intercultural foreign language education (Belz & Thorne, 2006), Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) (Rubin, 2016) and so on (Dooly & Smith, 2020; Dooly & Vinagre, 2021; O’Dowd, 2011, 2023; Orsini-Jones & Lee, 2018). The term telecollaboration is used here because, as Dooly (Dooly & Smith, 2020) and Sadler and Dooly (2022) asserted, it is made up of the prefix ‘tele’ which implies distance, and the word ‘collaboration’. As Dooly observed, “it’s talking about geographically distanced partners, it’s talking about digitally or technologically supported communication, and it’s talking about collaboration” (Dooly & Smith, 2020, p. 64), while the term ‘exchange’ (e.g., ‘virtual exchange’) “doesn’t always capture that inherent quality of mutually supported learning and sharing” (Dooly & Smith, 2020, p. 64). In support of this stance, Colpaert (2020) vindicated the use of the term ‘telecollaboration’ as he claimed that ‘virtual’ means “less than the real thing” (Colpaert, 2020, p. 655) and has therefore a negative connotation, while “telecollaboration affords many more activities than its physical counterparts” (Colpaert, 2020, p. 654). In line with this, Dooly (2017) defined telecollaboration as

The process of communicating and working together with other people or groups from different locations through online or digital communication tools (e.g., computer, tablets, cellphones) to co-produce a desired work output. Telecollaboration can be carried out in a variety of settings (classroom, home, workplace, laboratory) and can be synchronous or asynchronous. In
education, telecollaboration combines all of these components with a focus on learning, social interaction, dialogue, intercultural exchange and communication all of which are especially important aspects of telecollaboration in language education. (pp. 169-170)

Belz (2003) is said to be the one who coined the term ‘telecollaboration’. She defined it as “The use of ICTs to link linguistically and culturally disparate groups of language learners and teachers over an extended period of time in order to work collaboratively on a variety of language-based activities and/or projects” (p. 46). Lately, O’Dowd (2011) outlined telecollaboration as “The application of online communication tools to bring together classes of language learners in geographically distant locations to develop their foreign language skills and intercultural competence through collaborative tasks and project work” (p. 342). While Guth and Helm (2010) defined it as “Internet-based intercultural exchange between people of different cultural/national backgrounds, set up in an institutional context with the aim of developing both language skills and intercultural communicative competence (as defined by Byram 1997) through structured tasks” (p. 14).

O’Dowd (2023) recently reflected about the terminology to be used. He acknowledged that Colpaert’s (2020) made a fair point and correctly identified the limitations of the umbrella term ‘virtual exchange’ (VE), however he argued that VE is being widely accepted and employed by different academic organisations such as the ‘Virtual Exchange Coalition’, Stevens Initiative, the European Commission (Erasmus+ Virtual Exchange) and UNICollaboration (O’Dowd, 2023). Bearing this in mind, O’Dowd (2023) proposed his definition of VE:

Virtual Exchange is an umbrella term which refers to the numerous online learning initiatives and methodologies which engage learners in sustained online collaborative learning and interaction with partners from different cultural backgrounds as part of their study programmes and under the guidance of teachers or trained facilitators. (p. 11)

He stressed the presence of teacher guidance or trained facilitators, and that VE is part of students’ study programmes, which is what differentiates it from learning ‘in the digital wilds’ (Sauro & Zourou, 2019 as cited in O’Dowd, 2023). This means that students receive some sort of academic recognition for their participation in VE projects (O’Dowd, 2023). Virtual exchange has also been defined by Sevilla-Pavón and Nicolaou (2019) as

[…] an online intercultural and linguistic exchange which encourages students to explore other cultures while sharing aspects about their culture, communicating and collaborating with other students from all over the world, either in their L1 or L2, in a virtual environment. (p. 5)

Although expressions such as virtual exchange, intercultural exchange, online exchange, telecollaborative project, and other terms are used as synonyms to avoid redundancy, the term
telecollaboration is preferred by the author of this dissertation. In particular, Dooly’s (2017) definition will be taken as a reference. The programme of the International Virtual Exchange Conference (IVEC) 2022 revealed that scholars from different fields participated in the conference, which means that the terms ‘virtual exchange’ cover a broad range of disciplines other than language learning and teaching.

According to Belz (2007) this is what telecollaboration can offer to the development of L2 pragmatics:

1. authentic instructional materials
2. exposure to L2 discourse and the chance to practice and interact

Moreover, she argued that telecollaboration is related to the teaching and learning of ILP by nature, since one of its main aims is to develop students’ relationships with those from other cultures at the same time that they use the TL (Belz, 2007). For that reason, telecollaborative exchanges are considered cost-effective chances for getting in touch with TL speakers (Belz, 2007; Rafieyan et al., 2014).

According to O’Dowd (2011) and Helm (2015) there are two models of telecollaboration: the e-tandem model (O’Rourke, 2007 as cited in O’Dowd, 2011) and the Blended Intercultural Telecollaboration, which has its origins in Furstenberg et al.’s Cultura project (as cited in Helm, 2015). The former represents an exchange between two L1 students of two different languages, and its aim is to learn the other student’s language (O’Dowd, 2011; Terhune, 2015) while the latter is a class-to-class international exchange that involves tasks and projects which have been designed by the collaborating institutions’ teachers. The second model is usually aimed at the development of students’ intercultural communicative competence (O’Dowd, 2011). This dissertation follows the second model. Additionally, O’Dowd (2010) claimed that both these models bring several benefits to foreign language education. First, they highlight cultural awareness and diverse cultural perspectives. Second, they provide also access to authentic communicative situations in the TL (Chun, 1994). Third, they exemplify the relation between ‘classroom’ and ‘fieldwork’ because students can interact with speakers of the TL culture at the same time that they receive support from the teacher. Finally, students can become aware of how their cultural beliefs could be relative. O’Dowd (2010, p. 3) pointed out that telecollaboration has received some criticism. Some tutors complain about the complexity of organising these exchanges, while others affirm that due the short periods of contact, telecollaboration exchanges may reinforce negative stereotypes.
However, telecollaboration may be beneficial for fostering intercultural development for several reasons (O’Dowd, 2012). Firstly, the type of knowledge that it provides is different from the one that can be found in textbooks. The information that students receive from their international partners is personalised and subjective (O’Dowd, 2012). Secondly, it can foster the development of critical cultural awareness since participants can negotiate meaning during extended periods of time with speakers of the TL culture. Thirdly, Belz and Kinginger’s research (2002, 2003) showed that telecollaboration could also contribute to the development of L2 pragmatic competence thanks to the exposure to authentic discourse with L1 speakers of the TL. In line with this, “gaining pragmatic competence in the L2 has increasingly been seen as one of the most important outcomes of telecollaboration” (Godwin-Jones, 2019a, p. 10).

Sykes (2017) argued that telecollaboration brings about a drastic change in the way pragmatic competence may be developed. It may be extremely advantageous for teaching and learning ILP since it gives students the opportunity to use discourse patterns in authentic environments due to its strong sociocultural component (Sykes, 2017; González-Lloret, 2019). She also claimed that “the use of telecollaboration to address ILP development enables learners themselves to tackle pragmatic issues both as tasks and topics, but also as a function of their interactions with their peers around other tasks” (Sykes, 2018, p. 127). González-Lloret (2019) would appear to align with Sykes’s thinking, since she argued that telecollaborative exchanges with a strong sociocultural component are an extraordinary way of implementing L2 pragmatics instruction. Also, Alonso-Belmonte and Vinagre (2017) highlighted how the goal of telecollaboration is to observe the intercultural speaker’s norms (following Byram’s 1997, 2021 definition of intercultural speaker) instead of achieving a native speaker-like competence in the L2. To sum up, the development of ICC through telecollaboration is one of the main interests in the area of CALL (O’Dowd, 2012). In addition, Guth and Helm (2010) developed a framework for the goals of telecollaboration (see Figure 16 below).

Through this framework, Helm and Guth (2010) illustrated the inter-relation between the development of ICC (as defined by Byram, 1997), foreign language skills and competences, and new online literacies, which should also be included as a goal. According to them, these three areas could be developed at the same time. Helm and Guth (2010) took Byram’s (1997) model of ICC as a starting point and combined it with the language learning objectives of the CEFR (2001) and what they defined as new online literacies in order to conceptualise “a framework that attempts to capture the multifaceted nature of Telecollaboration 2.0” (Helm & Guth, 2010, p. 69). Furthermore, the three goals proposed should be implemented through task-based language teaching (TBLL) (Müller-Hartmann 2007 as cited in Helm & Guth, 2010) and a Pedagogy of Multiliteracies (New London Group 1996, 2000 as cited in Helm & Guth, 2010). Since Byram’s (1997) model was developed
before the increasing use of the Internet and Web 2.0, it did not take into consideration online contexts, but was rather related to physical mobility (Helm & Guth, 2010). Despite that, Helm and Guth (2010) considered it as an appropriate starting point to develop their framework for the goals of telecollaboration because of its completeness in defining ICC in telecollaboration.

Figure 16: Helm & Guth (2010, p. 74) framework for the goals of telecollaboration 2.0

As Levy (2007, p. 109) pointed out, “technology itself is cultural”. It is therefore relevant to discuss the implications of digitally-mediated interactions with culturally distant partners, as the language used in those interactions will need to be adapted to the specific context where it is employed. For this reason, the next section will explore the concept of ‘cyberpragmatics’.

4.2. Cyberpragmatics

In Cyberpragmatics. Internet-mediated communication in context Yus (2011) analysed the impact that technology has on the production and interpretation of language from a pragmatic perspective. Yus coined the term cyberpragmatics in 2001 and he claimed that
Its main interest is the analysis of how information is produced and interpreted within the Internet environment. It is also interested in how users access contextual information […] in order to fill in the informative gaps between what users type on the keyboard and what they really intend to communicate. (2011, p. 13)

Orsini-Jones and Lee (2018) defined cyberpragmatics as “understanding the intended meaning of others in online communication” (p. 3). According to them, cyberpragmatics can be developed through telecollaboration and it is a fundamental component of ICC.

Yus (2011) believed that the diverse forms of communication on the Net have significant pragmatic consequences: “Cyberpragmatics analyses communicative exchanges that take place among Internet users using the different cyber-media available” (Yus, 2011, p. 14). He argued that the users that send a message make the prediction that interlocutors will access the contextual information needed to draw relevant conclusions, while those users that receive the message will look for relevance in the message that they receive and then process. This is the reason why context has the same importance on the Net than it has in face-to-face communication (Yus, 2011). Echoing Orsini-Jones and Lee’s (2018) words, “cyberpragmatics is the online focus of pragmatics” (p. 26). Yus (2011) illustrated Internet-mediated communication as follows:

![Internet-mediated communication according to cyberpragmatics](Yus, 2011, p. 15)

Furthermore, the quality of the channel of communication also alters the access to contextual information. It depends on whether the channel is written or oral, verbal or visual and asynchronous or synchronous. Also, those channels are continuously evolving.
4.3. Assessing online interaction

The last version of the *Common European Framework for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment Companion Volume* (2020) published by the *Council of Europe*, which is an updated version of the edition published in 2001, reflects the need to include computer-mediated activities within the FL class. This publication includes a new section devoted entirely to online interaction and in particular to online conversation and discussion, which demonstrates the increasing recognition of the use of this modality to teach and learn languages. An assessment scale centred on “conversation and discussion online as a multimodal phenomenon, with an emphasis on how interlocutors communicate online to handle both serious issues and social exchanges in an open-ended way” (Council of Europe, p. 84) is presented in this chapter of the Companion Volume (2020). The following is a list of the key concepts that operationalise within the scale presented:

- instances of simultaneous (real-time) and consecutive interaction, the latter allowing time to prepare a draft and/or consult aids;
- participation in sustained interaction with one or more interlocutors;
- composing posts and contributions for others to respond to;
- comments (for example, evaluative) on the posts, comments and contributions of others;
- reactions to embedded media;
- the ability to include symbols, images and other codes to make the message convey tone, stress and prosody, but also the affective/emotional side, irony, etc.

(From Council of Europe, p. 84)

The scale ranges between pre-A1 to C2 level. In this work the focus will be on the B2 level since it is the one of the subject participants of the present study were enrolled on. According to the *Council of Europe* (2020, p. 85), a B2 level learner can:

- Engage in online exchanges, linking their contributions to previous ones in the thread, understanding cultural implications and reacting appropriately
- Participate actively in an online discussion, stating and responding to opinions on topics of interest at some length, provided contributors avoid unusual or complex language and allow time for responses
- Engage in online exchanges between several participants, effectively linking their contributions to previous ones in the thread, provided a moderator helps manage the discussion
- Recognise misunderstandings and disagreements that arise in an online interaction and deal with them, provided the interlocutor(s) are willing to co-operate
In the case of the present study, it is believed that this scale is especially useful to evaluate participants’ ability to engage in the cultural discussions on the MeWe social network used in this dissertation, according to the level they were expected to achieve at the end of the course.

The first part of this thesis has reviewed the main theoretical foundations of the study, namely, pragmatics and apologies, communicative competence, intercultural communicative competence, and CALL and telecollaboration. As previously mentioned, teaching L2 pragmatics and ICC is of paramount importance for language learners to become intercultural speakers, and telecollaboration can be of great help to do it. Having said this, the second part of the thesis shall explore the study itself, whose objectives and research questions are reported on page 23.
5. METHODOLOGY

This section explores the methodology employed throughout the project. The study adopted an experimental design and a mixed-methods approach as both quantitative and qualitative analysis have been conducted.

Each group of participants will be introduced separately, and whenever the treatment received differed in some aspect this will be made explicit. Different experimental groups engaged in the project as the author felt it necessary to collect more data with a bigger sample size. Also, the tasks used in the study and the data analysis procedure will be deeply analysed.

It is important to mention that the first and the third partner (University of Bath, UK and Morgan State University, US) were found using the UNIcollaboration platform (https://www.unicollaboration.org/), which is a cross-disciplinary organisation for telecollaboration and virtual exchange in higher education. The researcher created an account on the website and then posted a virtual exchange proposal that the other members could find in their search for a partner. On the other hand, the partner for the second telecollaborative project was found through the CALICO mailing list. Zoom meetings were arranged with each of the partners in order to come to an agreement on the development of the exchanges and the tasks to be employed.

Before the treatment, the students were informed that the data gathered from the recordings of their Zoom sessions and the comments posted on MeWe would be used for research purposes, although their real name would not appear on any published material. All the students that participated in any of the stages of the present study signed a consent form.

5.1. Setting and participants

This study was carried out across four different semesters. Thus, there were four classes of students: a control group and three classes involved in the telecollaboration projects. A total number of 72 participants were involved in this study. Except for 8 Erasmus students, they were all Spanish-speaking learners. Also, all of them were students from the Aerospace Engineering Degree at Universitat Politècnica de València. The project was carried out with these students because “linguistic competences should be synchronised with the professional competences, such as, for example, intercultural communication” (Seiz Ortíz et al., 2015, p. 1).
5.1.1. Control group (1st semester 2019/2020)

The first part of the experiment was realised at Universitat Politècnica de València (Spain) with the control group. Participants were a 3rd year class of students from Aerospace Engineering. They were all enrolled on an optional B2 level (CEFR) English subject of 4.5 credits, although at the beginning of the year their teacher had collected the results of a placement test. According to it, the level of the students ranged from an A2 to a C1. Initially, they were 25 students, however, for the purpose of this study, one of them was excluded from the experiment since she was an Erasmus student. The researcher intended to have participants who have Spanish as their L1 or, at least, who officially lived in Spain, that is, not international students. Since the control group only carried out the role-play task, and not the cultural discussions (both will be outlined in section 5.4) or the Zoom sessions, it is believed that the data collected with this student did not comply with the purpose of this study. Moreover, another student was excluded, since he did not attend the classes when his classmates carried out the tasks in pairs, he did it on his own. For this reason, since one of the main aims of this dissertation is to analyse students’ interaction, his records could not be considered as data for the present study since there was no interaction at all. Also, two students completed the questionnaire (which will be outlined in section 5.3) but then did not attend the classes, while two dyads probably wrote the role-plays and used the same text, as the transcriptions from the recordings were the same. In this way, they lacked the spontaneity component, so they were excluded. Thus, in the end, the responses of 17 students were analysed.

It is important to mention that this selection of participants and data was realised following the recommendations of authors such as Valles (1999), Martín-Crespo Blanco and Salamanca Castro (2007), and Martínez-Salgado (2011), who claim that that in a qualitative study the researcher has to make often a selection within the initial number of participants. This is because s/he has to select the ones who best suit the characteristics needed for the research that is being carried out, and it is something that usually occurs during the process of analysis.

In terms of gender, 15 students were males and 2 of them were females. While in terms of origins, they were all from Spain except for one girl who was from Latvia, but who lived in Spain. They were aged between 19 years old and 21, being the average age 20.17.

5.1.2. First experimental group (1st semester 2020/2021)

The experimental group was composed of three different classes of students. The first one was a 3rd year group of 8 students, two of them were female while the remaining were males. They were
aged between 19 and 28 years old, being the average age 21.12. These participants were enrolled on the same B2 level English subject as the control group, although their initial level ranged between a B1 and a C1 level according to the CEFR. They were awarded 10% of their final grade upon the project completion. Within this group, in the case of one student, only his interventions on MeWe can be analysed, but not those on Zoom. This is because the recording of the Zoom sessions did not have audio, so it was impossible to transcribe them, and he did not complete the final apologies questionnaire, thus it was not possible to check if there was an improvement after the treatment received.

The participants engaged in a telecollaboration with 8 students from the University of Bath (UK) who took a Spanish course that was not part of their degree. In addition, students from Bath were not graded in this course and studied different degrees. Most of these students were not from an English-speaking country, but they were studying their whole degree there, so they were highly proficient speakers of English. This group of participants was paired with those from Bath, so there were eight dyads.

5.1.3. Second experimental group (2nd semester 2020/2021)

The second group of students was enrolled on a 1st year B2 (CEFR) Technical English subject of 6 credits, 3 for the theory part and 3 for the practical part, and their initial level ranged between A2 and C1. In this group, there were 5 females and 23 males. They were aged between 18 and 28 years old, being the average age 19.4. They were awarded 10% of their final grade upon the project completion, which was part of the practical part of the subject. Two students (1 male, 1 female) were Erasmus students from France and Germany respectively. They were required to participate in the project, although the analysis of their role-plays has not been carried out. This is because their first language could interfere in their apologies performance, and the aim of this dissertation is only to analyse the development of Spanish-speaking students’ pragmatic competence. Therefore, also their response to the apologies questionnaire have been excluded.

The second set of participants carried out the telecollaboration with 10 students from the University of Hawai’i (US) who were enrolled on a B1 Spanish subject and were graded for that. Since there were not enough students from Hawai’i to make up international dyads, the second set of participants carried out the activities in groups of four. That is to say, groups were made up of one student from the University of Hawai’i and three students from the Universitat Politècnica de València. This may have an impact on the results of this group.
5.1.4. Third experimental group (1st semester 2021/2022)

The third group of students were enrolled on the same B2 level subject of the control group and the first experimental group. Their initial level ranged between A2 and C1 (CEFR) and they were awarded a 10% of their final grade. In this group there were 10 Spanish students and 7 Erasmus students from France, Netherlands, Romania, and Hungary. In terms of gender, 5 of them were females, while 12 were males, and they were aged between 20 and 39, being the average age of the Spanish students 24.8.

In this case, Erasmus students did not complete the apologies questionnaire and did not perform any of the role plays, although they participated in the discussion part of the Zoom sessions and in the MeWe cultural discussions. This decision was taken to give Spanish students more opportunities to practice apologies in their TL to see if they obtained better results than the second group who, instead, had less chances to perform the role-plays. Within this group one dyad composed of the Erasmus student from Hungary and a Spanish student was excluded, as they did not participate in the activities. Therefore, there were 15 participants in this group (9 Spanish and 6 international students). However, only the role-plays of six Spanish learners could be considered, as the others did not perform the task as expected due to miscommunication.

This class took part in a telecollaboration project with 9 students from Morgan State University (US). Those students were enrolled on a 3rd year Spanish subject which was part of their minor and for which they were graded a 15% of the final grade, and their initial level ranged between B1 and B2 (CEFR). Hence, there were three dyads composed of an American and a Spanish learner, and six triads.

5.2. Instruments and materials

5.2.1. Control group

In order to carry out this study, different materials were employed. It is important to mention that the control group did not use the same tools as the experimental group. The former carried out the task in face-to-face interaction with their Spanish peers, while the latter took part in the telecollaboration project with their international partners. To begin with, the instruments and materials the control group made use of will be reviewed.
Firstly, students filled in an online pre-test, which was administered through Google Forms, in order to measure their pragmatic knowledge before the treatment. Section 5.3 will better explain the aim of the questionnaire.

Secondly, students were provided with explicit instruction on apologies. The first instrument used for that was a PowerPoint presentation designed by the researcher (see appendix A). Through it, the researcher briefly explained Crystal’s (1997) definition of Pragmatics with a simple language, as well as Leech’s (2014) taxonomy on apologies. In this way, students could get familiar with the main strategies L1 speakers use to apologise in everyday conversations. In addition, they were given a handout with this information (see appendix B). The last material used at this stage was a Time’s article based on the study *An Exploration of the Structure of Effective Apologies* by Lewicki et al. (2016). Section 5.5 will better explain how it was used.

Thirdly, participants of the control group had to perform six role-plays with their Spanish partners. The six situations were designed by the researcher in order to elicit the use of apologies. They all included an apology and another speech act because based on Taguchi (2007) students need to perform a different speech act apart from the target one “to divert their attention away from the particular speech act under study” (p. 120) and to elicit realistic interactions which would increase the validity of the task. The other speech acts were refusals, promises and congrats. In order to do that, they used their mobile phones to record themselves during the performance. They carried out the six role-plays (see Appendix I) in three class sessions.

### 5.2.2. Experimental groups

The students who took part in the telecollaboration projects used Zoom to perform the apologies with their international partners. This was done because by performing the apologies in an oral conversation these would have been more natural. Zoom was selected because it has a recording feature which allowed students to record the sessions and send them to the researcher. The participants were also given a list of suggested topics (appendix C) in case they did not know what to talk about, although they could discuss whatever topic they wished. Moreover, they also used the MeWe platform, which is a social media that allows users to create a profile, upload several types of files (pictures, videos, PDFs), create polls, post comments, and take part in discussions. They used it to carry out the cultural discussions as asynchronous activities allow for more time to reflect, which could be beneficial when dealing with cultural topics. The researcher created a private group for each telecollaboration project, and the students and the instructors were each invited to join their respective
group. This contributed to the creation of a safe environment for students’ privacy. After the students had registered and joined the private group, they were required to upload a brief video introduction or a picture of themselves with an audio presentation. This was done to break the ice, because in this way each participant could “meet” his or her keypal before the first Zoom session. Figure 18 below illustrates how the platform looks like. Through the private group, the researcher also posted the instructions for the collaborative tasks and any other issue related to the project. Learners from all the groups involved in the telecollaboration projects also received a Word document with the instructions for participating in the cultural discussions (see appendix D). They were required to choose a leader to start and end the discussion, and to post two comments per week after their classmates had replied, although not all students accomplished this instruction. As far as the researcher knows, this is the first time that MeWe has been used in a telecollaboration project, therefore the present study will test its validity as a pedagogical online tool. Students in the control group did not carry out any cultural discussion because one of the objectives is to demonstrate that pragmatic competence alone cannot be fully acquired without ICC. Thus, they did not use MeWe for that.

The experimental group and their counterparts in the UK and the US also completed two other questionnaires. One was used to pair students with somebody who had similar interests to them, while the other was an end-of-the-project survey. Additionally, students from the third group and their
partners filled in a pre-survey related to their expectations on the project (see appendix H) as after carrying out the first and second telecollaboration projects it was felt that knowing students’ expectations could help understanding better their final level of satisfaction. Table 4 below summarises all the activities that students from each group carried out.

Table 3: Summary of the activities carried out by each group of participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students’ group</th>
<th>Control group</th>
<th>1st experimental group</th>
<th>2nd experimental group</th>
<th>3rd experimental group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of students</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>28 (2 Erasmus)</td>
<td>15 (6 Erasmus)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-test (apologies)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explicit instruction on apologies</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pairing questionnaire</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-survey (expectations)</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role-plays</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zoom sessions</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MeWe sessions</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final artefact</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global Conversations</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-test (apologies)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final project survey</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keypals received explicit instruction on apologies</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virtual badge</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.3. The questionnaires

The same questionnaire on apologies was used as pre- and post-test across research treatments. Its purpose was to measure participants’ pragmatic knowledge on apologies before the treatment, and to determine whether or not they had improved it at the end of the project.

The survey was composed of three questions aimed at gathering demographical information about the participants, that is, age, gender, and country origin. Then, it had ten multiple-choice questions whose goal was to assess participants’ level knowledge on apologies performance. This is an example:

You borrow your sister’s dress for a party. Somebody pours a drink on it. How would you apologize?

- I beg your pardon
- I’m sorry about that
- I apologize

As one can see, the researcher proposed a simple and familiar situation for a young student, a real-life situation that could happen to him or her in everyday life. Besides, the three options are all grammatically correct, but the difficulty lies in choosing the most appropriate option for that particular context. The options “I beg your pardon” and “I apologize” are too formal in a familiar context (especially the first one). Nevertheless, both formal and informal situations were proposed in this questionnaire (see appendix E). The content of the questionnaire was based on the role-playing tasks students would have had to carry out, that is, familiar situations which could be either formal or informal as it will be explored in the next section. The multiple-choice format was chosen as it would allow to measure the appropriateness of each option chosen by the learners (see section 5.7.1).

The second questionnaire (see appendix F) was completed by the experimental group and their international partners, that is, those who participated in the telecollaborative project. The questionnaire was administered online through Google Forms and it was made up of 9 questions. Contrarily to the other questionnaires, this one was written in Spanish. The main aim of it was to know the participants’ interests, so they could be paired with somebody similar to them.

The third questionnaire is the end-of-project survey (see appendix G), and all students from the experimental group filled it in online after the project had ended. It was made up of 14 questions on a 5 points Likert-scale, one multiple-choice question and an open question. The purpose of this survey was to know students’ opinions and impressions on the project in general, the tools used, and whether
they felt they had learnt something about their partners’ culture. The questionnaire that students from the third group completed included two more questions on a Likert-scale related to the Global Conversations event to which they participated.

The last questionnaire included in this project was a pre-survey aimed at comparing the expectations of students before the project and compare them with their impressions after it, which were collected through the end-of-the-project survey. This was completed only by the third experimental group.

5.4. The task

In order to elicit the use of apologies six open role-plays were designed for all treatment groups. According to Félix-Brasdefer (2010) open role-plays “specify the actor’s roles, but the course and outcome of the conversation is not predetermined” (p. 47), thus it was thought that this kind of task gave students freedom to act as they somehow would have done in a real event. In support of this stance, Halenko (2021) categorised role-plays as the closest data collection method to naturally occurring discourse. Two of the role-plays employed in this study presented formal situations, while the other four informal ones, so that student could use different strategies. As mentioned before, in all of them students had to perform an apology and another speech act because studies such as Taguchi (2007) argue that this could be beneficial for the participants because in that way they would not focus only on the performance of the main speech act. Apart from apologies, role-plays included two promises, two refusals, and two congratulations. Furthermore, all the role-plays proposed represent real-life situations that students can experience in everyday life. This is an example:

You borrow your elder’s brother car. When you are parking, you hit the car behind you. The result is that now your brother’s car is dented. When you come back home you tell him what happened, so he gets angry. You apologize and you promise that it will never happen again.

Based on Beltrán-Palanques (2013), Table 3 shows the distribution of the six situations.

Table 4: Variable distribution and description of the situations used in the role-plays

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situation</th>
<th>Degree of formality</th>
<th>Social status</th>
<th>Social distance</th>
<th>Severity of offense</th>
<th>Participants’ role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Informal</td>
<td>Equal</td>
<td>Family</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>The speaker apologises to his/her</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2 | Formal | Hearer-dominant | Acquaintance | High | A university student apologises to the professor for being late
3 | Informal | Equal | Friend | Low | The speaker apologises to a friend for not attending his/her birthday party
4 | Formal | Hearer-dominant | Acquaintance | High | A university student apologises to his/her tutor for not attending a conference
5 | Informal | Equal | Friend | Low | The speaker apologises to a friend for not attending his/her wedding
6 | Informal | Equal | Friend | Low | The speaker apologises for not attending a friend’s baby shower

Authors such as Sykes and González-Lloret (2020) stated that role-plays’ “lack of authenticity limits the ability to collect meaningful data” (p. ix). However, it is argued that in order to perform an apology we first need to commit an offense, but this is not likely to occur in a telecollaborative environment. The results of Oskoz and Gimeno-Sanz’s (2020) study demonstrated “learners’ reluctance to be critical and hurt their telecollaborative partners’ feelings, which could potentially create a negative or threatening environment” (p. 202). Besides, the speech acts that emerged from Canto Gutiérrez (2020) analysis of spontaneous interaction in SCMC “were greetings and leave takings, assistance requests, the use of polite formulas and humour” (p. 99). Therefore, there is no evidence that apologies are likely to occur in a telecollaboration project, thus, there is a need of using a somehow “artificial” interaction in order to make participants use them. Furthermore, in the sample lesson outline proposed by Celce-Murcia (2007) in order to develop students’ communicative
competence, she also included role-plays within the activities. In the same line of thought, Yen et al. (2013) claimed that “role-playing is an important strategy in that it focuses on the ability to speak and communicate by playing different roles in a given real-world situation” (p. 4). As mentioned in the theoretical framework section, Yen et al.’s (2013) study revealed that the combination of a social-networking-site and Skype, together with role-plays activities, worked in favour of learners’ writing and speaking skills. Table 2 on page 43 reports the advantages and disadvantages of using open role-plays as a data eliciting method.

The second activity that the experimental group had to carry out were the two cultural discussions on MeWe. The reason why asynchronous activities were implemented was because, as suggested by Helm (2015), they give students time for reflection and allow them to plan their interventions. Additionally, and considering the focus of the study, written activities facilitate research and assessment (Godwin-Jones, 2019a) through the analysis of written records. In all the three telecollaborations, the first cultural discussion was carried out entirely in Spanish, while the second one entirely in English. This was done so that both Spanish-speaking and English-speaking learners could benefit from the activity in terms of linguistic competence. In all the three cases the topics to be discussed had been previously agreed among the researcher and the instructors from the two institutions involved. In the telecollaboration with Bath, the topic of the independence of Catalonia was the one discussed in Spanish, while digital education was discussed in English. The researcher suggested to discuss the independence of Scotland or the Brexit in order to draw a parallelism, but the instructor from the University of Bath believed those were too sensitive topics and that they could generate conflict among students. Therefore, a poll on MeWe where students could choose the second topic to be discussed in English was created. The options were:

- digital education
- Brexit
- Monarchy: Spain vs United Kingdom
- The independence of Scotland

Most of the students chose the first one.

Regarding the second experimental group, the topic discussed in Spanish was life at campus, while the one discussed in English was again digital education. Within the third experimental group, the topic discussed in Spanish was related to the US-Mexico and Spain-Africa borders, while the one in English was related to migratory movements in Spain and the US from a historical point of view. Except for life at campus, which is a more general theme, each topic was particularly significant at
the time of the study.\textsuperscript{2} The independence of Catalonia was not chosen as a topic for discussion in the second telecollaboration as the instructor from Hawai‘i suggested that, based on previous experiences, her students would have not been interested in that subject matter. To the extent of possible, the author of the present dissertation tried to select sensitive topics. The researcher agrees with Godwin-Jones’ (2019a) claim that “avoiding conflict in exchanges may [however] misrepresent the reality of intercultural encounters, in which there may well be significant and strongly expressed differences of opinion on a whole host of issues” (p. 11). In line with this, Helm (2015) believed that sensitive topics should not be avoided, although her survey revealed that only 47% of the educators agreed on discussing sensitive topics.

5.5. Procedure

In this section, the main steps that were followed during the implementation of the projects with both the control group and the experimental group are reviewed. Each of the projects lasted six weeks.

5.5.1. Control group

First, students accomplished the pre-test. In this way, their level of pragmatic knowledge before the treatment could be measured. Second, they received explicit instruction on apologies. Several studies demonstrate the robustness of explicit instruction over implicit. For instance, Billmyer (as cited in Takahashi, 2010) carried out a study on English compliments and compliment responses with Japanese students of English, who demonstrated that their ability to perform the speech act had improved after receiving explicit instruction on it. Another study who confirmed the superiority of explicit instruction over the implicit one is Alcón-Soler (2007), where the research was conducted with a control group, an implicit group, and the explicit one. Findings demonstrated that “the effect of explicit instruction are sustained in time more than the effects of implicit instruction at both levels of awareness: noticing and understanding” (Alcón-Soler, 2007, p. 233). Explicit pragmatic instruction was also encouraged by the results obtained by Plonsky and Zhuang (2019).

Through a PowerPoint presentation it was explained to the students what Pragmatics is in a simple and clear way, that is, not only with linguistics definitions. The researcher also emphasised

\textsuperscript{2} During the telecollaboration with Bath the judicial process for the independence movement in Catalonia was taking place and a few months before all sectors of education were forced to move from face-to-face to online teaching due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The telecollaboration with Hawai‘i started while students were receiving online classes, while during the telecollaboration with Maryland both the US-Mexico border and the border with Ceuta and Melilla in Spain-Africa received a huge number of migrants. Also the migration crisis caused by the Taliban attack in Afghanistan was taking place at that time.
the importance of context and explained them that language may vary according to different contexts and situations. Then, the researcher turned to what an apology is, the main strategies used by L1 speakers of English, and the main steps one should follow in order to perform an apology. Afterwards, participants were provided with examples of inappropriate as well as appropriate apologies through audiovisual material, as suggested by Celce-Murcia (2007) and Kondo (2010). The results of studies such as Martínez-Flor and Usó-Juan (2010) and Di Samo-Garcia (2018) demonstrated that the use audiovisual materials are beneficial for the teaching of pragmatic competence since they “provide learners with realistic models to imitate” (Martínez-Flor & Usó-Juan, 2010, p. 427). At the end of this part of explicit instruction, students were given a handout with the strategies and the steps seen before, so that they could review them at home. In the last step of the explicit instruction students had to read in pairs a magazine article from Time based on the paper An Exploration of the Structure of Effective Apologies by Lewiki et al. (2016). Afterwards, they had to make a summary of the main strategies and their use in pairs.

Third, students from the control group were told to look for a partner in order to perform the role-plays in pairs. Most of them chose the same partner with whom they made the summary in the previous session. Learners first performed situations A and B, then C and D, and in the last session E and F. Participants themselves were in charge of the recording process, and they did it with their mobile phones and then uploaded the files to the computer in order to send it to the researcher. All these activities were carried out during class hours.

This procedure is supported by Martínez-Flor (2010) and Kondo (2010) guidelines to teach speech acts according to which instructors should follow some steps. First, students need exposure to the speech act under study, especially the most common realisation strategies. Second, they need an explanation about the factors that influence the choice of a form or another. Third, learners have to practice the use of that particular speech act. It is argued that the participants of this study have been provided with the three conditions proposed by them. Finally, participants accomplished the post-test. This was an important step because thanks to it was possible to observe if there was an improvement after the explicit instruction and the realization of the task.

5.5.2. Experimental groups

The initial procedure followed by the experimental group was the same since they received explicit instruction on apologies and wrote the summary of the article after completing the pre-test. However, the researcher was the one who paired students from Valencia with those from English-
speaking countries. This was done after all students accomplished the pairing questionnaire. It should be mentioned that students from the second experimental group (i.e., those who collaborated with Hawai‘i) received the instruction on apologies through videoconference sessions as at that time we were forced to online teaching. Hence, this may have had an impact on the results. The students from the first telecollaborative experience (Bath-Valencia) worked in dyads, so they usually started the Zoom sessions by performing the two role-plays. One of them was in English and the other in Spanish because students from Bath were studying Spanish as a foreign language. The same happened with the students from Hawai‘i and those from Maryland. The difference is that since in the other two cases the students worked in group (except for three dyads in the third project) they first started by discussing some topic orally and at the end of the session those students who did not have to perform the role-play left the Zoom room and the ones who remained carried out the task. In this way, the Spanish students who worked with those from the University of Hawai‘i were expected to perform only two role-plays. This is because, as mentioned above, groups were formed by three students from Spain and one from USA. On the other hand, Spanish students who worked with students from Morgan State University performed all the role-plays because they worked with a student from US and one Erasmus student from their own university but who did not perform any role-play. Another important difference lies in the fact that students from the University of Bath also received explicit instruction on apologies in Spanish, so this may have had an impact on the results obtained by this virtual exchange. Students from all the groups, including the international partners, were required to provide their partners with feedback after completing the role-playing tasks. This was done as according to Martínez-Flor and Usó-Juan (2010) corrective feedback is one of the three main conditions for pragmatic acquisition, as explained in chapter 1. The aim of this was for students to receive feedback in a more informal situation compared to a language class where the feedback is usually provided by the teacher. Also, it was believed that receiving feedback from an L1 speaker would have helped learners to acquire more natural pragmatic formulas. The Zoom sessions took place during students’ free time, that is, at home.

Regarding the cultural discussions on MeWe, participants were given a three-week time span for each discussion. Following the work previously carried out by Oskoz and Gimeno (2019, 2020), the students were required to write two comments per week in which they were expected to share their opinion, refer to their partners’ previous comments, look for additional information and ask questions to trigger the discussion. All the instructions were provided through a handout (see appendix D). These discussions took place during class hours. However, if a student missed the class, they were free to write their comments from home.
Following the Cultural Awareness Model proposed by Dooly (2008) and the suggestions made by O’Dowd and Waire (2009) and Godwin-Jones’ (2019a), the students from the experimental group created a final product with their counterparts. This was done because collaborative tasks involve a considerable amount of negotiation of meaning on language, content, and culture (O’Dowd & Waire, 2009; Godwin-Jones, 2019a). This was a sound-enhanced presentation in which they summarised the main ideas discussed on MeWe and explained their impressions and feeling regarding the project in general. To do that, the participants used PowerPoint, Prezi, and Google Slides, according to their preferences. Spanish students recorded their audios in English, while English-speaking students did theirs in Spanish. According to Godwin-Jones (2019a), this “deepens the collaboration by having partners work together in creating some kind of shareable product or artefact such as a […] presentation” (p. 13). This is also in line with one of the objectives presented by the Council of Europe in the *Companion Volume* (2020) within the B2 level, in which a language learner “can collaborate online with a group that is working on a project, justifying proposals, seeking clarification and playing a supportive role in order to accomplish shared tasks” (p. 87). Nevertheless, in the case of the second telecollaboration (i.e., with Hawai‘i) some of the presentations were carried out only by Spanish-speaking students, thus, the collaboration component was missing in some of the groups. This may have influenced the results. Figure 19 below summarises the main activities carried out by the students in each telecollaboration project.

![Figure 19: Summary of the main activities carried out by students](image-url)
It should be mentioned that the experimental groups who worked with Bath (UK) and Baltimore (Maryland, US) also conducted an introduction session with the researcher and the instructors, as well as a final wrap up session where the final artefact was presented. It was not possible to do that with the students from Hawai’i (US) because the time difference was too big (12 hours). Nevertheless, Spanish students who worked with them presented their final product in class with the researcher and the instructor. Furthermore, students from the first experimental group asked if it was possible to receive a certificate of participation, therefore a virtual badge was issued through Open Badge Passport (www.openbadgepassport.com). This was done also with the second experimental group, but only three students accepted the badge. Because of that, and because it was not required by students, virtual badges were not issued to the third experimental group.

At the end of each project the researcher transcribed the Zoom sessions as it will be explained in section 5.6 of this chapter. After that, the data collected was analysed as it will be explained in the Data analysis section.

5.5.3. Additional activities of the third experimental group

The third experimental group (Valencia-Baltimore) also participated in the Global Conversations event with their counterparts from Morgan State University, which could have had an impact on the results they obtained. To prepare for this, some of them (the ones who attended the class that day) carried out a group activity. They watched a video presenting the migration crisis at the border between USA and Mexico and then worked in groups of four to create a PowerPoint presentation in which they compared that situation with the migration crisis that other countries were experiencing. This was the topic chosen since it would have been discussed also on MeWe.

5.6. Data gathering procedure

The data for this dissertation was collected through several means. First of all, the pre- and post-test (apologies questionnaire) were used to collect information regarding the participants’ knowledge about apologies performance before and after the treatment. Second, the Zoom conversations of the first experimental group and part of the third one were transcribed using MediaUpv which is a virtual tool developed by the UPV. It allows to upload videos for which it creates automatic subtitles in the language selected. The user can modify those subtitles into short chunks while s/he can listen to the audio. Figure 20 below illustrates how it works. Those session of which the researcher only had the
audio files were transcribed manually, as it happened with the second experimental group. Also, only the role-plays in English, the feedback, and the parts in which the participants discussed some cultural topics were transcribed for their subsequent analysis.

Third, the other significant source of data were the comments posted on MeWe. The final project questionnaire, and in the case of the 3rd experimental group also the pre-project questionnaire, were also used to collect data regarding students’ perceptions of the telecollaborative project. Finally, students’ presentations also served to gain insightful feedback from them. All data sources are better illustrated in the following section.

5.7. Data analysis procedure

The present study adopted a mixed-methods approach, as stated at the beginning of this chapter. This decision was driven by the researcher’s willingness to better understand the issues under investigation. In Guarda’s (2013) words:

Mixed methods research helps inquirers answer their research questions from a broader variety of perspectives, drawing on the strengths of both approaches, converging and corroborating findings, and adding insights that might be missed when adopting only one method. (p. 215)

In line with this, Ross and Hong (2019) claimed that “[…] neither an exclusively quantitative hypothetico-deductive nor a purely qualitative hermeneutic research approach is likely to suffice in providing a thorough account of language learning phenomena that is both descriptively accurate and externally valid” (p. 212). For this reason, it was thought that a mixed-methods approach would better explore the data collected in the present study.
In order to better explain the data analysis process, this dissertation will devote a subsection to the data related to pragmatic competence, another one to the data related to intercultural communicative competence.

### 5.7.1. Apologies data analysis

The apologies elicited from the role-plays performed by the Spanish-speaking students were coded following the taxonomy of apologies proposed in chapter 1, based on Blum-Kulka and Olsthain (1984), Leech (2014) and Martínez-Flor (2016). Thanks to the transcription of the Zoom sessions, the strategies used by the participants were categorised and quantified in order to see if they resembled L1 speakers-like apologies and to seek differences and similarities among the three experimental groups and the control group. This helped us also to understand which strategies were more frequently used by the participants. In this sense, a qualitative data set was turned into a quantitative data set, which means that it was *quantitized* (Guarda, 2013). With this in mind, the researcher created a different Excel sheet for each group of students (n = 4), and then she ‘counted’ the occurrence of each strategy depending on each individual student. After that, the total number and frequency of each strategy was calculated, as well as the total number of strategies in general. Table 5 below provides some examples of the strategies employed by Spanish students. Here, T stands for telecollaboration.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>IFID/head act</strong></td>
<td>Expression of S’s regret</td>
<td><em>I’m (so) sorry</em> (T1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Asking H’s pardon or forgiveness</td>
<td><em>Please forgive me</em> (T1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Excuse me</em> (T3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Using a performative utterance</td>
<td><em>I apologise</em> (T2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Expression of responsibility</strong></td>
<td>Explicit self-blame</td>
<td><em>It’s my fault I I admit it</em> (T2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Denial of fault</td>
<td><em>Well, is it's not my fault</em> (T1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Explanation of why the fault occurred</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>I’m late I lost the bus</em> (T3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Offer of repair</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>I’ll do my possible to pay to repair the car</em> (T3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Promise of forbearance</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>It won’t happen again</em> (T2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Apology intensification</strong></td>
<td>Concern for the H</td>
<td><em>I know that it’s so important for you</em> (T2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intensifier/modifier</td>
<td><em>I’m so sorry</em> (T1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>I’m sorry I’m very very apologise</em> (T1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Turning to the responses obtained from the pre- and post-test, a numerical number was assigned to each of the three options in every question. At a first stage, the researcher thought about providing only one possible correct answer, but at a second stage it was realised that categorising the three options from the most pragmatically adequate (3), to the least (1) would provide richer data. In this way, the participants’ responses could be statistically analysed. To ensure inter-rater reliability, an independent researcher checked the categorisation of the responses, and an agreement was reached on 100% of the responses. Within the ten questions of the pre- and post-test questionnaires, in two of them only the values of 3 and 1 were assigned, since it was thought that only one of the responses was pragmatically adequate, while the other two were inadequate at the same level.

The responses from the pre-test of each experimental group were compared to the ones obtained from the post-test in order to see if there was any improvement after the treatment received. To do so the statistical programme JASP was used. In the case of the control group, it was not possible to compare the responses given by each individual, as due to lack of experience the researcher used an anonymous survey for the pre-test. Therefore, in that case, the responses from pre- and post-test were analysed as a group. A number of statistical tests were carried out at this stage. First, a Shapiro-Wilk normality test was carried out in order to understand if the data was normally distributed. After that, a non-parametric Mann-Whitney T-test for independent samples was conducted to understand if there was an improvement from pre- to post-test. In this case, the data was treated as independent variables to seek any possible relation between pre- and post-test, since it was not possible to determine if the student from the pre-test was the same from the post-test because of the above-mentioned reason.

The Shapiro-Wilk normality test was carried out also with the experimental groups, as its result would indicate if the second step to be taken would be a parametric or non-parametric test, since when there are less than 30 participants (i.e., a small sample) the data is not usually normally distributed, and therefore a non-parametric test must be conducted. When that happened in the analysis of the experimental group, a non-parametric Wilcoxon test for paired samples was conducted, as in those cases it was possible to compare the responses of each individual. In some of the tables reported in the Results section, some items of pre- and post-test will not be included as in those cases no results were obtained (either positive or negative) because the variable did not meet the necessary requirements for the statistical test to be carried out. Also a Mann-Whitney U test was carried out to compare the results of the post-test obtained by the control group and the experimental group as a whole. This test is also a non-parametric test used for independent samples.

The aim of this analysis and of the statistical tests carried out was to seek any tendency, whether of improvement or not, to better understand the pedagogical processes that took place during the
implementation of the projects. For this reason, groups and variables were compared.

5.7.2. ICC data analysis

The comments that students from the experimental groups posted on their private groups on MeWe were classified and quantified following Byram’s (1997, 2021) five objectives of ICC. Previous studies such as Vinagre (2014) found evidence or traces of students’ development of their ICC following Byram’s five objectives after they had used wikis in a telecollaborative environment. Table 6 below illustrates all the objectives included within the five savoirs and examples of them. Here, T stands for telecollaboration, and D for cultural discussion.

Table 6: Byram’s (1997, 2021) savoirs and objectives to assess ICC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Savoirs</th>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attitudes</strong>: curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one’s own</td>
<td>Willingness to seek out or take up opportunities to engage with otherness in a relationship of quality, distinct from seeking out the exotic or the profitable</td>
<td>¿Cómo os ha afectado a vosotros la pandemia en la vida universitaria dentro de la UH de Mānoa? (T2, D1) [How has the pandemic affected your university life within UH at Mānoa?]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interest in discovering other perspectives on the interpretation of familiar and unfamiliar phenomena both in the cultures of the social groups to which one belongs and in other cultures and cultural practices</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Willingness to question the values and presuppositions in cultural practices and products in one’s own environment and social groups</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Readiness to engage with the conventions and rites of verbal and non-verbal communication in interaction</td>
<td>What’s your experience with digital education? (T1, D2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Knowledge</strong>: of social groups and their products and practices in one’s own and in one’s interlocutor’s country, and of the general processes of societal and individual</td>
<td>Historical and contemporary relationships between one’s own and one’s interlocutor’s countries</td>
<td>Es un hecho que &quot;una parte&quot; de Cataluña siempre ha tenido ese sentimiento de nación propia o diferente a la española, quiero remarcar &quot;una parte&quot; porque este es el motivo de la disputa. (T1, D1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The types of cause and process of misunderstanding between interlocutors of different cultural origins</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The national memory of one’s own country and how its events are related to and seen from the perspective of other countries</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The national memories of one’s interlocutor’s country and the perspective on them from one’s own country</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The national definitions of geographical space in one’s own country, and how these are perceived from the perspective of other countries</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The national definitions of geographical space in one’s interlocutor’s country and the perspective on them from one’s own</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The processes and institutions of socialisation in one’s own and one’s interlocutor’s country</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social distinctions and their principal markers, in one’s own country and one’s interlocutor’s</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Institutions, and perceptions of them, which impinge on daily life within one’s own and one’s interlocutor’s country and which conduct and influence relationships between them</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The process of social interaction in one’s interlocutor’s country</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The significance of symbolic competence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills of interpreting and relating: ability to interpret a document or event from another culture, to explain it and relate it to documents or events from one’s own</td>
<td>Identify ethnocentric perspectives in a document or event and explain their origins</td>
<td>Podemos observar un crecimiento en la desigualdad causado por las diferencias económicas en ambos países separados por el muro. (T3, D1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Identify areas of misunderstanding and dysfunction in an interaction and explain them in terms of each of the cultural systems present</td>
<td>[We can observe an increasing inequality caused by the economical differences in both countries separated by the wall.]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mediate between conflicting interpretations of phenomena</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills of discovery and interaction: ability to acquire a new knowledge of a culture and cultural practices and the ability to operate knowledge, attitudes and skills under the constraints of real-time communication and interaction</td>
<td>Elicit from an interlocutor the concepts and values of documents or events and develop and explanatory system susceptible of application to other phenomena</td>
<td>I recommend you watching the video that Sofia has posted because it has opened my mind. (T1, D2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Identify significant references within and across cultures and elicit their significance and connotations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Identify similar and dissimilar processes of interaction, verbal and non-verbal, and negotiate an appropriate use of them in specific circumstances</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use in real-time an appropriate combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes to interact with interlocutors from a different country or culture taking into consideration the degree of one’s existing familiarity with the country, culture and language and the extent of difference between one’s own and the other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Identify contemporary and past relationships between one’s own and the other culture</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use in real time knowledge, skills and attitudes for mediation between interlocutors of one’s own and another culture</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical cultural awareness/political education: and ability to evaluate, critically and on the basis of systematic process of reasoning, values present in one’s own and other cultures and countries</td>
<td>Identify and interpret explicit or implicit values in documents and events in one’s own and other cultures</td>
<td>I think this topic should be brought to the parliament not only for us, for the future generations who are going to suffer the consequences of the decisions that we take nowadays. Education is essential because it is the pillar of a society, if we fail in this aspect we are failing as a society. (T1, D2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Make an evaluative analysis of the documents and events which is based on systematic and conscious reasoning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interact and mediate in intercultural exchanges, negotiating where necessary a degree of acceptance of those exchanges, negotiating where necessary a degree of acceptance of those exchanges by drawing upon one’s knowledge, skills and attitudes and ability to develop a reasoned response</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some of the objectives have not been included in the table as it was thought that they were more specific for a stay abroad context. Within attitudes, the objective readiness to experience the different stages of adaptation to and interaction with another culture during a period of residence was been excluded, while within knowledge, knowledge about the means of achieving contact with interlocutors from another country (at a distance or in proximity), of travel to and from, and the institutions which facilitate contact or help resolve problems was not taken into consideration.

Following the work carried out by Guarda (2013) and Vinagre (2014), the researcher looked for examples or traces of these five objectives in students’ comments on MeWe. It is important to mention that the researcher did not intend to assess students’ ICC since, as previously argued by
Guarda (2013), the majority of the ICC dimensions are related to personal processes and the online encounters take place in an institutional context during a short period of time. The focus was, instead, on any evidence or trace of any dimension of ICC, and how students conveyed them on the online forums and the oral conversations. In this sense, the researcher felt the need to provide both numerical and qualitative insights of this phenomenon, in order to provide a more comprehensive representation of it by ascertaining its frequency and quality. For this reason, the comments posted on MeWe (qualitative data) were turned into numerical data (quantitative data), so they could be statistically analysed. In this case, it can be defined as *quantitized data* (Guarda, 2013). The qualitative data helped to distinguish categories, while the quantitative data allowed to quantify the frequency. In doing so, a clearer picture of which of Byram’s five objectives of ICC was more fulfilled through the comments could be given following Byram’s suggestion of answering to the question ‘What might count as…’, as stated on page 72. In order to do that, the researcher collected and saved all the Spanish students’ posts on MeWe in an Excel document and classified them according to the author, the group s/he belonged to, the online discussion where it was written, the telecollaboration project, and ordering them in chronological order (from the least to the most recent). Also the short sentences attached to the video introductions were included. Within each post, the relevant part was highlighted and classified according to Byram’s (2021) *savoirs*. Another category was created for those comments that did not fit in any of the objectives. It is believed that these objectives are not mutually exclusive as they are interrelated. Yet, they are presented as different categories for the sake of clarity and structure.

The same process was followed for the data collected in the discussion part of the synchronous oral Zoom sessions in that most of the students discussed some cultural topics before or after the role-play performance. This happened either spontaneously or triggered by the list of suggested topics that students from all institutions received at the beginning of each telecollaboration project. As previously mentioned, the oral conversations were transcribed, which allowed its deep analysis. In this regard, 14 categories or themes were created to classify the topics discussed by the students. Since the discourse was oral, specific utterances were not classified as this could be problematic in the sense that within oral conversations speakers may overlap or interrupt themselves in the middle of an utterance. Therefore, the occurrence of any topic was classified. In this way, a qualitative source of data was transformed into numerical data, that is, it was *quantitized* (Guarda, 2013). The researcher created an Excel document where she classified the frequency of each category according to the student/s who discussed it, the session in which it was discussed, and the telecollaboration project. Table 7 below illustrates the themes students dealt with during the Zoom session.
Table 7: Categorization of the cultural topics discussed on Zoom

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational systems/university life</th>
<th>Languages</th>
<th>Sports</th>
<th>Food/timetables to eat</th>
<th>General aspects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Festivities and traditions</td>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>Notions of family</td>
<td>Health care systems</td>
<td>Stereotypes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tabu topics</td>
<td>Immigration/borders</td>
<td>Digital education</td>
<td>Sense of humour</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Within the category of general aspects, students talked about drinking age, driving licence, general differences among countries, the weather, musicians and actors, use of social networks, sense of culture, and the Black Friday. On the other hand, within tabu topics they dealt with politics, ETA terrorist organization in the Basque Country, World War II, imperialism, drugs, racism, Spanish Civil War, the Capitol attack in the US, independent movement in Catalonia, the Spanish royal family, and protests. Also festivities and traditions includes subcategories such as Christmas, Easter, New Years’ Eve, Halloween, Thanksgiving, Fallas (which is a typical festivity in the city of Valencia). Inter-rater reliability tests were not carried out for the ICC data due to the huge amount of data collected and because the author of the thesis carried out the research on her own.

Responses to the final project questionnaire were analysed descriptively calculating the mean and the standard deviation of each 5-point item and the percentages of the multiple-choice question Would you like to keep on meeting with your partner after the end of the project?, while the responses from the last question Do you have any comments or suggestions? and any other comment received by the researcher were analysed qualitatively. In the case of the third experimental group, the means from pre- and post-survey were compared using the statistical programme JASP.

In terms of both pragmatic and intercultural communicative competence, ‘counting’ the occurrence of each strategy, objective, or category helped the researcher gain understanding of the patterns that emerged between each student and over time. All the data sources are better illustrated in Figure 21 below.
5.7.3. **Correlation and linear regression**

As one of the main aims of this study was to determine if there is a relationship between Pragmatic and Intercultural Communicative Competences, a correlation between all the data sources obtained was calculated through the statistical programme JASP. In particular, the Pearson correlation coefficient (r) was calculated. After that, statistically significant values were sought in order to determine the correlation between the different data sources.

After that, the linear regression was calculated in order to determine predictable models through which the best results could be achieved by participants in a telecollaboration project whose aims are to improve students’ use of apologies and their Intercultural Communicative Competence (as defined by Byram, 1997, 2021). This was done through the statistical programme JASP, through which an equation was proposed.
6. RESULTS

This chapter will explore the results obtained from the control group and the three telecollaboration projects implemented. On the one hand, the gains in terms of pragmatic competence will be exposed. In order to better understand how each class of students acquired pragmatic knowledge, the researcher will devote a subsection for each group. After that, the results obtained by the three groups as a whole will be analysed. A comparison between each experimental group and the control group will also be drawn in order to understand if the telecollaboration project had an impact on the results obtained by all the experimental groups or not. Then, also a comparison between the three experimental groups as a whole and the control group will be realised. Finally, although it was not the focus of the study, the results obtained by the transferred strategies of the participants’ L1 will also be examined.

On the other hand, the second part of this chapter will scrutinise the learners’ gains in terms of intercultural communicative competence (ICC). Here, one subsection will be devoted to the results obtained from the synchronous Zoom sessions, and another to the asynchronous cultural discussions on MeWe. After that, the results obtained from the final project questionnaire will be analysed, as well as the expectations and level of satisfaction of the third experimental group. A brief subsection will be devoted to the results obtained from the Global Conversations event, and the analysis of the students’ final presentations.

Section 6.3 will explore the results obtained from the Pearson correlation coefficient, which, as previously mentioned, aimed at demonstrating the inextricable relationship between pragmatic competence and ICC. In the same section, a predictable pedagogical model obtained from the linear regression will also be provided. The penultimate section of this chapter will look into the patterns followed by a dyad of students, which was found to be more successful than the others. Finally, the issues encountered during the implementation of the projects will be explored in the last section.

6.1. Pragmatic competence

As previously mentioned, this section will expose the results obtained in terms of pragmatic competence, that is, students’ acquisition of apologies. It includes the results obtained from the analysis of the apologies coded and pre- and post-test.
6.1.1. Control group

Regarding the quantitative analysis, within the descriptive statistics, those items that reached or almost reached the value 3 should be highlighted, as it was the value given to the most pragmatically adequate answer in the pre- and post-test. In particular, in the post-test students generally tended to 3 in items 2, 4, 5, 7 and 9. However, as it can be seen from the comparison between the responses obtained from the pre- and post-test, there are no statistically significant differences after the intervention. In addition, in some items the mean (M) even slightly decreased in the post-test.

Table 8: Descriptive statistics for the control group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Item 1</td>
<td>Pre-test</td>
<td>2.762</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post-test</td>
<td>2.647</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 2</td>
<td>Pre-test</td>
<td>2.810</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post-test</td>
<td>3.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 3</td>
<td>Pre-test</td>
<td>2.048</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post-test</td>
<td>2.294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 4</td>
<td>Pre-test</td>
<td>2.810</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post-test</td>
<td>2.824</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 5</td>
<td>Pre-test</td>
<td>2.905</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post-test</td>
<td>2.882</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 6</td>
<td>Pre-test</td>
<td>2.524</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post-test</td>
<td>2.353</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 7</td>
<td>Pre-test</td>
<td>2.952</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post-test</td>
<td>2.824</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 8</td>
<td>Pre-test</td>
<td>2.667</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post-test</td>
<td>2.706</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 9</td>
<td>Pre-test</td>
<td>3.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post-test</td>
<td>2.941</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 10</td>
<td>Pre-test</td>
<td>1.952</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post-test</td>
<td>2.235</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As it has been mentioned in the Methodology section, it was not possible to compare the responses by each individual from the pre-test to the ones obtained from the post-test as the former was anonymous. This also implies that it was not possible to delete the responses from the participants that were then excluded from the study. An alternative test was used to make a comparison between the responses to the two questionnaires. The only variable was therefore that of belonging to the pre-test or the post-test. In the first place, a Shapiro-Wilk normality test was carried out. As there were less than 30 students the result was that data was not normally distributed as it can be seen in Table 9 below. Therefore, the second step was to perform a non-parametric Mann-Whitney T-test for
independent samples. Since \( p > 0.05 \) in all cases, it can be claimed that there are no statistically significant changes from pre- to post-test in the control group after having received explicit instruction on apologies and after the performance of the role-plays in a face-to-face setting and with their classmates. In addition, as it can be observed from Table 10 below, there were no changes in the responses obtained to item 2 and item 9 from pre- to post-test. One hypothesis for this is that these two questions were too easy, thus, all students answered correctly also in the pre-test. It can be claimed that these results are in line with what was expected, as the control group did not participate in any cultural discussion nor in any telecollaboration project.

### Table 9: Shapiro-Wilk test for the control group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>W</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-test</td>
<td>Post-test</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 1</td>
<td>0.508</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 2</td>
<td>0.434</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 3</td>
<td>0.640</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 4</td>
<td>0.484</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 5</td>
<td>0.228</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 6</td>
<td>0.655</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 7</td>
<td>0.228</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 8</td>
<td>0.618</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 9</td>
<td>0.262</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 10</td>
<td>0.815</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 10: Mann-Whitney T-test for independent samples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>W</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Item 1</td>
<td>180.500</td>
<td>0.948</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 3</td>
<td>156.500</td>
<td>0.461</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 4</td>
<td>176.000</td>
<td>0.930</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 5</td>
<td>180.500</td>
<td>0.909</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 6</td>
<td>190.500</td>
<td>0.687</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 7</td>
<td>191.500</td>
<td>0.433</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 8</td>
<td>170.500</td>
<td>0.775</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Regarding the quantitative content analysis of the role-plays, Table 11 below represents the classification of the students’ strategies used to apologise during role-playing performance. A total number of 192 strategies were coded within 50 role-plays. As can be observed in Table 11, the most common head act used was the expression of speaker’s regret, which corresponds to 38.54%, followed by the use of a performative utterance that corresponds to 5.73%. The second most common strategy was an explanation of why the fault occurred (21.35%), followed by the use of intensifiers/modifiers. However, the percentage of use of other strategies is not high, including those strategies influenced by the participants’ L1 (i.e., Spanish).

Table 11: Results of the quantitative content analysis of the control group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Control group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IFID/head act</td>
<td>Expression of S’s regret</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Asking H’s pardon or forgiveness</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Using a performative utterance</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expression of responsibility</td>
<td>Explicit self-blame</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Denial of fault</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explanation of why the fault occurred</td>
<td></td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offer of repair</td>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promise of forbearance</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apology intensification</td>
<td>Concern for the H</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intensifier/modifier</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L1 transfer</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total N of strategies</td>
<td></td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total N of role-plays</td>
<td></td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following extract illustrates the speaker’s regret, an explanation of why the fault occurred, and an offer of repair *(verbatim)*:
I don’t know, I was really nervous and there were not enough space to park and I don’t know how it happened. Eh I’m really sorry I have done it eh I think I might go to the service and repair your car.

These strategies were used in an informal situation (role-play A) where one of the students had to apologise to his/her brother after denting his car. No apology intensification was used, and a promise of forbearance was not provided, although the other strategies conform to the steps to apologise proposed by the aforementioned taxonomy (see Table 4). The following example is taken from a more formal situation (role-play B), where a student was expected to apologise to his/her professor for being late:

*Sorry for being late, I know that’s it’s all my fault. The alarm didn’t wake me up. Next time it won’t happen again. Please let me in.*

Although an apology intensification was not used, the above quote conforms to all the steps needed to give a proper apology. Nevertheless, *sorry* can be too informal given the academic context and the social distance between a student and a university professor. The following extract taken from the same situation illustrates how the student used a more formal head act (*verbatim*):

*V: (knocks the door) Sorry?*

*F: Who are you?*

*V: I’m a student from (?) Aerospace Engineering*

*F: And why did you arrive late? Do you know that the class has start half an hour ago?*

*V: Eh yes. I apologise about that but I was driving my car and I was involved in a traffic accident.*

*F: Mmh, I don’t know if I should let you entry. You know.*

*V: Eh yes, it’s my fault. I-I try to leave my home earlier but it’s the first time that I have arrived eh (pause) late. I promise you that I will never do it again.*

*F: OK, don’t worry.*

*V: Thank you.*

Here, the head act used is *I apologise*, which is believed to be more formal than *sorry*. However, it can be observed the misuse of *Sorry?* at the beginning of the conversation, as the correct formula would have been *Excuse me?*.

Regarding the influence of L1 strategies, one of the students used the formula *you will need to excuse me* to refuse his professor invitation to a conference, which is a clear L1 transfer from the
Spanish formula *vas a tener que perdonarme*. The same happens in the following extract, where *I can’t assist* instead of *I can’t attend* is influenced by the Spanish *no puedo asistir*:

*Eh I received your invitation last week and unfortunately for me I can’t assist.*

Having analysed the role-plays performed by the control group, the following sections will analyse the apology strategies produced by the experimental groups.

### 6.1.2. First experimental group

Table 12 below illustrates the descriptive statistics obtained by the comparison of the pre- and post-test of the first experimental group. It can be observed that there is no variation in the responses obtained to items 4 and 5. This means that participants chose the most pragmatically adequate answer both in the pre- and the post-test, and hence it cannot be claimed that the intervention carried out had an impact on that. Despite that, the results demonstrate that there is a general tendency of improvement, especially in items 1, 3, 6, 7, 8, and 9 where the M increased in the post-test. This is not the case in item 2, as the M decreased in the post-test.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Pre-test M</th>
<th>Pre-test SD</th>
<th>Post-test M</th>
<th>Post-test SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Item 1</td>
<td>2.857</td>
<td>0.378</td>
<td>3.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 2</td>
<td>3.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>2.714</td>
<td>0.756</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 3</td>
<td>2.143</td>
<td>1.069</td>
<td>2.429</td>
<td>0.976</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 4</td>
<td>3.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>3.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 5</td>
<td>3.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>3.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 6</td>
<td>2.143</td>
<td>0.690</td>
<td>2.571</td>
<td>0.787</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 7</td>
<td>2.857</td>
<td>0.378</td>
<td>3.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 8</td>
<td>2.857</td>
<td>0.378</td>
<td>3.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 9</td>
<td>2.857</td>
<td>0.378</td>
<td>3.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 10</td>
<td>2.000</td>
<td>0.577</td>
<td>2.000</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In order to decide if it was more appropriate to carry out a parametric or non-parametric test, a Shapiro-Wilk normality test was carried out. As there were less than 30 participants, the result was that the data from that group were not normally distributed (Table 13) because \( p < 0.5 \), therefore a Wilcoxon test for paired samples was conducted. As it can be seen from Table 12 above, there was no statistical variation from pre- to post-test in some of the items, thus the results cannot be reported in Table 13 below, - will appear instead. Also, because of the results of pre- and post-test in items 4 and 5, it was not possible to calculate the distribution (i.e., normal or not normal) for these two items, and for this reason they do not appear in Table 13 below.

**Table 13: Shapiro-Wilk test for the first experimental group**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item 1</th>
<th>W</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Item 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 3</td>
<td>0.840</td>
<td>0.099</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 6</td>
<td>0.888</td>
<td>0.263</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 10</td>
<td>0.858</td>
<td>0.144</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The findings reveal that there are no statistically significant differences between pre- and post-test. As this group was composed only by 7 participants, it is not likely to show relevant differences. As it has been said above, the difference from the results obtained in the two questionnaires can be observed from the means, which show a tendency of improvement from pre- to post-test. One possible explanation for the slight improvement is that participants in this group were 3rd year students with an initial high level of English, therefore this probably had an impact on the responses obtained in the pre-test as they were mostly appropriate.
Regarding the quantitative content analysis of the strategies employed to apologise, Table 15 below illustrates the quantification and frequency of each of the strategies. A total number of 183 strategies were coded within 31 role-playing tasks. As it can be observed, the most common head act used was expression of speaker’s regret, corresponding to 26.93% of the strategies, followed by using a performative utterance, which corresponds to 2.75%, and asking for the hearer’s pardon or forgiveness (1.64%). Apart from the head act, the most common strategy used was that of apology intensification through intensifiers or modifiers (20.88%), followed by an explanation of why the fault had occurred (15.38%). On the other hand, the least used was an expression of responsibility. It is interesting to note that in this group up to 5.46% of the strategies used were influenced by the students’ L1.
In the following extract a number of strategies can be observed. It is taken from an informal situation where the student had to refuse attending his friend’s birthday party (role-play C). First, the student showed his regret by using the intensifier *terribly* and the head act *sorry*; second, he used an L1 strategy by saying *I hope you understand*, which is typically used in positive cultures such as the Spanish one; third he provided the hearer with an explanation of why the fault occurred; and finally, he apologised again (*verbatim*):

> Well I'm *terribly* sorry about not not attend your birthday party but I hope that you understand that I have a lot of exams and I have to study it is true that if I had organize my schedule in other way I could have some time to attend your party but I I couln't so it it would be it will be impossible to me to to attend your your party so I'm I'm so sorry.

The next extract, instead, offers an example of concern for the hearer by saying *I know it’s very important for you* (*verbatim*):

> *I know it's very important for you but I have to to refuse your invitation and come to my sister wedding. I hope you understand it. Eh I'm I'm very sorry because it's an important date but my sister wedding it's an important day too and I I know I should have told you before but things gone like that and I couldn't react before.*

Also, the L1 formula *I hope you understand it* is used again, although it is not the same speaker from the previous example. The head act *sorry* is preceded by the intensifier/modifier *very*, and it is followed by an explanation of why the fault occurred and explicit self-blame by saying *I know I*
should have told you before. However, an offer of repair or a promise of forbearance were not employed.

6.1.3. Second experimental group

Within the descriptive statistics, it can be observed from Table 16 below that there is no variation between the responses obtained from pre- and post-test to the item 5, which means that participants chose the most appropriate answer not only in the post-test, but also in the pre-test. Therefore, the intervention did not have an impact in this case. The general tendency is that students improved their answers in the post-test to the items 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, and especially to item 9 as the standard deviation (SD) is closer to 0. Nevertheless, it seems that item 2 was again problematic as the mean decreased in the post-test.

Table 16: Descriptive statistics of the second experimental group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Item 1</td>
<td>Pre-test</td>
<td>2.769</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post-test</td>
<td>2.615</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 2</td>
<td>Pre-test</td>
<td>3.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post-test</td>
<td>2.769</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 3</td>
<td>Pre-test</td>
<td>2.115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post-test</td>
<td>2.385</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 4</td>
<td>Pre-test</td>
<td>2.769</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post-test</td>
<td>2.923</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 5</td>
<td>Pre-test</td>
<td>3.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post-test</td>
<td>3.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 6</td>
<td>Pre-test</td>
<td>2.231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post-test</td>
<td>2.577</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 7</td>
<td>Pre-test</td>
<td>2.769</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post-test</td>
<td>2.846</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 8</td>
<td>Pre-test</td>
<td>2.846</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post-test</td>
<td>2.885</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 9</td>
<td>Pre-test</td>
<td>2.885</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post-test</td>
<td>2.962</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 10</td>
<td>Pre-test</td>
<td>2.115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post-test</td>
<td>2.038</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Regarding the pre- and post-test, first of all a Shapiro-Wilk normality test was carried out. As there were less than 30 participants in this case too, the result was that the data was not normally distributed as it can be observed from Table 17 below. The results also demonstrate that, again, there were no differences in the responses obtained from the pre- and the post-test in question 2. In this case, the same happened with item 5.
After that, a non-parametric Wilcoxon test for paired samples was carried out to compare the responses obtained from pre- and post-test to seek for any differences or similarities. As \( p > 0.05 \), it can be claimed that there are no statistically significant changes from pre- to post-test in this group. These findings were expected since this group had less chances to interact with their international partners than the previous one.

Table 17: Shapiro-Wilk test for the second experimental group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>W</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Item 1</td>
<td>0.827</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 2</td>
<td>0.758</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 3</td>
<td>0.625</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 6</td>
<td>0.625</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 7</td>
<td>0.635</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 8</td>
<td>0.503</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 9</td>
<td>0.536</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 10</td>
<td>0.805</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 18: Wilcoxon test for paired samples the second experimental group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>W</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Item 1</td>
<td>36.000</td>
<td>0.401</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 3</td>
<td>12.000</td>
<td>0.199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 4</td>
<td>3.500</td>
<td>0.129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 6</td>
<td>27.000</td>
<td>0.104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 7</td>
<td>7.000</td>
<td>0.589</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 8</td>
<td>4.000</td>
<td>0.850</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 9</td>
<td>2.500</td>
<td>0.424</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 10</td>
<td>38.500</td>
<td>0.627</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The items 2 and 5 are not included in Table 18 above because there was no variation from pre- to post-test. Therefore, the Wilcoxon test could not be calculated in those cases.

Turning to the quantitative content analysis of the role-plays, Table 19 below exemplifies the number and frequency of the strategies used to apologise by this group of participants who produced a total number of 190 strategies within 38 role-playing tasks. As it can be observed, the most frequent head act was the expression of the speaker's regret, which constitutes 31.06% of all the strategies produced. Asking hearer's pardon or forgiveness and using a performative utterance were produced the same number of times (2.10%). Within the other strategies, the most used was explanation of why the fault occurred, which corresponds to 18.95% of the total, followed by the use of intensifiers/modifiers (15.26%), and promise of forbearance (11.58%). Participants in this group
seldom employed L1 strategies to apologise during role-playing performance, as this category constitutes only 1.58% of the strategies used.

Table 19: Results of the quantitative content analysis of the second experimental group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Second experimental group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IFID/head act</td>
<td>Expression of S’s regret</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Asking H’s pardon or forgiveness</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Using a performative utterance</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expression of responsibility</td>
<td>Explicit self-blame</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Denial of fault</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explanation of why the fault occurred</td>
<td></td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offer of repair</td>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promise of forbearance</td>
<td></td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apology intensification</td>
<td>Concern for the H</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intensifier/modifier</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L1 transfer</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total N of strategies</td>
<td></td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total N of role-plays</td>
<td></td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the following extract it can be observed that the Spanish student used *I’m sorry* in order to apologise, which in this case would be correct as the situation was informal (role-play C). Apart from that, he showed concern for the hearer by saying *I know it is very important for you*, and he provides an explanation of why the fault is occurring. Interestingly, as it has been observed in other previous examples, he apologised again at the end (*verbatim*):

G: Oh no. *I’m sorry* but I can’t go to the to your birthday. *I know it is is very important for you* and an- for and for me too but on Monday I’m doing the the exams eh I have pass these exams to pass the course. *I’m I’m sorry*

On the other hand, in the role-play that follows, the student used several strategies to apologise, going from informal to more formal (*verbatim*):
L: Hello ehm thank you for the eh eh eh thank you for your attention and I have to tell you something I’m I’m really sorry but I am afraid that I am not going to be able to attend to your invitation

M: You can’t attend? But you know it’s a very important conference ehm this is for your final project degree

L: Yes and it’s my fault because I didn’t remember that that’s the same day as my eh sister’s wedding and it’s a really important day for me and for her so eh with all my respect for your work and your invitation and I know that it’s very important for my final project but I have to refuse it. I hope you are okay with it

M: As long you understand that (unintelligible) my time is very important so this can’t happen again

L: Eh it won’t and I’m really really sorry and I apologise and I’m so sorry and I hope that ehm you can invite me to another thing and I will be more responsible

As the reader can see, the student uses the formula I + intensifier + sorry three different times, and at the end of the role-play s/he even says I apologise, which in this case would be more appropriate as it was a formal situation (role-play D). Apart from the head act, s/he also acknowledges her/his fault, s/he provides an explanation of why the fault occurred, s/he shows concern for the hearer by saying with all my respect for your work and your invitation, an L1 strategy which is I hope you are okay with it, and a promise of forbearance (triggered by the interlocutor). It is believed that also the strategy classified as concern for the hearer is transferred from the Spanish con todos mis respetos. It was felt that it would be more appropriate to classify it as a strategy to show concern for the interlocutor, as it was clearly her/his intention when uttering that formula.

6.1.4. Third experimental group

Regarding the quantitative analysis of pre- and post-test, the descriptive statistics demonstrate that there is no variation in the items 2, 5, and 8 as the participants answered all correctly both in the pre- and the post-test. Despite that, there is a general tendency of improvement in all items except item 9 whose M decreased from pre- to post-test (see Table 20).

Table 20: Descriptive statistics of the third experimental group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Item 1</td>
<td>Pre-test</td>
<td>2.556</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 2</td>
<td>Pre-test</td>
<td>3.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
After that, a Shapiro-Wilk test was carried out (Table 21). Results obtained from items 3, 4, 7, and 10 suggest a deviation from the norm, which means that parametric tests could be applied to those items. Nevertheless, the results obtained by applying parametric tests did not vary from the non-parametric Wilcoxon test for paired samples. As in previous cases, the responses obtained to item 9 did not show any variation from pre- to post-test.

**Table 21: Shapiro-Wilk test for the third experimental group**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Pre-test W</th>
<th>Pre-test p</th>
<th>Post-test W</th>
<th>Post-test p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Item 1</td>
<td>0.873</td>
<td>0.132</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 3</td>
<td>0.813</td>
<td>0.028</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 4</td>
<td>0.781</td>
<td>0.012</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 6</td>
<td>0.846</td>
<td>0.263</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 7</td>
<td>0.638</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 9</td>
<td></td>
<td>&lt;.01</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 10</td>
<td>0.781</td>
<td>0.012</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The results obtained from the Wilcoxon test for paired samples are better illustrated in Table 22 below. Since \( p > 0.05 \) in all cases, this means that there are no statistically significant changes from pre- to post-test. However, as said before, the mean shows a general tendency of improvement from pre- to post-test.

**Table 22: Wilcoxon test for the third experimental group**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>( W )</th>
<th>( p )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Item 1</td>
<td>2.000</td>
<td>0.345</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 3</td>
<td>2.500</td>
<td>0.424</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 4</td>
<td>2.000</td>
<td>0.773</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 6</td>
<td>4.000</td>
<td>0.850</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 7</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>1.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 9</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 10</td>
<td>2.000</td>
<td>0.773</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this case, the main limitation is the small sample size as it happened with the first experimental group. With such a reduced number of participants there are few chances to observe statistically significant changes.

Regarding the quantitative content analysis of the strategies used to apologise during role-playing tasks, it can be observed from Table 23 below that a total number of 123 strategies were employed within 25 role-plays. Of these, 35.25% were expressions of speaker’s regret, followed by the use of intensifiers/modifiers (19.67%) and explanation of why the fault occurred (18.85%). Within the head acts strategies, the second most used was using a performative utterance (4.10%), although its use is far lower than that of expressing regret. The least used was asking hearer’s pardon or forgiveness (1.64%), which was used the same number of times as expression of responsibility. L1 strategies were used only 3 times, corresponding to 2.46% of the strategies.

**Table 23: Results of the quantitative content analysis of the third experimental group**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Third experimental group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>( n )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IFID/head act</td>
<td>Expression of S’s regret</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Asking H’s pardon or forgiveness</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Using a performative utterance</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expression of responsibility</td>
<td>Explicit self-blame</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Denial of fault</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The extract below is taken from an informal situation (role-play C), where the Spanish student uses a number of strategies to apologise to a friend. Instead of explicitly apologising from the beginning, he first provides an explanation of why the fault occurred, then he uses an L1 strategy to call for the hearer’s empathy by saying *I hope you apologise me*, which corresponds to the Spanish formula *espero que me perdones*. He apologises using a head act and an intensifier only at the end, and he also offers a repair *(verbatim)*:

*N: So I know that your birthday party is on Saturday but unfortunately (laughter) I won’t be able to attend because of this exam yeah yeah yeah I know I know*

*J: Dude we’ve been we’ve been planning this for months man like just for this one class just skip it bro*

*[…]*

*N: Yeah I have to study I think all the all the all Saturday and Sunday (laughter) I hope you apologise me*

*[…]*

*J: Okay that’s alright [I hear]*

*N: [I’m very sorry]*

*J: Okay I hear you out I’m gonna hear you out I understand okay okay*

*N: We can we can go to have a drink the next Saturday*
In that case, the apology was appropriate as the level of imposition was low and the context was informal. In the next extract, instead, the student was probably using a too informal strategy to apologise, as this was a formal situation where a student apologises to his university professor (role-play B) (verbatim).

G: Hi teacher I so sorry eh I can’t come before because there was many traffic and I go out late. This is the last occur eh I promise you this. Sorry.

As it can be observed, the register is informal from the beginning when he said *Hi teacher*. In terms of apology performance, he used *I + intensifier + sorry*, an explanation of why the fault occurred, a promise of forbearance, and he apologised again at the end using *sorry*.

### 6.1.5. Results from all the experimental groups

In order to have a whole picture of the impact that the virtual exchanges had on the experimental groups, the quantitative part of all the three experimental groups together was analysed as if they were the same group. This is useful to observe the general tendency of the participants, although the different variables that affect each class are not taken into account in this way. As this time there were more than 30 students, the Shapiro-Wilk test was carried out to see if the data from the three experimental groups were normally distributed. Results presented in Table 25 below demonstrate that they did not, therefore a non-parametric test was conducted to compare the responses obtained to pre- and post-test.

The descriptive statistics reported in Table 24 below revealed that there is no variation between the results obtained in the pre-test and those in the post-test of items 1 and 5. As in item 5 the result is 3, this means that the participants chose the most pragmatically appropriate answer in both questionnaires. Apart from that, the M of item 2 reveals that some students gave a less pragmatically adequate answer in the post-test, contrarily to the pre-test where all of them had chosen the best option. These two facts could imply that the questions proposed in items 5 and 2 are somehow problematic: item 5 could possibly be too easy for the level that the participants had, while the role-plays or the cultural discussions could have had an impact on the students’ choice in question 2, which made them change their minds. On the other hand, a slight improvement can be observed in all the other items. In particular, items 6, 3, 4 show a higher improvement than the others which were steadier.
### Table 24: Descriptive statistics of all experimental groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Pre-test</th>
<th>Post-test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Item 1</td>
<td>2.738</td>
<td>2.738</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.544</td>
<td>0.587</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 2</td>
<td>3.000</td>
<td>2.810</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.594</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 3</td>
<td>2.024</td>
<td>2.333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>0.954</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 4</td>
<td>2.786</td>
<td>2.905</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.415</td>
<td>0.297</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 5</td>
<td>3.000</td>
<td>3.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 6</td>
<td>2.143</td>
<td>2.452</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.843</td>
<td>0.670</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 7</td>
<td>2.786</td>
<td>2.881</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.606</td>
<td>0.328</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 8</td>
<td>2.881</td>
<td>2.929</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.328</td>
<td>0.342</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 9</td>
<td>2.905</td>
<td>2.952</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.297</td>
<td>0.216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 10</td>
<td>2.048</td>
<td>2.024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.623</td>
<td>0.680</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 25: Shapiro-Wilk test for all the experimental groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>W</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Item 1</td>
<td>0.808</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 3</td>
<td>0.768</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 4</td>
<td>0.614</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 5</td>
<td>0.897</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 7</td>
<td>0.612</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 8</td>
<td>0.431</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 9</td>
<td>0.520</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 10</td>
<td>0.818</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The same non-parametric test that was used for the different experimental groups was carried out in this case. As p > 0.05, it can be claimed that no statistically significant results were obtained. However, in line with the descriptive statistics results, findings from items 3 and 6 reveal that p is closer to 0.05 than in the other items, which corroborates that a higher improvement can be observed from the answers given to questions 3 and 6 of the apologies questionnaire.
Also, as mentioned before, the M of the descriptive statistics demonstrate a general tendency of improvement from pre- to post-test, which is something positive. The following sections shall compare the results of the control group and each experimental group.

### 6.1.6. Comparison between the control group and the first experimental group

A comparison of the results obtained in the post-test by the control group and the first experimental group was also carried out. First, a Shapiro-Wilk normality test whose results can be observed in Table 27 below was implemented.

#### Table 27: Shapiro-Wilk test of the comparison between the control group and the first experimental group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Control group</th>
<th>Experimental group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Item 1</td>
<td>470</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 2</td>
<td>453</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 3</td>
<td>611</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 4</td>
<td>600</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 5</td>
<td>262</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 6</td>
<td>635</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 7</td>
<td>646</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 8</td>
<td>569</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As a normal distribution of the data could not be established, a Mann-Whitney U test for independent samples was carried out in order to compare the results obtained by the two groups. As the sample size was reduced, statistically significant differences among the two groups were not observed. What is more, as it was observed in the previous sections, the responses obtained did not show a high variability, which has also an impact on these results.

Table 28: Mann-Whitney U test for independent samples for the comparison of the control group and the first experimental group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Experimental group</th>
<th>Control group</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Item 9</td>
<td></td>
<td>262</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 10</td>
<td></td>
<td>792</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Experimental group</td>
<td>759</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Nevertheless, the descriptive statistics from the control and the first experimental group reveal a higher tendency of improvement in the first experimental group, as can be observed from Tables 8 and 12. The control group showed an improvement in items 2, 3, 8, 10, and a slight improvement in item 4, while all the other items showed a regression. In contrast, the first experimental group showed an improvement in items 1, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, while all other items did not reveal any variation from pre- to post-test as they already scored the highest (i.e., 3) in the pre-test, except for item 2 which is the only one which revealed a regression. Therefore, it can be claimed that the first experimental group outperformed the control group in terms of apology performance. In order to corroborate that, an Eta correlation coefficient was calculated between the number of strategies used to apologise by each student in both groups and their work modality (i.e., face-to-face or telecollaboration). To do that, a numerical value was assigned to the work modality, being face-to-face 1 and telecollaboration 2. The Eta coefficient showed a statistically significant correlation between the number of strategies used to apologise by each student and the work modality as $r = .71$, which means that the participants of the
telecollaboration project used a higher number of strategies to apologise compared to those who carried out the role-plays in a face-to-face setting with their Spanish classmates.

6.1.7. **Comparison between the control group and the second experimental group**

A comparison of the results obtained in the post-test by the control group and the second experimental group was also carried out. First, a Shapiro-Wilk normality test was carried out whose results can be observed in Table 29 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Control group</th>
<th>Experimental group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.470</td>
<td>0.594</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.376</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.611</td>
<td>0.583</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 4</td>
<td>0.470</td>
<td>0.301</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.262</td>
<td>0.262</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 6</td>
<td>0.635</td>
<td>0.684</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.391</td>
<td>0.436</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 8</td>
<td>0.569</td>
<td>0.300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>0.262</td>
<td>0.198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 10</td>
<td>0.792</td>
<td>0.796</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As a normal distribution of the data could not be established, a Mann-Whitney U test for independent samples was carried out in order to compare the results obtained by the two groups. Probably due to the small sample size, statistically significant differences among the two groups are not observed.
Regarding the descriptive statistics, the second experimental group improved in 5 out of 10 items from pre- to post-test, while a regression was observed in 3 out of 10 items, and the remaining items did not show variation. In this sense, the second experimental group slightly outperform the control group which showed a regression in 5 out of 10 items.

### 6.1.8. Comparison between the control group and the third experimental group

The same procedure was followed also to compare the results obtained from the post-test of the control group and the third experimental group. Table 31 below illustrates the ones obtained from the Shapiro-Wilk normality test, which revealed that the data was not normally distributed.
Therefore, a Mann-Whitney U test for independent samples was carried out. The findings reveal that there are no statistically significant changes, although as said before the small sample size and the low variability may have had an impact on that.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Control group</th>
<th>Experimental group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.569</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>0.262</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>0.792</td>
<td>0.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.693</td>
<td>0.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 32: Mann-Whitney U test for independent samples for the comparison of the control group and the third experimental group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>W</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>70.000</td>
<td>0.606</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>83.500</td>
<td>0.678</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>80.000</td>
<td>0.813</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>97.500</td>
<td>0.229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>75.500</td>
<td>0.961</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>80.500</td>
<td>0.683</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>92.500</td>
<td>0.334</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Nevertheless, the descriptive statistics reported on Table 8 and Table 20 demonstrate that the third experimental group outperformed the control group in that it improved in 6 out of 10 items and showed a regression only in 1 item, as opposed to the control group who showed a regression in 5 out of 10 items as previously reported.

The comparison of results from the post-test of the control group and each individual experimental group has been carried out because of scientific rigour. However, significant differences were not expected because of the small sample size. For that reason, in the following section the same procedure was followed but considering the three experimental groups as a unique group.

6.1.9. Comparison between the control group and all the experimental groups

As one of the aims of this dissertation is to demonstrate that the participation in a telecollaboration project affects the students involved in a positive way, a comparison between the post-tests of the control group and all the experimental groups together was carried out. Although
statistically significant results were not obtained, there appeared to be a general slight tendency of improvement in the experimental group (Table 33). The main exception to this is again item 2, where the control group outperformed the experimental groups. The same happened with item 10.

Table 33: Descriptive statistics of the comparison between the control group and the experimental group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th></th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Item 1</td>
<td>Post-test control group</td>
<td>2.647</td>
<td>0.786</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post-test experimental group</td>
<td>2.738</td>
<td>0.587</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 2</td>
<td>Post-test control group</td>
<td>3.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post-test experimental group</td>
<td>2.810</td>
<td>0.594</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 3</td>
<td>Post-test control group</td>
<td>2.294</td>
<td>0.985</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post-test experimental group</td>
<td>2.333</td>
<td>0.954</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 4</td>
<td>Post-test control group</td>
<td>2.824</td>
<td>0.393</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post-test experimental group</td>
<td>2.905</td>
<td>0.297</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 5</td>
<td>Post-test control group</td>
<td>2.882</td>
<td>0.485</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post-test experimental group</td>
<td>3.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 6</td>
<td>Post-test control group</td>
<td>2.353</td>
<td>0.931</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post-test experimental group</td>
<td>2.452</td>
<td>0.670</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 7</td>
<td>Post-test control group</td>
<td>2.824</td>
<td>0.529</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post-test experimental group</td>
<td>2.881</td>
<td>0.328</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 8</td>
<td>Post-test control group</td>
<td>2.706</td>
<td>0.588</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post-test experimental group</td>
<td>2.929</td>
<td>0.342</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 9</td>
<td>Post-test control group</td>
<td>2.941</td>
<td>0.243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post-test experimental group</td>
<td>2.952</td>
<td>0.216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 10</td>
<td>Post-test control group</td>
<td>2.235</td>
<td>0.664</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post-test experimental group</td>
<td>2.024</td>
<td>0.680</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Also a normality Shapiro-Wilk test was carried out (see Table 34), and the result was that the data was not normally distributed. Therefore, the Mann-Whitney U test was calculated, through which it was found that \( p < 0.05 \) in item 8 (Table 35), which means that it is statistically significant. For that reason, the Cohen’s d effect size was calculated for item 8 to see how significant it is. As \( r = 0.226 \), the effect size is small, but it rests on the experimental group, which is something positive given the aim of this study.

*Table 34: Shapiro-Wilk test of the comparison between the control group and the experimental group*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Post-test control group</th>
<th>Post-test experimental group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Item 1</td>
<td>0.470</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 2</td>
<td>0.498</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 3</td>
<td>0.335</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 4</td>
<td>0.595</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 5</td>
<td>0.611</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 6</td>
<td>0.732</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 7</td>
<td>0.379</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 8</td>
<td>0.569</td>
<td>&lt; .001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The main drawback of carrying out a comparison with a unique experimental group is that the individual variables such as their initial level, the topic of the cultural discussions, and the number of sessions in which they participated are not considered.

Also a comparison between the results obtained in the pre-test by the control group and those obtained in the post-test by the experimental groups was carried out. This was done to compare the results obtained by a group before any kind of intervention (i.e., neither face-to-face nor virtually) and another after participating in a telecollaboration project. The Shapiro-Wilk normality test revealed that the data was normally distributed (Table 36), thus a parametric T test for independent samples was carried out. The results obtained in item 8 are statistically significant as $p = 0.027$, while those obtained in item 4 are not statistically significant but still show a tendency of improvement in the experimental group as $p = 0.292$. After that, the Cohen’s $d$ effect size was calculated for those two items, revealing that $r = 0.604$ in item 8, which demonstrates a strong effect size on the experimental group. Turning to item 4, $r = 0.284$, it revealed a small effect size although it is still

Table 35: Mann-Whitney U test of the comparison between the control group and the experimental group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Post-test control group</th>
<th>Post-test experimental group</th>
<th>$U$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
<th>$d$</th>
<th>$r$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Item 1</td>
<td>354.500</td>
<td>0.961</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 3</td>
<td>350.000</td>
<td>0.894</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 4</td>
<td>328.000</td>
<td>0.394</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 6</td>
<td>357.000</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 7</td>
<td>355.000</td>
<td>0.964</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 8</td>
<td>291.000</td>
<td>0.037</td>
<td>0.463</td>
<td>0.226</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 9</td>
<td>353.000</td>
<td>0.878</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 10</td>
<td>415.500</td>
<td>0.282</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
positive as it rests on the experimental group. The same happens with item 3, as $r = 0.292$. This is in line with the descriptive statistics, as these three items were the ones with a higher mean variation between the two groups as it can be observed in Table 36 and 37 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>W</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Pre-test control group</td>
<td>0.508</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post-test experimental group</td>
<td>0.498</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Pre-test control group</td>
<td>0.434</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post-test experimental group</td>
<td>0.335</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Pre-test control group</td>
<td>0.640</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post-test experimental group</td>
<td>0.595</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Pre-test control group</td>
<td>0.484</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post-test experimental group</td>
<td>0.335</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Pre-test control group</td>
<td>0.228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post-test experimental group</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Pre-test control group</td>
<td>0.655</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post-test experimental group</td>
<td>0.732</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Pre-test control group</td>
<td>0.228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post-test experimental group</td>
<td>0.379</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Pre-test control group</td>
<td>0.618</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post-test experimental group</td>
<td>0.219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Pre-test control group</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post-test experimental group</td>
<td>0.222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Pre-test control group</td>
<td>0.815</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post-test experimental group</td>
<td>0.801</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 37: Descriptive statistics for item 3, 4, and 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item 3</th>
<th>Pre-test control group</th>
<th>Post-test experimental group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>2.048</td>
<td>2.333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>1.024</td>
<td>0.954</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item 4</th>
<th>Pre-test control group</th>
<th>Post-test experimental group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>2.810</td>
<td>2.905</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>0.402</td>
<td>0.297</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item 8</th>
<th>Pre-test control group</th>
<th>Post-test experimental group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>2.667</td>
<td>2.929</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SD</td>
<td>0.577</td>
<td>0.342</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results obtained from the content analysis of each group have also been compared, as can be seen from Table 38 below. In terms of head acts, the control group was the one which used the expression of speaker’s regret the most (38.54%), followed by the third experimental group (35.25%), the second experimental group (31.06%), and the first experimental group (26.77%). The control group is also the one which used performative utterances the most (5.73%), followed by the third experimental group (4.10%). However, they were also the ones which asked hearer’s pardon or forgiveness least (0.52%), which can be a symptom of lack of variety. In addition, the control group is also the one which used the promise of forbearance the least (4.17%), while the first and second experimental group duplicate or almost triplicate it (8.74% and 11.58% respectively). The control group also used less intensifiers/modifiers than the three experimental groups, as this strategy was used the most by the first experimental group (20.77%) and the third experimental group (19.67%). Moreover, the first experimental group was also the one which showed concern for the hearer more often (6.56%), followed by the second experimental group (5.79%), while there is almost no difference between the control group and the third experimental group. On the other hand, the control group was the one which provided explanations of why the fault occurred the most (21.35%), while the first experimental group was the one which used this strategy the least (15.30%). Offers of repair were used almost the same number of times by all groups except the first experimental group which used it the most (9.29%). In terms of expression of responsibility, the second experimental group and the control group used explicit self-blame almost the same number of times (3.68% and 3.65% respectively), while the third experimental group was the one which used it the least (1.64%). Denial of fault was used only once by the control group and the first experimental group, while it was never used by the second and third experimental groups. Finally, the first experimental group was also the
one which used more L1 strategies to apologise (5.46%), while the second experimental group was the one which used it the least (1.59%).

Group 1 was the more productive in general, as the total number of strategies produced was 183, although it was composed of 7 students. The results show that they used almost the same number of strategies of group 2, although the latter almost quadruplicates the number of participants of the former. Furthermore, group 3 which was composed of 6 students, used 123 strategies, which is a considerably lower number compared to group 1.

Table 38: Comparison of the quantitative content analysis of all the groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Control group</th>
<th>First experimental group</th>
<th>Second experimental group</th>
<th>Third experimental group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IFID/head act</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expression of S’s regret</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>38.54</td>
<td>26.77</td>
<td>31.06</td>
<td>35.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asking H’s pardon or forgiveness</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>1.64</td>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>1.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using a performative utterance</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5.73</td>
<td>2.73</td>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>4.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expression of responsibility</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explicit self-blame</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>2.19</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>1.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denial of fault</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explanation of why the fault occurred</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>21.35</td>
<td>15.30</td>
<td>18.95</td>
<td>18.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offer of repair</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7.81</td>
<td>9.29</td>
<td>7.89</td>
<td>7.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promise of forbearance</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>8.74</td>
<td>11.58</td>
<td>6.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apology intensification</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concern for the H</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.08</td>
<td>6.56</td>
<td>5.79</td>
<td>2.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intensifier/modifier</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13.54</td>
<td>20.77</td>
<td>15.26</td>
<td>19.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L1 transfer</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.09</td>
<td>5.46</td>
<td>1.59</td>
<td>2.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total N of strategies</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>183</td>
<td>190</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total N of role-plays</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of participants</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6.1.10. The impact of work modalities on the production of speech acts

In order to corroborate the fact that the work modality influences the number of strategies used to apologise, which was demonstrated by the comparison of the control group and the experimental group in section 6.1.5.2, a comparison between the first experimental group and the second experimental group was also carried out. In this case, the two work modalities compared were pair work and group work, as students in the first experimental group worked in pairs with students from Bath, while those in the second experimental group worked mostly in groups of 4 with students from Hawai’i, except for two groups composed of 3 students instead of 4.

To carry out the comparison a numerical value was assigned to the two work modalities, being 2 pair work and 1 group work. After that, the Eta coefficient was calculated to seek any relation between the number of strategies used to apologise by each student and the work modality. The results revealed a significant correlation between the number of strategies used to apologise by each student and the work modality as \( r = .79 \). Therefore, it can be claimed that students in the first experimental group outperformed those in the second experimental group, and that the fact that they worked in pairs could be the explanation of that. This is confirmed by the results of the descriptive statistics which can be observed in Table 12 and 16. Although no statistically significant differences were found between the two groups, it can be noted that the first experimental group slightly outperformed the second experimental group in the post-test. The first experimental group scored higher in items 1, 3, 4, 7, 8, and 9, while they obtained the same result in item 5.

6.1.11. L1 transfer in performing apologies

Although it was not the focus of the analysis, the results brought to light also a small percentage of strategies used to apologise which did not fit in any of the established categories. Therefore, an extra category was added to the proposed taxonomy. This was analysed in Di Sarno-García (2023), but for the sake of completeness it will also be included here.

It is believed that those strategies occurred as a result of the learners’ L1 transfer, that is, they transferred Spanish strategies to apologise into their English apologies. In particular, the first group was the one who used L1 strategies more frequently (5.46%), followed by the third group (2.45%), and the second one (1.59%). It can be argued that the first group was the one who used more L1 strategies because, generally speaking, was also the most productive of the three experimental groups. On the other hand, the control group used 2.09% of L1 strategies.
The most used L1 strategy among the four groups was *I hope you understand*, which was used 8 times of 20 and which is frequently used in Peninsular Spanish as *Espero que lo entiendas*, although similar formulas were also used as it will be explained in this section. The following are examples taken from different students (*verbatim*):

a. [...] I’m terribly sorry because won’t be able to attend your wedding *I hope you understand* that it is to expensive because a flight from my hometown to another foreign country is very expensive so I really really mmm I’m really really terribly sorry [...]  
b. I know it’s very important for you but I have to to refuse your invitation and come to my sister wedding. *I hope you understand it*. Eh I’m I’m very sorry because it’s an important date but my sister wedding it’s an important day too and I I know I should have told you before but things gone like that and I couldn’t react before

The verb *hope* was also used in the following examples, although in a slightly different way (*verbatim*):

c. S1: [...] I’m I’m really sorry but I am afraid that I am not going to be able to attend to your invitation  
S2: You can’t attend? But you know it’s a very important conference ehm this is for your final project degree  
S1: Yes and it’s my fault because I didn’t remember that that’s the same day as my eh sister’s wedding and it’s a really important day for me and for her so eh with all my respect for your work and your invitation and I know that it’s very important for my final project but I have to refuse it. *I hope you are okay with it*

d. [...] I have the final exams of my degree and I have to study a lot because eh I want to pass all my subjects ehm *I hope that you apologise me* because I really wanted to go but it’s impossible. *I hope that you understand me*

As it can be seen in example d, not only the student is transferring an L1 strategy into English, but she is also committing a grammatical error as she employs “apologise” instead of “forgive”. A similar strategy was used by this student (*verbatim*), who employed *I hope to asking hearer’s forgiveness*  
e. [...] the flights are so so expensive on on Christmas so and because of the the covid situation and I I’m so sorry and so so sorry and I can’t be there with you so *I hope you forgive me*

In the next example a similar strategy is employed, but in this case a more direct utterance was used (*verbatim*):


f. [...] in my office there’s another work now in Christmas and the and they need all the all all the employees there day and night so I was talking with my boss to going out earlier that they and he said me it’s impossible. Eh he can’t do anything and I want to I want you to forgive me because I want to be there you are a very good friend for me and well I like a party I want a party (laughter) but I can’t I’m so sorry.

As it can be observed, the verb “want” is used instead of “hope” forgiveness, therefore she uses an imperative instead of mitigating the request of forgiveness, which could sound rude in English, but not in Spanish.

The following extract is a clear example of L1 transfer strategy, as the student uses I can’t pardon me, which is transferred from the Spanish No puedo perdonármelo. In addition, the word pardon was pronounced /pɛɾˈðɔn/ as the Spanish word perdón. In particular, the student had already apologised, but the hearer did not accept it, thus he apologised again (verbatim):

g. I’m really sorry I I really know how much you love your car and eh and that it’s really useful for you to get to the university I I was really careful with it but was a little mistake I I can’t pardon me because I know how important it is to you. So I really sorry I’m really sorry. It won’t happen again

Also the following extracts are examples of the students’ L1 influence (verbatim):

h. I’m so sorry because eh next Saturday I have to study for a exam that I have Mo- on Monday so I cannot go to your attend to your party eh so I’m so sad but I I’m so sorry for it and I hope that you eh accept my apologize

i. Oh eh first of all I want to eh give my- you some congratulations because eh of your wedding but I cannot go there for this special day because the flight is too expensive for me and I don’t have eh this money to go I know that you will understand this problem but I want to apologize me for not coming

Example h is a transfer from the Spanish strategy Espero que aceptes mis disculpas, while example I is a transfer from the Spanish Quiero disculparme por... .

j. Eh I received your invitation last week and unfortunately for me I can’t assist.

k. OK. Thank you. I’m sorry again but it won’t be repeated.

l. Yes, but you will need to excuse me. You know, is-is my sister. I cannot do that to her.

In example j the same happens as in example d, as the L1 negative transfer results in a vocabulary mistake since the student is using the verb assist, which in English is a synonym of help, instead of
attend. This happens because assist is a false friend as in Spanish ‘asistir’ means ‘to attend’. Example k is a calc from the Spanish formula No se repetirá and example j from the Spanish expression Vas a tener que perdonarme/disculparme, which are not usually used in English in the same way as they are in Peninsular Spanish.

Having analysed the results in terms of apologies, the next section shall explore the results obtained in terms of ICC.

6.2. Intercultural communicative competence

This section includes the results obtained from the analysis of the transcriptions of the synchronous Zoom sessions, the comments posted on MeWe, the participants’ final artefact, and the responses obtained from the final project questionnaire.

6.2.1. Results from the synchronous oral Zoom sessions

As stated in the methodology section, several cultural categories were identified from the qualitative analysis of the oral Zoom conversations. These were quantified in order to provide a general picture of the preferred cultural topics. Figure 22 below is a representation of the results obtained. Starting from the left side, the illustration goes from the main categories to the small ones, of which some do not fit in any of the big ones.

Six main cultural categories were identified in the oral discourse. The most frequently cited was that of general aspects, which included a variety of topics such as general differences among countries, sense of culture, the use of social networks in each country, and more, and it represented 24.82% of all the cultural categories. The second most common category was that of tabu topics which included topics that were relevant at the moment of the telecollaboration projects, such as the Capitol attack in the USA, and historical controversial topics such as imperialism or the terrorist group ETA, and it constitutes 15.67% of all the categories. These two main categories were followed by festivities and traditions, which dealt with those festivities relevant at the moment of each project (e.g., the telecollaboration project with Bath took place from October to December, thus students talked about Christmas and New Year’s Eve) and represented 13.87% of the categories, differences or similarities in education systems or university life (13.14%), differences or similarities in typical food and timetables to eat (10.95%), and languages (9.49%) (e.g., differences in Spanish varieties). Within the subcategories, the one with a higher frequency was sports (2.92%), followed by
stereotypes (2.19%), sense of humour (2.19%), religion (1.46%), notions of family (1.46%), immigration or borders (1.46%), and the least frequent, which was digital education (0.73%).

It should be noted that both general aspects and tabu topics have a higher percentage not only because, generally speaking, students dealt with those kinds of topics more often, but also because they comprise several issues. However, the cultural category of educational systems or university life has a quite high percentage being a unique category on its own. In the following lines there are two examples of how the topic was brought into conversation taken from the transcriptions of the synchronous oral Zoom sessions of the first telecollaboration project (Bath). As it can be observed, these are two different ways of approaching the issue, as the first one is more neutral and generic, while the second one reveals the Spanish student’s (mis)conception of Anglo-Saxon cultures and possibly a more negative attitude towards his own culture.
First example (verbatim):

M: Si entonces tú sí empezaste la universidad cuando eh tenías

J: In 2018 ehm

M: Yeah cuando tenías si sí.

J: Eighteen eighteen years old.

M: Dieciocho años sí sí. Porque yo estoy yo tengo 20 años sabes

J: Sí.

M: Pero sí acabo de acabo de empezar la universidad estoy en mi primer año

J: Ah.

M: Ehm porque no sé porque sabes en Hungría es que eh vamos a la empezamos la escuela el el colegio en la edad de siete.

J: In Spain we begin at the age of of three

M: Three?

J: Three three in Spain we in a when we are three years old we we start

M: (overlapping) But this is the kindergarten no?

J: What?

M: Isn’t that the kindergarten first? Kindergarten you know kindergarten

J: En España se llama como eh infantil.

M: Cuál es el nombre?

J: Cursos de infantil. Infantil.

M: Sí si nosotros lo tenemos también pero pero eso no sí no los consideramos como educación como escuela solamente.

J: Claro entonces de la escuela de primaria eh la empezamos con seis años creo más o menos. Seis años.

M: Sí sí vale.

Second example (verbatim):

B: What’s like in Spain a graduation like what’s it how does it work usually for university graduation?
R: Eh I think is with the pandemic is going to be virtual but they the eh graduations are not as as in England bec- I mean I have seen a lot of films a lot of of movies about people graduating

B: (laughter)

R: and it’s very different from Spain because in Spain is more is not like a party is an event but is a usually is in a closed eh room where is

B: (overlapping) Yeah

R: (overlapping) some members of your family but it is I don’t know how to say. It’s boring is boring is not like in England. Yes you you receive your I don’t know diploma?

B: Yeah yeah yeah diploma.

R: Yes and but it has no special thing. Later you go out with your friends and you drink a lot but...

B: Yeah of course (laughter)

R: The event is not is not awesome but I I have seen movies about graduations in England or the United States and I I like I like it

B: (overlapping) Is so cool

R: (overlapping) But in Spain is not like that. Yes it’s different

B: (overlapping) There’s lot of traditions like a lot of traditions around graduation like what you do yeah but I won’t get it which is so sad because of the stupid pandemic so I won’t get but it’s fine.

The first extract is also an example of translanguaging as both the student from England and that from Spain use both their L1 and L2 within a few seconds of the exchange. On the contrary, the dyad in the second example maintains the conversation in English. According to Celce-Murcia (2007), educational systems should be introduced in the foreign language classroom since the aim of language teaching is communicative competence alongside cultural instruction. Therefore, the fact that this was one of the main categories identified in spontaneous interaction within the three telecollaboration projects demonstrates learners’ intercultural awareness. In line with this, Byram (2021) distinguished the knowledge of education systems within the objective knowledge of social groups and their products. Similarly, Celce-Murcia (2007) suggested introducing topics such as religion, festivities, and social structure (e.g., family). These were all topics covered in the synchronous Zoom sessions.

Regarding food and timetables to eat, it is suggested that it was a frequent topic as the difference between Spanish gastronomy and our timetables to eat and that of the other cultures is something
well-known and students feel curious about it. The following extract highlights the cultural contrast among the two speakers, being B a Spanish student and C a French student studying in England.

Third example (verbatim):

C: Nueve y media...porque los españoles ehm...

B: Cenamos tarde

C: Sí

B: Pero también comemos tarde. Comemos sobre las dos tres

C: Wow. Pero si...

B: Di

C: Pero durante la mañana te cuando cuando comes a las siete las ocho? No no tienes hambre entre las ocho de la mañana y las tres de la tarde? (laughter)

B: Sí

C: (overlapping) Cómo haces?

B: (overlapping) O sea si claro pero aquí hacemos cinco comidas

C: Cinco?!

B: Cinco claro!

C: What?!

B: (laughter) We’re we all the day cooking and eating (laughter) we have breakfast eh desayuno. First of all desayuno

C: Sí

B: Eh then we have our brunch ehm se llama almuerzo

C: (overlapping) A las diez?

B: Well it depends

C: A las once?

B: If you get up early you are going to almorzar si te levantas pronto almuerzas si no desayunas barra almuerzas todo junto y ya comes. Hay gente que hace dos hay gente que hace cuatro o cinco comidas pero bueno si te levantas pronto después a mitad mañana tienes hambre y comes allá a las once de la mañana y después comes a las dos tres
Although it may seem a superficial cultural topic, Byram (2021) suggests that knowing about “beliefs and taboos in routine situations such as meals” is part of the objective of knowledge of social groups and their products and practices in one’s own and in one’s interlocutor’s country. It is therefore argued that the fact that food and timetables to eat was one of the main categories identified in spontaneous oral interaction is an indicator of the students’ intercultural awareness development. If they will ever visit the TL country, they will be aware of the cultural differences regarding this topic, which should not be underestimated. In particular, the extract above is an example of how the Spanish student is explaining her counterpart a specific Spanish custom (i.e., a practice in her own country).

Turning to the use of languages, it was observed that it was more frequently discussed among the groups of students who engaged in the Zoom sessions with students from Hawai’i. Nevertheless, in general participants of the three telecollaborations talked about official and co-official languages in the countries they or their partners belonged to, different Spanish varieties and accents around the world and within the peninsula. This is an indicator of student’s ICC awareness in that knowing about language varieties including “minority languages and socially determined accent” (Byram, 2021, p. 97) is one of the objectives identified within knowledge of social groups and their products and practices. Below there is an example taken from the second telecollaboration project (Hawai’i) where the Spanish side is interested in knowing more about the languages spoken in Hawai’i.

Fourth example (verbatim):

A: Tengo una pregunta sobre Hawái

H: Sí

A: En Hawái la lengua oficial cuál es?

H: Eh es es inglés ahm
A: Inglés ah vale

H: Ah el segundo es japonés ehm

A: Japonés?

H: (laughter) Si porque ehm Hawái es entre ehm el Weste de el USA pero ehm y Japón y eh Asia (laughter)

A: Si Hawái está entre entre Japón y la USA

H: Si ehm y también es ehm también muchos de los eh las turistas eh turistas?

A: Turistas si

H: Japán eh

A: Y el Hawaiano nativo se habla allí mucho?

H: (overlapping) Ehm muy I forgot (unintelligible)

G: (overlapping) Tranquila tranquila [name of the student]

H: (laughter) Eh

A: Did you understand my more or less my question?

H: I’m sorry I didn’t hear it

A: Ah ok I repeat it. El Hawaiano nativo se habla mucho allí?

H: Eh no

A: No?

H: Por la razón que ehm Hawaiano nativo era muerte para pocos años así eh así poca gente aprender en escuela pero no no se usa

G: Sí si está muy bien

H: Es interesante pero no es muy común eh (laughter) algo más común es pidgin

A: Sorry?

H: Pidgin. Un tipo eh es como los dos

G: (overlapping) Pidgin?

A: Una mezcla?

G: (overlapping) Una mezcla?

H: Hawaiano inglés
A: Está bien sí

G: (overlap) Yo tengo una yo tengo una-

A: (overlap) Una pena una pena que el hawaiano no se hable tanto pero bueno

H: (laughter) Eh es pidgin es un concepto un poquito difícil en las idiomas eh no me gusta mucho ehm pero es como like eh

A: Hablas hablas pidgin?

H: Eh (laughter) solamente un poquito solamente que necesito ehm

A: Po- podemos oírlo? Podemos...

H: So it would be like (says something using pidgin)

The example below is taken from the same pair of students in the second example above. It is believed that the Spanish student is showing again his/her cultural prejudices against his own culture, thus reinforcing those on the English side. He is doing so by saying explicitly that he does not like Catalan varieties such as the ones spoken in the Balearic Islands of Menorca and Mallorca, and by stating that it is not easy to understand Spanish speakers from Sevilla (Andalusia). The same student believes that it is easy to understand Portuguese if the interlocutor speaks slowly. This is an instance of how some learners appreciate foreign cultures more than their own.

Fifth example:

B: Y los idiomas son muy diferentes en in diferentes partes de España como en Menorca? No hablan castellano hablan menorquí y no puedo entender nada eh

R: Ah! Si yo tampoco los entiendo a veces

B: (laughter)

R: Es hablan en Menorca hablan catalán pero es una variante del catalán que es menorquí o mallorquí en las islas es catalán pero modificado.

B: Yo creo que es terrible.

R: Pero yo por ejemplo

B: (overlap) Yo creo que es muy feo.

R: Si sí a mí no me gusta o sea respeto que lo hagan
B: (overlapping) no no

R: (overlapping) pero es un idioma que no me atrae.

B: Sí sí

R: Y

B: No no yo...

R: Yo yo por ejemplo no los entiendo y se parece a mi idioma

B: (overlapping) no ...

R: (overlapping) pero si te hablan rápido no los entiendes

B: No no no es muy difícil no no.

R: Por ejemplo en yo he estado en Portugal y en Portugal te hablan despacio y los entiendes.

B: Ah sí?

R: Sí si te hablan despacito mmh es un idioma parecido

B: Pero yo creo que el portugués es más como el francés no? como like sounds wise.

R: Sí si tiene un toque diferente

B: Mmh.

R: Pero también-

B: (overlapping) Puedes entenderlos si te hablan portugués despacio? Puedes entenderlo?

R: Sí también

B: (overlapping) Ah wow!

R: (overlapping) imagino que depende depende de las zonas porque como Portugal está frontera en frontera con España la zona que está mas cerca de España mmh hablan parecido a España. Hablan portugués pero con un acento más parecido a nosotros.

B: Ah ok ok vale. No lo sabía.

R: Pero sí aquí bueno y luego por ejemplo eh Sevilla allí hablan también muy muy diferente. Hablan español

B: (laughter)

R: pero las s no las dicen las z tampoco es...
\textit{B: Tienes un ejemplo?}

\textit{R: Sí.}

\textit{B: Un ejemplo de como hablan.}

\textit{R: Por ejemplo si quieres decir niños en plural varios eh they say niño no no dicen la s.}

\textit{B: Los niño?}

\textit{R: Lo niño.}

\textit{B: Ooh oh weird.}

\textit{R: Or for example they they say eh they the c and ch es cha cha cha}

\textit{B: (overlapping) Ooh!}

\textit{R: They say they say sh sh}

\textit{B: Sh sh}

\textit{R: Yes}

\textit{B: (laughter)}

\textit{R: Like s h s h}

\textit{B: Ooh!}

\textit{R: Pues ellos debería debería ser c h pero dicen s h y se les entiende muy mal}

Although the implications in terms of ICC have already been mentioned in this section, chapter 7 will discuss the pedagogical implications of these findings, as it is suggested that they should be considered within the didactics of foreign languages.

\textbf{6.2.2. Results from the asynchronous cultural discussions on MeWe}

A total of 162 comments on MeWe were collected, including also those attached to the video introductions and links to external sources, of which 51 were produced by participants of the first telecollaboration project, 68 by those in the second telecollaboration project, and 43 by students of the third project. Within these 162 comments, 183 instances of attitudes of curiosity and openness (38.53\%) were identified, as well as 85 instances of knowledge of self and others (17.89\%), 77 statements related to political education and critical cultural awareness (16.21\%), 66 examples of skills of discovery and interaction (13.89\%), 50 instances of skills of interpreting and relating
(10.53%), and 14 comments which did not fit in any of Byram’s (1997, 2021) objectives, corresponding to 2.95% and including links to external sources. It is important to mention that within one single comment there could be more than one instance or trace of any of the objectives. That is the reason why more instances of the 5 objectives than comments were identified. Figure 23 below is a graphical representation of the frequency of each objective.

![Figure 23: Findings from MeWe asynchronous cultural discussions](image)

The following are two examples of attitudes of curiosity and openness taken from the first cultural discussion in the first telecollaboration project:

¿Desde Bath qué pensáis? ¿Qué visión tenéis de este problema desde el extranjero? [What do you think from Bath? Which perspective do you have of this problem from abroad?]

Within this objective Byram (2021) identified “interest in discovering other perspectives on the interpretation of familiar and unfamiliar phenomena” (p. 84). This interest is reflected in the numerous questions that Spanish students made to their counterparts and is in line with the results obtained by Vinagre (2014). Another example is the following, taken from the second cultural discussion of the second telecollaboration project:
Do you use much the Internet in order to doing your University’s tasks?

It corresponds to Byram’s (2021) statement about the intercultural speaker being “interested in the other’s experience of daily life” (p. 84). In addition, Byram (2021) pointed out that “the intercultural speaker takes into consideration the expectations the others may have about appropriate behaviour from foreigners” (p. 85), which is reflected in the apologies of this student:

*I am so sorry for de dealy, but here it is my presentation. [Sorry for the delay]*

Turning to knowledge of self and other, Byram (2021) claimed that the intercultural speaker “knows about education systems” (p. 86), thus, the following is an example of how the Spanish student knows about his own culture and is trying to share this knowledge with his keypals in Hawai’i:

*Estudiar en España puede resultar diferente según de la provincia de la que vengas, pero como sociedad te da posibilidad de acceder a muchas de ellas. Por ejemplo, es diferente estudiar en la Universidad de Bilbao (Norte de España) donde encontramos un clima más frío, que en Sevilla (Sur) donde las temperaturas son altas en todas las estaciones. [Studying in Spain can be different depending on the province you come from, but as a society it gives you the possibility of accessing many of them. For example, it is different to study at the University of Bilbao (North of Spain) where a colder climate can be found, than in Seville (South) where temperatures are high in all seasons.]*

Another example of this objective is the following, taken from a comment of the second cultural discussion of the third telecollaboration project:

*[...] the coexistence between Spaniards and Arabs responds more to a territorial question. The fact that the two countries are so close has pushed them to have to live together 157enjamins157 the history.*

It is related to knowledge of “the national memory of one’s own country” and “the national definitions of geographical space in one’s own country” (Byram, 2021, p. 86).

In terms of skills of interpreting and relating, Byram (2021) affirmed that the intercultural speaker “can ‘read’ a document or event, analysing its origins/sources” (p. 87). Throughout all the cultural discussions several instances of how the participants read and interpreted external sources were found. Moreover, they also attached other external sources apart from the ones provided by the author at the beginning of each cultural discussion. These are examples of that, being the former from the second discussion of the third exchange, and the latter from the second discussion of the second exchange:
Indeed, as we saw in the video and article, African Americans in the United States and North Africans had to fight and impose themselves in order to be accepted.

This following article points out what I said and you have time to read it, is a good way to deepen on the topic.

Concerning skills of discovery and interaction, it is suggested that the following extract from the first cultural discussion of the third telecollaboration project exemplifies the identification of “contemporary and past relationships between one’s own and other culture” (Byram, 2021, p. 89):

Realmente no sabía que existían tantas similitudes entre las situaciones de España y de Estados Unidos y es que, en ambas muchas familias con niños pequeños incluso arriesgan su vida para entrar en nuestro país. [I really did not know that there were so many similarities between the situations in Spain and the United States, and in both, many families with small children even risk their lives to enter our country.]

Also Vinagre (2014) identified this objective in a comment where the student was drawing a parallelism between his/her own culture and the other’s.

Regarding critical cultural awareness/political education, according to Byram (2021) it is about identifying and interpreting values in events and documents, conscious reasoning, and mediating and interacting in intercultural exchanges. Several instances of these three actions can be identified, but it is argued that especially in the following comments:

En un mundo global como en el que vivimos los hechos ocurridos entre las fronteras son impactantes. Se juntan la situación desesperada de personas buscando una mejor vida con las políticas migratorias de cada país (Comunidad Europeam, EEUU ...), que de vez en cuando dejan muchísimo que desear. [In a global world like the one we live in, the events that occur across borders are shocking. The desperate situation of people looking for a better life is combined with the immigration policies of each country (European Community, USA...), which from time to time leave a lot to be desired.]

But for me the most important thing is respect and learn from these new cultures and don’t repeat the same mistakes from the past.

The TIC competences are so important nowadays and, for that, the digital education is essential.

It is very important that politicians take action now, and create a strong base for generations to come, so they can take high quality online teaching in the future, as I think that this pandemic is going to be the beginning of an era when digital education is going to experiment a huge growth.
Regardless of the topic under discussion, which in this case were *migratory movements in Spain and the US* and *digital education*, students reflected about past and present events and consciously analysed the current events.

In terms of frequency, the topic *life at campus* represented 19.14% of the 162 comments posted on MeWe, followed by the *independence of Catalonia* (14.20%), *digital education* in the second experimental group (12.96%), *US-Mexico and Spain-Africa borders* (11.72%), *digital education* in the first experimental group (10.50%), and *migratory movements in Spain and the US from a historical perspective* (9.26%). Apart from that, 22.22% of the comments were the ones included as a description or greetings when students posted their video introduction. Figure 24 is a graphical representation of the frequency of comments for each topic in the asynchronous cultural discussions on MeWe.

![Figure 24: Percentages of comments in each cultural discussion](image)

Figure 24 illustrates that in the first and third experimental groups, the topics for which the participants posted more comments on MeWe were the most problematic. The implications of this will be explored in the discussion section.

### 6.2.3. Results from the final project questionnaire

A total number of 50 students completed the final project questionnaire. The results obtained through the descriptive analysis of the means are reported in this section. To the item *In general, I found the project useful* the mean obtained is 4.46, which means that most of the participants chose either 4 or 5. The low standard deviation (SD = 0.76) implies that the answers were consistent among learners. Turning the two tools used in the project, results demonstrate students’ preference for
synchronous Zoom sessions instead of the asynchronous MeWe discussions, as the mean in the item *I found the Zoom sessions useful* is 4.58 (SD = 0.83), while that of the item *I found the MeWe discussions useful* is 3.6 (SD = 1.04). Despite that, most of the learners found the topics discussed stimulating, as the mean of the item *I think the cultural topics discussed on MeWe were interesting* is 4.2 (SD = 0.83).

In terms of difficulty, neither MeWe nor Zoom seemed to be complicated to use for students. The item *I found the MeWe platform difficult to use* has a mean of 1.94 (SD = 0.82), which means that most of the students thought it easy to use. The same happens with the item *I found Zoom difficult to use*, as its mean is 1.58 (SD = 0.76). Turning to the relation with their counterparts, most of the participants felt at ease with their partners, as the mean of that item is 4.36 (SD = 0.74). Apart from that, some of them also had problems arranging a meeting with their partners, as the mean of that item is 3.02, although the SD is 1.34, which indicates a higher difference in the responses given by the students as opposed to the other items. In addition, the mean of the item *I met once a week with my partner* is 3.38 and the SD is 1.46, which also implies a wider range of responses. Furthermore, the mean of the item *I had communication problems with my partner* is 2.18 and the SD is 1.24, which means that communication problems were not frequent for some most of the students, but they were for a small number of them. However, when they occurred most of the participants were able to solve them, as the mean of that item is 4.33 and the SD is 0.82.

Technical problems were not an issue for most of the learners, as the mean of the item *I had technical problems with my computer or the connection during the online sessions* is 1.86 and the SD 1.30. In terms of language use, most of the participants reported having employed both of them during the sessions as the mean of the item *We practiced both languages in the Zoom sessions* is 4.64 (SD = 0.66). What is more, most of the students felt they had learnt something about their partners’ culture, as the mean of that item is 4.56 (SD = 0.70). The results obtained from the above-mentioned items are better illustrated in Figure 25 below.
To the question *Would you like to keep on meeting with your partner after the end of the project?* Only 6% (3 participants) answered *no*, while 44% (22 participants) chose *maybe* and 50% (25 participants) answered *yes*. This is exemplified in Figure 26 below.

Turning to the final question *Do you have any comments or suggestions?* and the comments received, it can be claimed that most of them were positive. The following are comments received by e-mail from two participants of the first experimental group:
1) Me ha gustado mucho hacer las sesiones con [name of the student]. Me han ayudado a soltarme un poco más al hablar y a conocer algunas diferencias entre culturas. Además, me llevo un buen recuerdo por [name of the student] en concreto, porque me he sentido muy cómoda desde el principio y me ha parecido muy agradable. Espero que vaya todo bien. [I really enjoyed the sessions with (name of the student). It helped me to gain fluency when speaking and knowing some differences among cultures. Also, I have a good memory especially for (name of the student), because I felt really at easy from the beginning and she seemed very nice. I hope that everything goes fine.]

2) It has been a great experience and I take with me a new friend.

Thank you, Sofia.

The same student also wrote the following in the final project questionnaire:

3) I liked this experience. It has been useful and funny at the same time. Week after week we have increased our confidence level and I take with me a new friend.

Also two students from the University of Bath either sent the researcher and the instructor an email or shared the personal experience on social networks such as LinkedIn:

4) I just wanted to say I hope you have had nice holiday and wanted to once again thank you for this incredible experience, I really enjoyed my time with [name of the student], it was a fantastic experience and thank you for organizing it all.

5) It was a pleasure to participate to the Telecollaboration project for 6 weeks, organised by Sofia Di Sarno García for her PhD subject on Applied Linguistics. Student from University of Bath and Universitat Politècnica de València (UPV) engaged in several discussions, notably the independence of Catalonia or digital education. I was very pleased to meet Spanish students and made a great progress in my Spanish proficiency!

Many thanks to the organisers and students who committed to the project. I am looking forward to participating to a new project!

Some comments also reflected the difficulties encountered in meeting with their counterparts. The following 162enjamins162 an example of this:
6) I would like to keep in touch with my partner, but he looks really busy and doesn’t even answer my messages, so it will be quite difficult. We also couldn’t arrange all the meetings, we’re really sorry about that but was impossible to coordinate our schedules to meet for the last sessions.

Regarding the second experimental group, these are the positive comments received through the final project questionnaire:

7) An 163enjamins proyect, so interesting. I would repet it 163enjam a dubt.

8) At first, I though it would be very difficult to prepare and meet at the same time, but then we realized that it was easier as we keep meeting. I think that this project has been very interesting.

9) I think that the proyect is a fantastic idea and a great 163enjamins163y to develop our 163enjamis since we don’t always have the chance to speak with a native 163enjamis speaker, however due to the time difference it was really difficult to arrange the meetings and we could not do it right.

As it can be observed from comment 9, also some participants from the second experimental group found it difficult to arrange weekly meetings with their partners. In the case of the second group it was probably even harder as the time difference between Spain and Hawai’I initially was 11 hours, and then 12 hours. This is reflected in the following comments:

10) The main problem I had was contacting my team members. One of them I find anywhere and we had to do the project without him, and it’s difficult to message someone via mewe, so it would be better to give each other’s numbers from the start.

11) I wanted to apologise for the low outcome of our group. Unfortunately, the willingness and motivation in my group was not very high and after several attempts and attempts, I also got a little tired of organising meetings. I think the basic idea is very good and I think it could be a good way to learn languages.

12) The project has been very entertaining. I’ve had a good time and I’ve met new people.
13) Depending on your lack, it may be difficult to meet your partners. The time delay is really difficult to struggle with it but overall the way this project is done is really good and, of course, the aim of the project really suits the aim of this subject which is learning 164enjami and improve our communication skills.

Other students also expressed their willingness to meet different students apart from the ones with whom they were grouped:

14) I would have like to meet more students from Hawai‘i.

Regarding the third experimental group, these are the positive comments that students wrote at the end of the final project questionnaire:

15) Loved it and it was very useful to improve my English! I’ll only add the recommendation to include different variations for the roleplays in order to practise different situations.

16) I think that everything was so useful and very well organized.

17) I think it is well organized

18) Both Telecollaborative Project and the Global Conversations event were very interesting! Thank you!

19) It was nice!!

These are two comments received from one of the Erasmus students from France:

20) Here you will find the meeting number 2 for the telecollaboration project. We spoke 164enjami and 164enjami and I thought that it was very interesting. Thank you

21) I really enjoyed this experience!
Thank you

As it happened with the two previous groups, also participants from the third experimental group encountered difficulties to organise their meetings:

22) Has been a good project but is difficult concrete a meet with partner because his hour is different.

23) It’s really hard to communicate with people from USA due to the time difference.

24) Communication has been proven to be difficult. Unfortunately, my partners were not really willing to interact or suffice the requirements of the assignment and as a Erasmus+ student this makes it difficult as I cannot fully participate in the project anyways. I hope you still got some good results for your research!

Also a student from Morgan State University sent a positive comment during the wrap up Zoom session, although she also acknowledged the difficulties encountered in arranging the meetings:

25) Disfruté hablando con [name of the student] y aprendiendo un poco sobre su vida en España. Me habló de su ciudad natal y de algunas de las tradiciones de su familia. También hablamos mucho sobre la cultura de la escuela y de nuestras familias. Aprendí mucho sobre las similitudes y diferencias entre algunos temas en España y Estados Unidos em MeWe y enjami mucho que no sabe antes de este proyecto. Realmente disfruté la oportunidad de conectarme con otros en un país diferente. Fue un poco difícil encontrar buenos tiempos de reunión con [name of the student], pero siempre fue una gran conversación cuando hablamos. él es muy bueno en inglés también! Me gusts este proyecto mucho! [I enjoyed talking to (name of the student) and learning a bit about his life in Spain. He talked about his hometown and some family traditions. We also talked a lot about the school culture and that of our families. I learnt a lot about similarities and differences among some topics in Spain and the United States on MeWe and learnt a lot things I didn’t know before the project. I really enjoyed the chance to connect with others in a different country. It was a bit difficult to find good times to meet with (name of the student) but we always had a good conversation when we talked. He is very good at English also! I like this project a lot!]
6.2.4. Expectations and satisfaction of the third experimental group

The comparison between the results of the pre-survey and the post-survey (final project questionnaire) of the third experimental group revealed that, in general, participants’ expectations mostly aligned with the perceived benefits at the end of the telecollaboration project or even exceeded it. Table 39 below summarises the main findings obtained.

Table 39: Descriptive statistics of the comparison between pre- and post-test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Pre-test</th>
<th>Post-test</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Item 1</td>
<td>4.333</td>
<td>4.563</td>
<td>0.724</td>
<td>0.629</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 2</td>
<td>4.000</td>
<td>4.563</td>
<td>1.000</td>
<td>0.814</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 3</td>
<td>3.800</td>
<td>4.125</td>
<td>1.146</td>
<td>0.885</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 4</td>
<td>2.333</td>
<td>1.938</td>
<td>0.816</td>
<td>0.772</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 5</td>
<td>1.800</td>
<td>1.813</td>
<td>0.775</td>
<td>0.834</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 6</td>
<td>3.200</td>
<td>3.438</td>
<td>1.014</td>
<td>1.263</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 7</td>
<td>3.600</td>
<td>2.875</td>
<td>0.828</td>
<td>1.258</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 8</td>
<td>2.600</td>
<td>2.500</td>
<td>0.910</td>
<td>1.265</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 9</td>
<td>4.200</td>
<td>3.813</td>
<td>0.862</td>
<td>0.981</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 10</td>
<td>3.800</td>
<td>2.313</td>
<td>1.014</td>
<td>1.448</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 11</td>
<td>3.600</td>
<td>4.188</td>
<td>1.454</td>
<td>1.223</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 12</td>
<td>4.600</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.632</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 13</td>
<td>Post-test</td>
<td>0.946</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pre-test</td>
<td>0.828</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post-test</td>
<td>0.778</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Item 2 of the pre-test was *I think the synchronous Zoom sessions will be useful*. It can be observed from Table 39 above that in the post-test response the mean increases 0.563. This demonstrates that the synchronous Zoom sessions were perceived as a useful activity by more participants compared to the ones who had this expectation before starting the project. Similarly in item 3, *I think the cultural discussions on MeWe will be useful*, most of the learners answered between 3 and 5 in the post-test, while the pre-test response ranged between 2 and 5.

Conversely, the M in item 4 decreases in the post-survey. This is a positive result as the item was *I think the MeWe platform will be difficult to use*. Therefore, the learners thought that MeWe was less difficult to use than expected. This supports the results obtained from Di Sarno-García (2021) who claimed that MeWe was an adequate tool for telecollaboration projects.

Turning to item 7 *I think I will be able to meet once a week with my virtual partner*, it seems that arranging a weekly meeting with their partners was more difficult than expected. Similarly, responses to item 9 *If we have communication problems, I think we will be able to solve them* revealed that some of the participants felt it was harder than expected at the end of the project.

Regarding item 10, which in the pre-test was *I don’t think we will have technical problems during the sessions*, while in the post-survey *I had technical problems with my computer or the connection during the online sessions*, the results show that students had less technical problems than they thought at the beginning of the project, which could have hindered communication. This result is given by the decreased M score.

### 6.2.5. Results from the Global Conversations event

As previously stated, some students from the third experimental group participated in the Global Conversations event organised by DePaul University (US) as part of the telecollaboration project. It should be mentioned that apart from students from Universitat Politècnica de València and Morgan State University also other international students from different countries engaged in this free event. As a warm-up activity, participants of the Global Conversation were asked to answer the question *What do you think of when you hear the word ‘immigration’?* through the online app Mentimeter. A
total number of 21 participants answered the question and Figure 27 below illustrates the responses received.

As it can be observed, the concept most often cited was that of culture with words such as culture, cultural, multicultural, multiculturalization, and diversity. Also, moving, movement, and leaving were mentioned more than once. Apart from that, economics was mentioned twice with economic opportunity and economic resources, as well as love and lovely. More negative concepts were also brought up such as sacrifice, pain, problem, crisis, racisms, asylum, annoying, deportation, and help. However, some participants thought about positive concepts such as pride, friendship, life, and hope. It is argued that the remaining responses are more neutral, such as citizen, global, change, families, situational, people, studies, politics, border, and push vs pull factors.

What do you think of when you hear the word ‘immigration’? / ¿En qué piensas cuando escuchas la palabra ‘inmigración’?

Figure 27: Results from the Mentimeter question

The final project questionnaire of the third experimental group also included items regarding the Global Conversation event. The first one was I participated in the Global Conversations event, to which 12 students (80%) answered yes and 3 (20%) answered no. The following two items were answered only by the 12 learners who participated in the event. To the item In general I found the Global Conversation event useful 7 of them (58.3%) chose 5 on the Likert-scale (i.e., completely agree), while 3 (25%) answered 4, and 2 (16.7%) chose 3. These results are exemplified in the Graphic 1 below.
The second item related to this event was *I have learnt something about other people’s perspectives thanks to the Global Conversation event*, to which 6 of the students (50%) answered 5, 4 of them (33%) chose 4, and 2 of them (16.7%) answered 3, as it can be seen from Graphic 2 below.

**6.2.6. Results from the final artefact**

Students from the three experimental groups and their partners were asked to work with their MeWe partners to create a final presentation where they summarised what they had discussed during the telecollaboration project and their feelings regarding the project. Table 40, 41, and 42 below summarise the main advantages and disadvantages identified by the three groups of learners.
Table 40: Results from the 1st experimental group final presentation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages/suggestions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• learning cultural communication norms</td>
<td>• reducing the writing activities to have more time to interact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• discussing a sensitive political issue</td>
<td>orally, as chances to speak with TL speakers are rare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• talking with TL speakers and speakers from different cultures</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• practising spontaneous language</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• knowing the opinion, experience, and perspectives of people from different cultures</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• how to apologise</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• discussing several topics without feeling judged</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• talking with other people outside their circle of classmates during the Covid-19 pandemic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• practising writing skills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• developing critical thinking abilities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 41: Results from the 2nd experimental group final presentation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages/suggestions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• learning how to participate in an online discussion</td>
<td>• difficulties in arranging the Zoom meetings due to time differences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• learning how to use the appropriate structure to write an opinion comment and being able to follow and answer their partners’ comments during the written discussion</td>
<td>• difficulties in coordinating all the members of each team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• the facility to be connected to people in other parts of the world without the need to be physically in the same place through Zoom and the easiness to communicate through it</td>
<td>• lack of time to speak about more topics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• the importance of the intercultural exchange</td>
<td>• disappointment when they could not accomplish all the tasks required (because they could not meet all the expected times)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• the good relationship between them and their partners</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• learning things in common and not among the students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• knowing the differences between students’ lives through the discussions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
- learning about new cultures
- learning about university life in a different country
- improving their writing skills through MeWe and speaking and listening skills through Zoom
- the telecollaboration project was a different and good way to improve language skills and more motivating than traditional methods because they were interacting with other students with whom they had things in common
- how to apologise in different situations
- learning teamwork skills
- the difference in educational system
- how the Covid-19 pandemic affected education
- finding similarities among them although they belonged to two different cultures

Table 42: Results from the 3rd experimental group final presentation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages/suggestions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• improving planning and time management, social, listening, speaking, writing, and vocabulary skills</td>
<td>• difficulties in arranging the Zoom meetings due to time difference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• confidence when practising everyday situations that they cannot usually practise</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• learning the differences between their everyday life activities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• learning differences among cultures</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• the opportunity to speak with TL speakers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• knowing the point of view of others through the discussions on MeWe</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• expressing their feelings on a common subject through MeWe</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• comparing their cultures and lifestyles during the Zoom sessions without the need to travel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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• knowing differences in the educational systems and sense of humour, as well as tabu topics in each country
• being able to communicate with a real audience
• using different vocabulary for each role-play
• discussing topics which are important in society and in their lives
• discussing sensitive topics through MeWe
• improvising different situations through the role-plays and gaining confidence with their partners through them,
• learning that although they belong to different cultures, they also have things in common
• learning how to express their opinions

As can be observed, the students from the first telecollaboration project did not report time differences as a problem, since in that case it was only 1 hour difference. In addition, it is clear that students perceived much more benefits than drawbacks despite some difficulties encountered.

6.3. Results from the correlation and linear regression

The Pearson correlation coefficient between the number of strategies employed and the mean score of the post-test revealed a statistically significant correlation as R=0.440 and p=0.01. Therefore, the more strategies students produced in role-playing tasks during the synchronous Zoom sessions, the better they scored in the post-test of apologies. Although it might seem obvious, the results from the Pearson correlation coefficient between the number of strategies used and the number of role-plays performed showed a statistically significant correlation as R=0.832 and p=<.001. Similarly, the Pearson correlation coefficient between the number of Zoom sessions and the number of strategies used demonstrated a statistically significant correlation between them, as R=0.389 and p=0.005. Moreover, a statistically significant correlation between the number of role-plays performed and the average score in the post-test was found, as R=0.430 and p=0.002. Despite not being statistically significant, a correlation between the number of role-plays and the number of sessions dealing with cultural topics was found, as R=0.272 and p=0.054. The same happened with the correlation between
the number of Zoom sessions and the average score obtained in the post-test questionnaire, as R=0.267 and p=0.058.

Regarding the relationship between pragmatic competence and intercultural communicative competence, the results from the Pearson correlation coefficient between the number of MeWe comments and the number of role-plays performed demonstrated a statistically significant correlation between them as R=0.989 and p=<.001. Thus, the more comments students posted on MeWe during the asynchronous cultural discussions, the more role-plays they performed and vice versa. In the same line, the Pearson correlation coefficient between the number of MeWe comments and the number of strategies used during the role-plays revealed a statistically significant correlation as R=0.369 and p=0.008. Therefore, it can be claimed that the more a student participated in the cultural discussions on MeWe, the more strategies to apologise s/he produced in the synchronous Zoom sessions and vice versa. Although this might also seem obvious, a statistically significant correlation between the number of Zoom sessions and the number of sessions dealing with cultural topics was also found as R=0.764 and p=<.001. One should bear in mind that, although students had a list of suggested topics, most of the times the cultural topics were spontaneously brought to conversation by the students themselves. Despite the fact that gender was not initially considered, it was nevertheless taken into account. It was observed that it did not play a role as the correlation between gender and the other factors did not reveal any statistically significant results.

Turning to the results obtained from the linear regression, the null hypothesis is that there are no prediction models, which was rejected because two prediction models were obtained. The equation formulated for the first one is the following:

1) \[ R^2 = 0.872 \ (87.20\%) \]
   \[ N \text{ of strategies (X)} = -1.241 \ (\text{constant}) + 1.513 \ (\text{gender}) + (-0.654) \ (\text{N of Zoom sessions}) + 10.771 \ (\text{N of Zoom sessions dealing with culture}) + 22.086 \ (\text{N of role-plays}) + 5.257 \ (\text{N of MeWe comments}) \]

The number of strategies, which was the dependent variable, would be given by the sum of all the above-mentioned factors. Therefore, following this prototype the number of strategies produced by the students could be predicted. Turning to the second model, its capacity of prediction corresponds to 80.50%, and the formulated equation is the following:

2) \[ R^2 = 0.805 \ (80.50\%) \]
Average score post-test apologies (X) = 0.864 (constant) + (-0.0102) (gender) + 0.108 (N of Zoom sessions) + 2.258 (N of Zoom sessions dealing with culture) + 2.275 (N of role-plays) + (-0.897) (N of MeWe comments)

This model predicts the score in the questionnaire about the performance of apologies, which was the dependent variable, considering the above-mentioned factors.

6.4. An ideal apology pattern: a case study

As stated in the methodology section, students from the three experimental groups and their counterparts were asked to provide their partners with feedback after their apology performance. Despite this, it was observed that most of the participants avoided giving corrective feedback to their mates. It is believed that they may have found this a face-threatening act or that they may have tried to avoid offending their partners by correcting them.

Nevertheless, one of the dyads from the first telecollaboration project strictly observed the instruction to provide their partners with feedback on their role-play performance and other linguistic issues, as they did so in all the Zoom sessions. The aliases Lucas and Albert were allocated to these two students. Appendix K summarises the feedback that the Spanish student (Lucas) received in each session after performing an apology in English. The students often discussed the degree of formality of the situation as they talked about it in all sessions except the third one. This could mean that they were aware of the fact that different levels of formality require different strategies to apologise. In line with this, they also mentioned the different strategies that Lucas used or could have used.

Apart from that, Albert provided Lucas with feedback on grammar such as in session 2 where he explained him the difference between arriving on/in time according to him, and in session 3 where he corrected Lucas who had said “sorry about not attend” instead of “sorry about not attending” and where they talked about verb tenses. In addition to this, Albert also acknowledged Lucas’s good performances of the role-playing tasks, which could be considered as positive feedback.

These qualitative results are supported by the quantitative results obtained from the post-test, as Lucas obtained a mean score of 2.8 out of 3. He was also the one who employed more strategies to apologise as he used 47 different strategies. Also, he met all the scheduled sessions, thus performing six role-plays as it was expected. Regarding culture, in half of the sessions with Albert they discussed cultural topics, and he was one of the most active users on MeWe cultural discussions, having posted 6 comments. For all of this and for the fact that Albert provided Lucas with feedback
in all the six sessions, it is argued that their execution of the tasks included in the telecollaboration project was ideal and for that reason Lucas obtained such good results. In line with this, the responses obtained from the final project questionnaire also indicate Lucas’ high level of satisfaction as it can be observed in Table 40 below. In line with this, the conclusion of the final presentation made by Albert and Lucas’ group was that the telecollaboration project was worthwhile and that they would do it again.

Table 43: Lucas’ responses to the final project questionnaire

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. In general, I found the project useful</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I found the Zoom sessions useful</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I found the MeWe discussions useful</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I think the cultural topics discussed on MeWe were interesting</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I found the MeWe platform difficult to use</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I found Zoom difficult to use</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I felt at ease with my partner</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. I had problems trying to arrange a meeting with my partner</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. I met once a week with my partner</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. I had communication problems with my partner</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. When I came across communication problems with my partner, we solved them</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. I had technical problems with my computer or the connection during the online sessions</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. We practiced both languages in the Zoom sessions</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. I have learnt something about my partner’s culture</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Would you like to keep on meeting with your partner after the end of the project?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Do you have any comments or suggestions?</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is suggested that factors such as motivation and getting along with his partner could have had a strong positive influence on Lucas’ willingness to learn and accomplish all the tasks involved in the project. In addition, he showed his interest in maintaining a relationship with Albert after the end of the project in the final survey. As mentioned earlier, this could be a symptom of the development of his ICC, as maintaining relationships is one of the characteristics of the intercultural speaker (Byram, 1997, 2021). It is interesting to note that Lucas was the one who asked if they would have received some written record to certify that they participated in a telecollaboration project with an international university in order to include that in their curriculum vitae. This reveals that he was conscious of the fact that as a future engineer he will probably need effective intercultural skills in his professional life (Seiz Ortiz and al., 2015), as well as pragmatic abilities and the capacity of communicate smoothly in English, which nowadays is crucial (Gimeno-Sanz, 2013). This could be the reason why he was highly motivated for the project.
6.5. Issues encountered

Although chapter 8 will explore the limitations of the present study, this section will consider the main issues encountered during the three telecollaboration projects.

Some of the issues encountered were the different expectations among students from different institutions and miscommunication problems. This is mentioned because at the beginning of the first telecollaboration project, students from University of Bath expected a higher level of interaction during the first session planned, which was the first day of asynchronous cultural discussion on MeWe. The asynchronous nature of the activity did not involve real-time interaction among students, but it was felt that both the students and the instructor from Bath were disappointed because of that, although in the briefing Zoom session among researcher and instructor the difference between the synchronous and asynchronous activities was made clear. On the other hand, students from UPV felt pressure because they had been told that the first session would have only been asynchronous and thus that they would have had time to read the materials provided and write their comments. This initial misunderstanding could have ruined the whole project, but the researcher and the instructors from both institutions met to review the structure of the whole project, and an introductory Zoom session with students was organised. From that moment on, the project went smoother. Nevertheless, one of the students from Bath University met only the first two weeks with her Spanish counterpart, as she felt that the project was too demanding.

A second miscommunication problem encountered was related to the second telecollaboration project. As previously mentioned, students from each project were expected to create a final presentation with their virtual partners. Some of the students from University of Hawai’I thought that they were not expected to participate in this activity, and therefore one of the American students did not participate in the creation of the final artefact.

The third issue encountered was the lack of commitment of some students, especially in the third telecollaboration project. Feelings of frustration were aroused as students tried to arrange the synchronous Zoom meetings with their partners during several days, but then some of them did not show up when planned. The next chapter will explore some possible solutions to help students to better plan their meetings.
7. DISCUSSION

Despite the fact that pragmatic competence is one of the main components of communicative competence (Hymes, 1972), the scarcity of studies that analyse how this could be implemented through technology is surprising (Belz, 2007; Khaerudin, 2012; Eslami et al., 2015; Gónzalez-Lloret, 2019; Sydorenko et al., 2020). Belz (2007) made a review of the studies carried out up to that moment on the role of computer mediation in the development of L2 pragmatics and she observed that “telecollaborative exchanges can be interpreted as a vehicle for increased exposure to L2 input in the form of NS keypals” (Belz, 2007, p. 47). Also Sauro’s (2011) review found that only 22 studies out of 97 dealt with sociocultural competence (Canale & Swain, 1980), and in particular with the form and use of speech acts. Although small in number, the existent body of research indicates that SCMC is beneficial for pragmatic instruction (Alonso-Belmonte & Vinagre, 2017; González-Lloret, 2018; Sykes, 2017) and provides opportunities for oral practice (Sydorenko et al., 2020).

Regarding RQ1, will there be any differences in terms of apology performance between the four groups of participants? If so, which ones? considering the results obtained from the data analysis, the most outstanding difference is that the first experimental group was the one who used a higher number of strategies in relation to the number of participants it was made of. This could mean that for a telecollaboration project to be beneficial for language learners the role-playing tasks and the oral conversations should be carried out in dyads instead of groups. In addition, the second group used only 6 more strategies compared to the first one although it was made of 26 students and used 2 strategies less than the control group which also carried out the tasks in pairs.

Regarding strategy use, the most common one was expression of speaker’s regret (i.e., sorry, I’m sorry, etc.) in all four groups. This could be interpreted as a positive result, as according to the BNC (Deutschmann, 2003) most of the strategies produced by L1 speakers of English contained the word sorry. Halenko (2021) coded the apologies performed by the participants in her study following a similar taxonomy to the one used in the present thesis. She compared the results obtained by a control group and two experimental groups in a study abroad context. The two experimental groups received explicit instruction on requests and apologies before starting their stay abroad, one through paper-based activities (PAPER), and the other through computer-animated production task (CAPT). Halenko (2021) found that the control group in her study did not improve its apology behaviour as opposed to the two experimental groups who produced more key mitigating strategies. In terms of frequency, the CAPT group produced more ‘essential’ (Halenko, 2021, p. 122) strategies than the PAPER group, which supports the idea that technology-enhanced learning favours the acquisition of
apologies. Similarly, the first experimental group in the present study, whose participants were the ones with more opportunities to interact with TL speakers via synchronous Zoom sessions, used a wider range of apologies compared to the other groups. According to Sabaté I Dalmau and Curell I Gotor (2007) using a broad repertoire of apology strategies could be a characteristic of high-level proficiency students. In line with this, the initial level of participants in the first experimental group ranged between B1 and C1, while in the other groups it ranged between A2 and C1.

Halenko (2021) found that the experimental groups used more intensifiers than the control group both in the pre- and post-test, which is corroborated by what was found in the present study. Also, expression of regret was the most common strategy used by all groups in Halenko’s (2021) study, which is confirmed by the findings obtained in the thesis discussed here. Regarding offer of repair, Halenko (2021) identified that in the pre-test the PAPER group was the one who used them the less, while in the post-test it was the control group. These results differ from those obtained in the present study, as it was found that the first experimental group used offer of repair the most, but no outstanding differences between the control group and the second and third experimental groups were found. It is argued that working in pairs favoured better quality interaction with TL speakers and, therefore, more apology strategies could be acquired. The findings of the present dissertation differ partially to the ones obtained by Halenko (2021) in terms of the use of promise of forbearance as in the pre-test of her study the control group was the one who used this strategy the most, contrarily to the post-test. The results of the present study are in line with those obtained in Halenko’s (2021) post-test, as the control group was the one who used promise of forbearance the least. Regarding explanation of why the fault occurred different results were obtained by Halenko (2021) and the present study. Her results demonstrated that the control group was the one who used this strategy less frequently, while the opposite was found in the present study. This could be because Spanish speakers tend to justify themselves when committing an offense, thus it was ‘normal’ for participants in the control group to use this strategy in their apology performance. In relation to the use of self-blame strategies, the results obtained by Halenko (2021) partially differ from the ones obtained in the present study as she found that the CAPT group was the one who used this strategy the most both in the pre- and post-test, although the PAPER and the control group used this strategy similarly in the pre-test. The findings of the present study, however, revealed a similar use of self-blame strategies by the control group and the second experimental group which were the ones who used it the most, as opposed to the first and third experimental group. In particular, the third experimental group was the one who used self-blame less frequently. Although Halenko (2021) used a similar taxonomy to the one employed in the present thesis, any comparison between the two studies should be made
cautiously as she compared the strategies used in pre- and post-test before and after a stay abroad period, while the present study collected the strategies used during role-playing performance in a telecollaboration project. Therefore, general claims in terms of similarities or differences of the results obtained in both studies cannot be made.

Regarding RQ2, will there be any differences in the post-test questionnaire between the four groups of participants? If so, why? The results did not reveal statistically significant differences among the four groups. However, it is important to highlight the fact that the reduced number of participants had an influence on these results, as it is hard to find significant differences with groups composed of less than 30 students. Despite this, the descriptive analysis demonstrated a higher tendency of improvement in the first and third experimental groups, as they improved in 6 out of 10 items from pre- to post-test and a regression was observed only in 1 item, while the others showed no variation. On the other hand, the control group experienced a regression in the post-test in 5 out of 10 questions, and the second experimental group in 3 items. This supports the findings reported in terms of apologies performance by each group, and the idea that the more practice in a telecollaborative environment, the better. This does not mean that quantity is preferred over quality. What is argued here is that in order to learn how to perform L1-like apologies language learners need to be trained and need to be given enough opportunities to practice the speech act in life-like tasks with highly proficient or L1 speakers of the TL. The second experimental group did not achieve the same results as the first and the third experimental groups because its participants did not have the same opportunities to perform role-playing tasks and probably also to discuss cultural topics spontaneously, as it is more difficult to participate in a conversation in a group of four rather than when working in dyads. This could also be disadvantageous especially for shier students. Furthermore, these findings provide evidence of the strength of role-plays as a mean to practice speech acts and acquire pragmatic competence. This is claim is done as role-plays have been heavily criticised for their lack of authenticity, but it is argued here that it would have been almost impossible to collect apologies without using role-plays, and for this reason they are adequate when teaching this particular speech act.

These results partially corroborate those previously obtained by Sykes (2005) who was probably one of the first researchers who analysed the effects that SCMC has on the acquisition of pragmatic competence following the perspectives of the speech act theory (Belz, 2007). She conducted a study that measured how two different modalities of SCMC, namely written chat, oral chat, apart from face-to-face interaction, affected the development of students’ pragmatic
competence, and in particular on the acquisition of refusals. Sykes (2005) argued that SCMC allows to overcome difficulties such as the “lack of authenticity in textbooks and input” (Sykes, 2005, p. 404). She carried out this study with American students of Spanish who were divided in three groups depending on the results of the survey they completed one week prior to the treatment. The three groups carried out the same tasks but in the three different modalities mentioned above. In order to measure their prior pragmatic knowledge, as well as the results after the treatment, students performed a series of role-plays. The results demonstrated that although all groups experienced a general improvement, the “written chat group outperformed the other two groups in terms of complexity and variety” (Sykes, 2005, p. 420). Therefore, she concluded that SCMC had positive effects on pragmatic instruction and, thus, it should be included in the FL curriculum. As stated above, the results obtained in this dissertation also revealed a difference among the four groups after the treatment received, although generally speaking all the three experimental groups had improved to some extent after role-playing performance in synchronous videoconference sessions. Similarly, although the empirical evidence resulting from Sykes’ (2005) study was limited, English-speaking learners perceived that they had improved their pragmatic abilities in Spanish, and in particular their use of refusals. This is in line with the results obtained from the final-project questionnaire in the present study, as participants reported to be satisfied with the usefulness of the synchronous Zoom sessions where they practiced the apologies. Furthermore, Belz and Kinginger (2002) were pioneers in saying that telecollaboration could provide L2 learners with opportunities to interact with L1 speakers in authentic conversations and, thus, foster the development of L2 pragmatic competence. Their study revealed that interaction with L1 peers might be one of the benefits of telecollaborative exchanges because after negotiating meaning with their keypals a change in their American students’ language use was observed. It can be argued that this is in line with the results of this dissertation, as the post-test responses demonstrated a general improvement after carrying out the telecollaborative exchange. This is because the post-test results revealed that learners in the experimental groups outperformed those in the control group in terms of apology acquisition. Students in the experimental group were able to choose more appropriate ways to apologise in the given scenarios, indicating that their pragmatic awareness had increased after practicing apologies in telecollaboration.

Regarding the difference between the experimental groups and the control group, the findings presented in this dissertation are in line with those previously obtained by Rafieyan et al. (2014) who analysed the development of pragmatic comprehension through telecollaboration. This study had an experimental design since it used a control group who only received pragmatic instruction, and an experimental group that, apart from receiving pragmatic instruction, participated in telecollaborative
exchanges with TL speakers. It was carried out with undergraduate students from Iran and from Texas. Findings revealed that the telecollaboration had a significant positive effect on the experimental group’s development of pragmatic comprehension, as opposed to the control group who had lower marks in the pragmatic comprehension test.

As mentioned above, Halenko’s (2021) results revealed that the two experimental groups produced more appropriate apologies compared to the control group. Generally speaking, the CAPT group outperformed the PAPER group in the performance of adequate apologies. These findings align with the ones obtained in the present study, as all the experimental groups outperformed the control group in terms of post-test production as previously mentioned. In particular, the first and third experimental groups are the ones who obtained better results from pre- to post-test. As argued before, this could be due to the fact that participants in the first and third experimental group worked in pairs and therefore had more opportunities to practice role-plays and engage in one-to-one oral conversations.

Although pragmatics was not the focus of analysis in Canto Gutiérrez’s (2020) study, her results also revealed that, generally speaking, those students who participated in a telecollaboration project either through videoconference sessions or in virtual reality, experienced a higher improvement in their oral proficiency compared to those learners who did not interact with TL speakers. These results align with the one obtained in this thesis, as all the experimental groups outperformed the control group in the post-test.

Regarding RQ3, will the topic discussed in the cultural discussions on MeWe affect the acquisition of participants’ ICC (as defined by Byram, 1997, 2021)? If so, how? the findings revealed that in the first experimental group more instances of Byram’s objectives were found in the cultural discussion concerning the political situation of Catalonia as compared to the cultural discussion about digital education. Regarding the third experimental group, the most outstanding differences between the two topics discussed, namely US/Mexico border versus Spain/Africa border and immigration from a historical perspective are related to skills of discovery and interaction and political education/critical cultural awareness whose evidence was found more often in the first cultural discussion. These findings support Helm’s (2015) and Godwin-Jones’ (2019a) idea that controversial issues should not be avoided in telecollaborative exchanges, as it can hinder the intercultural experience. Immigration in the United States was one of the topics discussed also in Oskoz and Pérez-Broncano (2016), and which, according to the authors, definitely influenced students’ interactions. As in the case of the second experimental group none of the topics can be
considered sensitive, it is argued that life at campus was the topic with a higher participation because its discussion was carried out in Spanish and most of the participants of that telecollaboration project were precisely from Spain. As Godwin-Jones (2019a, p. 12) claimed, “focusing solely on topics such as university life or families may lead to relatively shallow interactions (Kramsch, 2014)”, and it is believed that this is what happened in the cultural discussions of the second experimental group. The results obtained by Oskoz et al. (2018) and Oskoz and Gimeno-Sanz (2019, 2020) reinforce the idea that discussing controversial topics could be beneficial for the development of students’ ICC. In addition, Oskoz and Gimeno-Sanz (2020) suggested that sensitive topics under the instructor’s guidance should be included in intercultural exchanges as a way to intentionally tackle opposing perspectives. Previously, also Helm (2013) advocated for a dialogic model of telecollaboration in which ‘safe’ topics are substituted for divisive issues. In line with this, Helm (2013) reported that discussing ‘safe’ topics can hinder learners’ interaction beyond mere shallow comparison among the two cultures and information exchange, thus making it harder for them to achieve more profound levels of understanding. This is corroborated also by the findings of the synchronous cultural conversations, which will be discussed below.

The results have also revealed that the objective of which more evidence or traces were found is that of attitudes of curiosity and openness. One possible explanation is that showing this kind of attitude may be at the surface level in an intercultural interaction as it concerns greetings and questions that show curiosity among other features. Participants demonstrated to be interested in knowing their partners’ cultures and perspective as well as to be eager to talk about their own in all groups and discussions. It is argued that this is a positive starting point as showing a negative or closed attitude could have possibly hindered the intercultural experience. This supports Gonzales’ (2013) previous findings after using the social network Livemocha. Findings of this case study unveiled “that participants in the Livemocha space make a concerted effort to establish positive rapport with their interlocutor” (Gonzales, 2013, p. 213). Also Vinagre’s (2010) results of asynchronous telecollaborative exchanges revealed students’ interest in their partners’ culture and their willingness to introduce their own culture to them. Similarly to the present study, most of the examples of ICC objectives were categorised as “interest in knowing other people’s way of life and introducing one’s own culture to others” (2010, p. 40) in Vinagre’s study. On the other hand, showing skills of interpreting and relating could have been more challenging for students as it concerns the “ability to interpret a document or event from another culture, to explain it and relate it to documents from one’s own” (Byram, 1997, p. 52). Apart from watching videos and reading newspaper articles participants in this study did not have many opportunities to find documents from their partners’ cultures or facing
particular events from that culture due to the virtual aspect of the telecollaboration. This objective could probably be developed more in a study-abroad context. These results differ from those found by Guarda (2013), as critical cultural awareness was identified as the most frequent objective with a total of 48 occurrences. According to Guarda (2013) participants in her study showed the ability to ‘decentre’ and analyse both their partners’ and their own culture. She explained that the peak in frequency of this ICC objective might have been due to the topic chosen for the Skype discussion, confirming therefore that the topic of discussion can affect the acquisition of ICC objectives, as Guarda (2013, p. 299) observed. This could also be the reason why the present study obtained different results from Guarda’s (2013) investigation, as the topics chosen for discussion differed in each study. However, it is also important to mention that Guarda (2013) analysed participants’ diaries entries instead of asynchronous cultural discussions.

Generally speaking, traces or instances of all Byram’s (1997, 2021) five objectives were found in the MeWe comments. This is in line with the results previously obtained by Vinagre (2014) whose qualitative content analysis of the students’ comments posted on wikis during a telecollaboration project revealed the presence of all Byram’s objectives. Similarly, Vinagre (2016) analysed the content posted on collaborative wikis by language learners and she found traces of all ICC objectives. However, none of the two mentioned studies provided percentages of occurrence of the ICC objectives, thus it is not possible to draw a comparison between those previous studies and the present one in terms of frequency. In light of the results obtained in the present study, it can be claimed that the asynchronous discussions carried out through MeWe contributed to the students’ development of ICC. These findings are also supported by those previously found by Jauregi and Bañados (2008) who carried out an intercultural exchange between 40 students from The Netherlands and from Chile, that is, 20 L1 speakers of Spanish and 20 L2 learners of English, using both synchronous and asynchronous tools as it was done in the present study. In Jauregi and Bañados’ (2008) words, their project helped to increase learners’ “motivation to communicate and learn the language, the culture and pragmatic issues in a real sociocultural context” (p. 201). Also Canto Gutiérrez’s (2020) qualitative analysis of virtual world tasks and video communication revealed that participants engaged in intercultural negotiation of meaning, and thus showed evidence of Byram’s (1997) objectives of ICC. In particular, Canto Gutiérrez (2020) claimed that students demonstrated attitudes of curiosity and openness through open-ended questions, which aligns with the results obtained in the present study.
Savlovska et al. (2021) found completely different results. They claimed that the use of telecollaboration to foster intercultural dialogue among culturally distant students is overestimated (Savlovska et al., 2021, p. 217). According to their findings, forum discussions are not an appropriate tool for discussing sensitive cultural topics. Participants in their study tended to avoid conflict when addressing those topics, and sometimes expressed even different opinions in the forum discussions compared to the reflective journals which were read only by the teachers. This differs from the results obtained in this dissertation, since sensitive topics were the ones that presented more ICC objectives as it has been mentioned above. In order for an intercultural telecollaboration project to be beneficial, language learners need to be guided through all the process, they cannot be thrown into discussing sensitive topics without any support. This is why participants in the present study received a handout with instructions for the cultural discussions, something which is not mentioned in Savlovska et al.’s (2021) study. Also, teachers should consider conducting warm-up activities related to the cultural topics to be discussed. In this way, students’ first contact with the topic would not be the discussion itself. External resources such as magazine articles and explanatory videos are also appropriate tools to foster reflection, as revealed by the results obtained in the present study.

Regarding the oral Zoom sessions, the results revealed unexpected negotiations of intercultural meaning, which corroborate the findings in Canto Gutiérrez’s (2020) study. This occurred each time students dealt with cultural topics which did not appear on the list of suggested topics they were provided with. These are examples of authentic intercultural interactions which were mediated by SCMC. As Canto (2020) claimed, the informal nature of the synchronous environment could have been a facilitator of negotiation of intercultural meaning, which in a formal educational and face-to-face setting could have been hindered.

Regarding RQ4, will there be any preferred cultural topic discussed in the synchronous Zoom sessions? If so, which one(s)? the findings obtained from the oral conversations through Zoom corroborate the idea that discussing sensitive issues in telecollaboration projects can be beneficial for students as they are given the opportunity to reflect on a more profound level and understand the other’s perspective. Apart from discussing general cultural aspects, the category whose frequency is higher is that of ‘tabu topics’. These included politics, terrorism, racism, and war among others. Although in the list of suggested topics to discuss one of the elements included was ‘tabu topics’, none of the topics students brought up to conversation were included there except for politics, which was used as an example in the handout. In terms of pedagogical implications, this could suggest that when designing tasks for future telecollaboration projects, those could be considered topics to be
included in the activities, as suggested by Helm (2013). On the contrary, ‘stereotypes’ were barely mentioned in the synchronous conversations. Therefore, they might probably be avoided in intercultural discussions.

Regarding RQ5, will there be any relation between the acquisition of pragmatic competence (apologies) and the acquisition of ICC (as defined by Byram, 1997, 2021)? If so, in what way? Although the relationship between ICC and pragmatic competence has been acknowledged by a number of authors, the number of studies aimed at examining this connection is scarce (Jackson, 2019), and most of them were carried out in a study abroad context, except for Chun (2011). An example of this is Shively and Cohen’s (2008) study in which they used a pre- and post-test design to quantitatively measure the relationship between L2 pragmatic development and intercultural sensitivity. The speech acts under study were requests and apologies, and the instrument used to measure intercultural sensitivity was the Intercultural Development Inventory (Hammer & Bennett, 1998, 2001 as cited in Shively and Cohen, 2008). In terms of apologies an improvement from pre- to post-test after students’ period abroad was observed, and a correlation between apology gains and TL speakers contact was found. Nevertheless, the Pearson correlation did not reveal any statistically significant results between gains in apologies and intercultural sensitivity, as opposed to the results reported in this dissertation. It is important to highlight, however, that Shively and Cohen’s (2008) investigation was conducted in a study abroad context instead of a telecollaboration project, and also the tool used to measure intercultural sensitivity was not the same adopted in this dissertation.

Taguchi (2015) examined the relation between cross-cultural adaptability and speech act production in a study abroad context. For that reason, she used the Cross-Cultural Adaptability Inventory (CCAI) (Kelley and Meyers, 1995 as cited by Taguchi, 2015) to measure the students’ intercultural competence. In terms of pragmatic competence, oral DCTs were employed to measure speech act production and they were administered via computer as pre- and post-test. Whereas no significant correlation between speech style and cross-cultural adaptability was found, Taguchi’s (2015) results demonstrated a positive correlation between the appropriate production of speech acts and cross-cultural adaptability. Although only partially, Taguchi’s (2015) study found evidence of the existing relationship between pragmatic and intercultural communicative competence, which has been corroborated by the findings obtained in this dissertation. However, both studies cannot be completely compared as the study abroad context and telecollaboration are two completely different settings.
The CCAI and oral DCTs were also employed by Taguchi et al. (2016) in a study abroad context whose aim was to measure the impact of intercultural competence and social contact on the development of pragmatic competence. The results showed that social contact directly affected pragmatic competence and also acted as a mediator between pragmatic and intercultural competence. However, a direct effect of cross-cultural adaptability on pragmatic competence was not found. Although also in this case a full comparison between the results obtained in Taguchi et al. (2016) and those obtained in this thesis cannot be drawn because the former investigated a study abroad context and the latter a telecollaboration environment, it can be claimed that the findings of the present study only partially corroborate those found by Taguchi et al. (2016). The empirical evidence obtained from the Pearson correlation in this study revealed a positive correlation between 1) the variety of strategies used to perform apologies and the participation in the asynchronous cultural discussions and 2) the number of Zoom sessions the number of synchronous Zoom sessions where participants tackled cultural topics spontaneously, and therefore where there was more social contact with their virtual partners.

To the knowledge of the author of the present thesis, Chun (2011) has been the only study which examined the acquisition of both pragmatic and intercultural communicative competence through an online exchange. Chun (2011) carried out a study on how L2 learners’ pragmatic competence and ICC can be fostered through online exchanges, both in SCMC and ACMC. The results revealed that the type of internet tool used in the interaction affected the type of syntactic and pragmatic style used by the students. Forums fostered longer entries and more formal statements, while the entries in the text chat were shorter and less formal. Besides, some students followed their own pragmatic norms during the interaction with their international partners, and this resulted in a clash of expectancies. However, other students’ entries showed that their ILP ability was emerging and that their speech acts were “sophisticated and nuanced” (Chun, 2011, p. 417). These students were those who also demonstrated ICC (in the sense that Byram defines it) and who had discussions regarding political and cultural topics, instead of more superficial conversations such as those who felt that their interactions were not successful. This corroborates the findings of this dissertation, as a positive correlation was found between the number of synchronous Zoom sessions dealing with culture and the number of role-plays performed, as well as the number of strategies used to apologise and the MeWe comments as it has been mentioned above. Therefore, it can be claimed that pragmatic and intercultural competence go hand in hand, and one can hardly be developed separately from the other. This study has shed some light on the symbiotic relation between these two concepts, therefore future telecollaboration exchanges aimed at developing either one competence or the other, should consider
that they cannot be developed separately. If some tasks focus on culture, there will probably be benefits also on the pragmatic level because of the opportunities of social interaction, and vice versa. As matter of fact, apologies are deeply embedded in culture, thus those students who made a higher progress in terms of ICC, also improved in terms of apologies performance.

Regarding RQ6, will students be satisfied at the end of the telecollaboration projects? If so, in what way? as stated in the results section, the findings from the final survey revealed an overall satisfaction towards the project, and students also acknowledged having learnt something about their partners’ cultures. These results corroborate those of previous studies such as Gimeno (2018), Sevilla-Pavón (2018), and Taskiran (2019), which showed learners’ feeling of cultural knowledge gain and improvement of their intercultural communication skills. In line with this, the asynchronous cultural discussions, and the Global Conversations event in the case of the third experimental group, were aimed at fostering participants’ ICC. It is also claimed that the tools used to communicate during the project facilitated the acquisition of ICC. Although MeWe was a new tool for all the participants, the results revealed that it was easier to use than expected in the case of the third experimental group, while the first and the second experimental group did not find difficulties in using it. Therefore, it can be claimed that MeWe is a valid pedagogical tool. These results align with O’Dowd (2007) who claimed that combining asynchronous written tools and synchronous videoconference sessions could best support the development of ICC as written interaction allows more for reflection, while oral discourse simulates real-life interaction. Previous studies from Andujar and Haro-Soler (2018) and Abid et al. (2020) also revealed students’ positive attitudes towards the technology used for creating authentic intercultural communicative environments. It was also the case of the study carried out by Sevilla-Pavón (2018), who also employed a combination of synchronous and asynchronous activities.

Participants of the study presented in this dissertation showed a preference for synchronous Zoom sessions. A possible explanation for that is that through Zoom Spanish students could interact in real-time conversations with L1 or highly proficient speakers of English, which is something that usually they cannot do. The synchronous sessions were also longer than the comments posted on MeWe, thus learners had more opportunities to interact than in the written discussions. The fact that they were free to discuss any topic could also have had an impact on the preference for synchronous oral conversations rather than asynchronous written discussions. In addition, Sevilla-Pavón (2018) argued that synchronous exchanges offer a more personal and direct experience to students, which is beneficial for the creation of a closer relationship among participants. In the case of the present study, the telecollaboration project potentially fostered language learners’ competences in an innovative
way which was completely different from traditional textbooks and that allowed students to interact with international partners despite the geographical barriers. It is argued that dealing with sensitive topics helped students to develop their cultural awareness as they were given the opportunity to compare explicitly the two cultures (O’Dowd, 2007). The positive responses of the students demonstrate that, indeed, dealing with those issues was not seen as a problem, but rather as a chance to engage in meaningful dialogue in a way that was new for most of them.

Despite the general positive responses obtained, also feelings of frustration arose during the intercultural exchange in the case of a couple of students. Arranging weekly meetings was sometimes seen as a barrier due to either time difference between Hawai’i/Maryland and Spain or because the two sides were not equally committed. Although time difference was not an obstacle in the intercultural exchange with Bath, a couple of students also found lack of commitment a problem. These results align with the challenges found also by Sevilla-Pavón (2016) and Gimeno (2018). For that reason, this kind of issues should be address in the FL class since they can result in disappointment and the creation of negative preconceptions towards the other culture. Instructors on both sides should make an important effort to foster students’ motivation and engagement by describing intercultural encounters as invaluable and enriching opportunities to interact with learners from other cultures. Furthermore, formal instruction could also focus on planning techniques aimed at helping students arranging the expected meetings. Echoing Sevilla-Pavón (2016), instructors need to guide “students throughout the process so as to avoid their feeling lost or frustrated” (p. 222). Previous studies reported that lack of motivation and commitment, unmet expectations, or time zone differences could negatively affect the outcome of intercultural exchange projects (Helm, 2015; O’Dowd & Ritter, 2006; Turula & Raith, 2015; Ware, 2005).

Regarding the third experimental group, the results indicate that the perceived benefits exceeded participants’ previous expectations in terms of the usefulness of the project in general, and of the synchronous Zoom sessions and asynchronous MeWe cultural discussions in particular. Concerning the tools used (i.e., Zoom and MeWe), learners’ expectations mostly aligned with their final level of satisfaction. As mentioned above, they found that arranging weekly meetings was more challenging than expected, which derived in feelings of frustration to a couple of students. These findings corroborate those previously obtained by Gimeno (2018), although communication problems and frustration had been minimised. The results also align with those previously obtained by Sevilla-Pavón (2018), who claimed that 90% of the participants felt that the telecollaboration project met their expectations, except for only one student. As recommended by O’Dowd and Ritter (2006),
instructors should communicate and agree before the telecollaboration project, while learners can conduct introductory tasks to explain to their keypals their expectations about the project. By following this suggestion feelings of frustration or unsuccessful intercultural exchanges could be avoided. Additionally, Hauck & Youngs (2008) and Sevilla-Pavón (2018) pointed out at the paramount importance of task design as a mean to foster language learners’ ICC and their digital skills, as well as a determining factor in the success of the telecollaboration (Taskiran, 2019).
PART III
8. CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

After presenting and discussing the findings of the study, this chapter shall provide the final conclusions, address its limitations, as well as explore the direction for future research.

Although the past years have witnessed an increasing number of studies addressing the development of ICC through telecollaboration, few of them focused on the pragmatic aspect of language and culture. This is especially the case for Spanish learners of English. For this reason, one of the main aims of this dissertation was to demonstrate how telecollaboration can help Spanish-speaking students to develop both their pragmatic competence and their ICC. In addition to this, the strong relationship between pragmatic competence and ICC has been acknowledged by a number of authors, but studies aimed at demonstrating it are still limited (e.g., Jackson, 2019), especially in virtual environments. This leads to the second aim of this dissertation, which was to prove the relationship between these two competences.

Having said this, the first chapter explored the linguistic branch of pragmatics and its origins, as well as the main theories of speech act performance. The speech act of apology was explored, as it was the one under study in this dissertation. Also, the proposed taxonomy used to classify the students’ apology performance was presented. At the end of the chapter, the advantages and disadvantages of using role-plays as a data collection method in ILP were reviewed, as they were the task carried out by the participants. Chapter 2 reviewed the main models of CC, which include pragmatics as one of the competences that should be taught in second or foreign language teaching. These models served as inspiration for Byram’s (1997, 2021) model of ICC, which was discussed in chapter 3. The five objectives of ICC described by Byram were the ones used to classify part of the data collected. The fourth chapter of this thesis presented a general overview of the field of CALL and the use of telecollaboration in second and foreign language teaching in particular. On the other hand, chapter 5 explored the methodology followed in conducting the study, including setting and participants, tools used, and data analysis carried out. Chapters 6 and 7 presented the results obtained and their discussion. On the pragmatic side, the findings revealed a tendency of improvement in the three experimental groups, as opposed to the control group, although the statistical analysis did not bring statistically significant results probably due to the small sample size. In addition, it was found that the students who worked in pairs instead of groups had more opportunities to interact with their counterparts, and probably for this reason they produced a wider variety of strategies to apologise. It is therefore argued that for a telecollaboration project to be beneficial in terms of speech act performance, the optimal condition is pair work modality. Students in the control group did not
improve in terms of apology acquisition as those in the experimental groups did. It is argued that the lack of interaction with TL speakers and intercultural dialogue could be the reasons why they did not experience the pragmatic gains that the other learners did. Intercultural contact is therefore highly beneficial for the acquisition of apologies. On the ICC side, findings showed that attitudes of curiosity and openness was the most common in the comments posted to the asynchronous cultural discussions. In addition, it was found that discussing sensitive topics was not problematic for students, but rather they were willing to engage in discussions regarding controversial issues even spontaneously. It is argued that guiding the asynchronous cultural discussions through external resources such as newspapers articles, videos, etc., and by making a specific question regarding the topics discussed was beneficial for students, as in this way the starting point was already given to them. Thus, this helped them not to feel lost and to avoid unexpected turns in the activity. The results from the Pearson correlation coefficient revealed a positive correlation between gains in pragmatic competence (i.e., apologies) and ICC. This means that the more students engaged in the cultural discussions, the more they did in the role-playing tasks, and vice versa. This should be taken into account in future studies addressing either pragmatic competence or ICC, as the present dissertation demonstrated that when one of the competences improves, also the other does. Therefore, they should no longer be taught separately, nor should any of them been neglected. However, as mentioned before, studies aimed at demonstrating the relationship between pragmatic competence and ICC are still scarce in telecollaborative environments, thus, more research is needed to confirm the results obtained in this dissertation, which cannot be generalised. This leads to the limitations and issues encountered during the project.

One of the limitations of this study is the small sample size of each group of students, in particular, the first and the third experimental group. This could be one of the reasons why the statistical analysis did not reveal significant changes between pre- and post-test. Some may ask “why do statistics for statistics’ sake?”, well, as a mixed-methods approach was adopted, it was felt that including all the results obtained, even the ones not statistically significant, was honest and gave a broader perspective on the data analysis carried out. Also, as claimed in the results section, the means from pre- and post-test revealed a tendency for improvement. Therefore, it is claimed that the findings obtained from the descriptive statistics, together with the qualitative data obtained from the comments on MeWe, and the Pearson correlation coefficient between the ‘pragmatic data’ and the ‘intercultural data’, provided different angles from which the same issue can be observed and analysed. In addition, some may argue that the questions proposed in the questionnaire on apologies were ‘too easy’. Although for an L1 speaker of English pre- and post-test may seem basic, for learners of English as
a foreign language they may pose a number of challenges to determine the different nuances in each of the options given, which is proved by the fact that nobody scored 3/3 in all the 10 multiple-choice questions. The second limitation is that participants of the second experimental group did not carry out the synchronous Zoom sessions in pairs as the participants in the other two groups. As argued before, this could have had an impact on the results obtained from the role-plays analysis, as each student had fewer opportunities to practice the performance of apologies as compared to the first and the third experimental groups. Therefore, lower variability in strategy use was observed, as well as lower improvement from pre- to post-test. Unfortunately, the author did not have full control over the groups of students and intergroup variability. In addition, students from the University of Bath received explicit instruction on apologies in Spanish, while those from University of Hawai’I and Morgan State University did not. This could also have impacted their participation in the role-plays as interlocutors. Thus, this is another limitation of the study, as that variable was not considered when carrying out the data analysis. A direction for future research could be investigating the extent to which receiving explicit instruction on both sides could influence the performance of apologies.

Another variable which could not be controlled was students’ participation, which means that some of them did not accomplish all the expected tasks. This could also have had an impact on their final outcome. The fact that learners from Bath were not graded for the telecollaboration project could also have had an impact on their engagement. The same happens with the topics discussed in the cultural discussions on MeWe. The author had to reach a compromise with the different instructors of the partners institutions, therefore some of the topics suggested by her had to be substituted by those proposed by the colleagues. The change in topics among the groups affected the research design, and probably the results obtained.

Time difference proved to be the main constraint as students sometimes struggled to find the right moment to meet, as they were all busy with other assignments and extra-curricular activities. Future studies should provide the participants with further guidance, especially when there is a considerable time difference between the countries involved in the project. For instance, a shared document (e.g., on Google Drive or OneDrive) could be created in order to carefully plan the synchronous meetings with the help of the instructors. A further limitation was that most of the participants did not provide their partners with feedback regarding their performance of apologies. It is believed that they feared offending their counterparts, and that they felt that providing ‘corrections’ to their performance was face-threatening. In terms of pedagogical implications, future studies should prepare students for the role of feedback providers by conducting exercises before the start of the telecollaboration project. For instance, they could practice how to provide feedback in a respectful
way with their classmates, as it could possibly be less face-threatening because they already know each other. This is extremely important as research shows that feedback is crucial for L2 pragmatic learning to take place (Gónzalez-Lloret, 2022). Recent studies such as Tsubota et al. (2023) demonstrated the effectiveness of pre-telecollaboration training courses to foster learners’ willingness to communicate. Similarly, pre-telecollaboration training courses could be implemented to scaffold learners’ role of ‘feedback providers’. Another limitation is that the initial level of Spanish learners was not considered when carrying out the analysis. Future studies should take this variable into consideration to see if there is any relationship between level of proficiency and pragmatic competence and ICC acquisition.

Although the present study analysed the frequency of Byram’s (1997, 2021) five objectives of ICC in the MeWe comments and carried out a qualitative analysis of them as well as the cultural categories created from the Zoom sessions, its aim was not to assess students’ ICC, as previously stated on page 110. Within language teaching there is not a hundred percent reliable method to do that since language competence is not an exact science but rather a compendium of abilities needed to be proficient communicators. As claimed by Guarda (2013):

As most of the dimensions of ICC touch deeply on personal processes, their assessment on the part of a teacher or researcher would impose important limitations to the understanding of the complex dynamics that accompany an individual’s encounters with otherness within an institutional context such as, for instance, an online exchange. (p. 227)

Despite that, it is argued here that telecollaboration projects are an appropriate starting point to get in touch with learners from different cultures and their perspectives, and therefore telecollaboration can potentially broaden students’ horizon. What is more, the author is aware of the fact that although students in the three experimental groups interacted with L1 or highly proficient speakers of English, those learners did not belong to the same culture and, therefore, generalisations should be avoided. This is because students who collaborated with the 1st experimental group lived in a British context, although not all of them had British origins; those who worked with the 2nd experimental group lived in Hawai’I but came also from different states in the US and other countries; and learners from Maryland were Afro-American speakers of English. Therefore, the three different groups spoke three different varieties of English and had different cultural backgrounds, which could also have influenced the results obtained.

The main findings of this study are that the acquisition of apologies can be fostered through telecollaboration projects, as well as the development of ICC, which was indicated by the instances
or traces of ICC identified, but most of all, the relationship between these two competences. Although there is an increasing body of research (see Gónzalez-Lloret, 2021 for a review) on how CALL can assist the development of L2 pragmatic competence, there is still the need to address the development of this competence. Telecollaboration has proved to be an adequate way to help Spanish students to improve their performance of apologies. Therefore, it is hoped that in the near future scholars interested in carrying out telecollaboration/VE/COIL will explore its implications on the development of language learners’ L2 pragmatic competence. Furthermore, proving the existing relationship between L2 pragmatic competence and ICC has broadened the horizon of foreign and second language teaching. The importance of pragmatic competence along with ICC can no longer be ignored in the language classroom, especially in telecollaborative settings. It is therefore imperative that those academics and scholars interested in exploring the affordances of telecollaboration for the development of students’ ICC also include the teaching of pragmatics in their study’s rationale.

9. CONCLUSIONES, LIMITACIONES, Y DIRECCIONES FUTURAS

Después de presentar y discutir los resultados del estudio, en este capítulo ofreceremos las conclusiones finales, abordaremos sus limitaciones, así como vamos a explorar la dirección para futuras investigaciones.

A pesar de que los últimos años hemos presenciado un creciente número de estudios que abordan el desarrollo de la competencia comunicativa intercultural (CCI) a través de la telecolaboración, pocos se han centrado en el aspecto pragmático de la lengua y la cultura. Esto ha ocurrido especialmente en el caso de estudiantes de inglés de procedencia española. Por esta razón, uno de los objetivos principales de esta tesis era demostrar cómo la telecolaboración puede ayudar a hablantes de español en el desarrollo de su competencia pragmática y CCI. Además, la estrecha relación entre competencia pragmática y CCI ha sido reconocida por un cierto número de autores, aunque los estudios centrados en ello siguen siendo escasos (p. ej., Jackson, 2019), especialmente en entornos virtuales. Esto nos lleva al segundo objetivo de esta tesis, probar la relación entre estas dos competencias.

Dicho esto, en el primer capítulo se ha explorado la rama de la pragmática y sus orígenes, así como las principales teorías de ejecución de actos de habla. Dado que el acto de habla de las disculpas es el que se ha estudiado en esta tesis, también se ha presentado en el mismo capítulo. Además, se presentó la taxonomía propuesta para la clasificación de la ejecución de las disculpas por parte de los
estudiantes. Dado que los participantes utilizaron juegos de rol en sus interacciones, al final del capítulo se revisaron las ventajas y desventajas del uso de los juegos de rol como método de recogida de datos en pragmática de interlengua. En el segundo capítulo se han revisado los principales modelos de CC, los cuales incluyen la pragmática como una de las competencias que tendría que enseñarse en segundas lenguas y lenguas extranjeras. Estos modelos fueron la inspiración para el modelo de CCI de Byram (1997, 2021), que se ha discutido en el capítulo 3. Los cinco objetivos de CCI descritos por Byram han sido usados para clasificar parte de los datos recopilados. El cuarto capítulo de esta tesis se ha presentado una visión general del aprendizaje de lenguas mediado por computador (CALL por su sigla en inglés), y en especial del uso de la telecolaboración para la enseñanza de segundas lenguas y lenguas extranjeras. Por otra parte, en el capítulo 5 se ha explorado la metodología empleada para realizar el estudio, incluyendo el entorno y los participantes, las herramientas utilizadas, y el análisis de datos realizado. En los capítulos 6 y 7 se han presentado los resultados obtenidos y su discusión. En cuanto a la cuestión pragmática, los resultados han revelado una tendencia a mejora en los tres grupos experimentales, al contrario que el grupo de control, aunque el análisis estadístico no arroja resultados estadísticamente significativos, probablemente debido al reducido tamaño de la muestra. Además, se comprobó que los estudiantes que trabajaron en parejas en lugar de en grupos tuvieron más oportunidades de interactuar con sus compañeros, y ésta fue probablemente la razón por la cual produjeron una más amplia variedad de estrategias para disculparse. Por lo tanto, se argumenta que para que un proyecto telecolaborativo sea beneficioso en cuanto a la ejecución de actos de habla, la condición de trabajo óptima es la modalidad en parejas. Los estudiantes en el grupo de control no mejoraron tanto como lo hicieron aquellos en los grupos experimentales. Se argumenta que la falta de interacción con hablantes de la L2 y diálogo intercultural podrían ser las razones por las que no experimentaron beneficios pragmáticos de la misma manera que los otros estudiantes sí lo hicieron. Así pues, el contacto intercultural es altamente beneficioso para la adquisición de las disculpas. En cuanto a la CCI, los resultados han mostrado que las actitudes de curiosidad y apertura eran las más comunes en los comentarios publicados en los debates culturales asíncronos. Además de eso, se comprobó que debatir temas sensibles no fue un problema para los estudiantes, sino que estaban dispuestos a participar en debates relacionados con temas controvertidos incluso de forma espontánea. Se cree que guiar los debates culturales asíncronos a través de fuentes externas como artículos de periódico, videos, etc., y haciendo preguntas específicas relacionadas con los temas tratados fue beneficioso para los estudiantes, dado que de esta manera se les proporcionaba el punto de partida de la conversación. Así pues, esto les ayudó a no sentirse perdidos y evitar giros inesperados en la actividad. Los resultados del coeficiente de Pearson revelaron una correlación positiva entre los
beneficios en la competencia pragmática y la CCI. Esto significa que cuanto los estudiantes más
participaban también en los debates culturales, más participaban en los juegos de rol, y viceversa.
Futuras investigaciones que aborden tanto la competencia pragmática como la CCI deberían de tener
esto en cuenta, dado que la presente tesis ha demostrado que cuando una de las dos competencias
mejora, lo hace la otra también. Por consiguiente, ya no se deberían de enseñar por separado. Sin
embargo, como se ha mencionado anteriormente, el número de estudios centrados en demostrar la
relación entre la competencia pragmática y la CCI sigue siendo escaso en entornos telecolaborativos,
así, se necesitan más investigación en este campo para poder corroborar los resultados de esta tesis,
los cuales no se pueden generalizar. Esto nos lleva a las limitaciones y los problemas encontrados
durante el desarrollo del proyecto.

Una de las limitaciones de este estudio es la reducida muestra de cada grupo de estudiantes, en
particular, del primer y tercer grupo experimental. Esta podría ser una de las razones por las cuales el
análisis estadístico no revela cambios significativos entre pre- y post-test. Ante estas circunstancias
se puede aducir una crítica sobre la pertinencia o no de realizar un análisis estadístico, dado que se
adoptó un enfoque de métodos mixtos, pensamos que incluir todos los resultados obtenidos, incluso
aquellos que no eran estadísticamente significativos, sería lo más honesto y ofrecería una perspectiva
más amplia del análisis de datos realizado. Además, tal y como se dijo en la sección de los resultados,
las medias de los pre- y post-test revelan una tendencia positiva. Así pues, se cree que los resultados
obtenidos de los estadísticos descriptivos, junto con los datos cualitativos obtenidos por los
comentarios en MeWe, y el coeficiente de correlación de Pearson entre los ‘datos pragmáticos’ y los
‘datos interculturales’, ofrecen diferentes ángulos desde los cuales se puede observar y analizar la
misma cuestión. Además, algunos podrían argumentar que las preguntas propuestas en el cuestionario
sobre las disculpas eran ‘demasiado fáciles’. A pesar de que para un hablante de inglés como L1 el
pre- y post-test podrían parecer básicos, para un estudiante de inglés como lengua extranjera de nivel
B1 puede suponer un reto determinar los distintos matices en cada una de las opciones dadas, lo cual
es demostrado por el hecho de que ninguno obtuvo 3/3 en todas las preguntas de respuesta múltiple.
La segunda limitación es que los participantes del segundo grupo experimental no realizaron las tareas
de juegos de rol en parejas como los participantes en los otros dos grupos. Tal y como se ha
argumentado anteriormente, esto puede haber tenido un impacto en los resultados obtenidos del
análisis de los juegos de rol, dado que cada estudiante tuvo menos oportunidades de practicar la
ejecución de disculpas comparados con el primer y el tercer grupo experimental. Así pues, se observó
un rango de variabilidad más bajo en el uso de estrategias, así como una mejora inferior entre pre- y
post-test. Desafortunadamente, la autora no tenía todo el control sobre los grupos de estudiantes y la
variabilidad intergrupal. Además, los estudiantes de la Universidad de Bath recibieron instrucción explícita sobre las disculpas en español, mientras que aquellos de la Universidad de Hawái y de la Universidad de Morgan State no la recibieron. Esto también puede haber tenido un impacto en su participación en los juegos de rol como interlocutores. Así pues, esta es otra limitación del estudio, dado que esa variable no se consideró cuando se realizó el análisis de datos. Una de las direcciones que futuras investigaciones podrían tomar es analizar la medida en la que recibir instrucción explícita por ambas partes puede influir en la ejecución de disculpas. Otra variable que no se pudo controlar fue la participación de los estudiantes, lo cual significa que algunos de ellos no llevaron a cabo todas las tareas previstas. Esto también podría haber tenido un impacto en el resultado final. El hecho que los estudiantes de Bath no fueran evaluados por el Proyecto de telecolaboración también pudo impactar en su participación. Lo mismo ocurre con los temas debatidos en las conversaciones culturales en MeWe. La autora tuvo que llegar a un acuerdo con los distintos docentes de las instituciones colaboradoras, y por lo tanto algunos de los temas sugeridos por ella tuvieron que ser sustituidos por otros planteados por estos. El cambio de temas entre un grupo y otro afectó el diseño del estudio, y probablemente también los resultados obtenidos.

La diferencia horaria demostró ser uno de los mayores obstáculos dado que a veces los estudiantes tuvieron problemas en encontrar el momento adecuado para quedar, puesto que todos estaban ocupados con otras tareas y actividades extracurriculares. Los estudios futuros deberían de ofrecer a los participantes orientación adicional, especialmente cuando haya diferencia horaria considerable entre los países implicados en el proyecto. Por ejemplo, se podría crear un documento compartido (p.ej. en Google Drive o OneDrive) para poder planificar cuidadosamente las reuniones sincronas con la ayuda de los docentes. Una limitación adicional ha sido que la mayoría de los estudiantes no proporcionaron feedback a sus compañeros/as respecto a su ejecución de las disculpas. Se cree que temían ofenderles, y que sentían que ‘corregir’ su ejecución era descortés. En cuanto a las implicaciones pedagógicas, los estudios futuros deberían preparar a los estudiantes para su rol de ‘proveedores de feedback’ realizando ejercicios previos al comienzo del proyecto telecolaborativo. Por ejemplo, podrían practicar como dar feedback de una manera respetuosa con sus compañeros de clase, dado que podría ser menos descortés porque ya se conocen entre ellos. Esto es extremadamente importante dado que investigaciones previas demuestran que el feedback es crucial para que el aprendizaje de la pragmática de L2 ocurra (González-Lloret, 2022). Estudios recientes como Tsubota et al. (2023) demostraron la eficacia de los cursos de formación previa a la telecolaboración para fomentar la disposición de los alumnos a comunicarse. Del mismo modo, se podrían implementar cursos de capacitación previos a la telecolaboración para reforzar el papel de ‘proveedores de
A pesar de que el presente estudio ha analizado la frecuencia de los cinco objetivos de Byram (1997, 2021) para la CCI en los comentarios de MeWe y ha realizado un análisis cualitativo de éstos, así como de las categorías creada a partir de las sesiones de Zoom, su objetivo no era el de evaluar la CCI de los estudiantes, tal y como se explica anteriormente en la página 112. Dentro de la enseñanza de lenguas no hay un método cien por cien fiable para hacer esto, ya que la competencia lingüística no es una ciencia exacta sino un conjunto de habilidades necesarias para ser comunicadores eficientes. Tal y como dijo Guarda (2013):

Dado que la mayoría de las dimensiones de la CCI tocan profundamente procesos personales, su evaluación por parte del docente o investigador impondría limitaciones importantes a la comprensión de las complejas dinámicas que acompañan los encuentros de un individuo con otros en un contexto institucional como, por ejemplo, un intercambio online. (p. 227) [traducción propia]

A pesar de ello, se argumenta aquí que los proyectos de telecolaboración son un punto de partida apropiado para contactar con estudiantes de diferentes culturas y sus perspectivas, y así pues, la telecolaboración puede potencialmente ampliar los horizontes de los estudiantes. Además, la autora es consciente del hecho de que aunque los estudiantes en los tres grupos experimentales interactuaron con hablantes L1 o altamente competentes de inglés, estos últimos no pertenecían a la misma cultura, y por lo tanto, hay que evitar generalizar. Esto se debe a que los estudiantes que colaboraron con el 1° grupo experimental vivían en un contexto británico, aunque no todos tenían orígenes británicos; aquellos que trabajaron con el 2° vivían en Hawái pero venían de diferentes estados en EEUU; y los estudiantes de Maryland eran hablantes de inglés afroamericanos. Así pues, los tres grupos hablaban diferentes variedades del inglés y tenían distintos orígenes culturales, lo cual también pudo haber influido en los resultados obtenidos.

Los principales hallazgos de este estudio son que la adquisición de las estrategias de disculpas se puede fomentar a través de proyectos de telecolaboración, así como el desarrollo de la CCI, que era indicado por los ejemplos y trazas identificados, pero sobre todo, la relación entre estas dos competencias. A pesar de que haya un creciente número de investigaciones (ver Gónzalez-Lloret, 2021 para una revisión) sobre cómo CALL puede ayudar en el desarrollo de la competencia...
pragmática, todavía existe la necesidad de abordar el desarrollo de esta competencia. La telecolaboración ha demostrado ser una forma adecuada de ayudar a los estudiantes españoles en su ejecución de disculpas. Así pues, se espera que en un futuro cercano los académicos interesados en llevar a cabo telecolaboraciones/intercambios virtuales/COIL (por sus siglas en inglés) explorarán sus implicaciones en el desarrollo de la competencia pragmática de los estudiantes de L2. Además, probar la relación existente entre la pragmática de L2 y la CCI ha ampliado el horizonte de la enseñanza de segundas lenguas y lenguas extranjeras. La importancia de la competencia pragmática junto con la CCI ya no se puede ignorar en la clase de lengua, y especialmente en entornos telecolaborativos. Por lo tanto, es imperativo que aquellos académicos e investigadores interesados en explorar los beneficios de la telecolaboración para el desarrollo de la CCI de los estudiantes, también incluyan la enseñanza de la pragmática en la base de estudio.
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What is Pragmatics?

Crystal’s (1997) definition:

“The study of language from the point of view of the user, especially on the choices he makes, the constraints he encounters in using language in social interaction, and the effects his use of language has on the other participants in an act of communication”
Pragmatics is the study of what we mean when we speak.

- Context plays the main role. What we mean depends on the context.
- A sentence may have different interpretations.

![Image of two people having a conversation with speech bubbles showing the concept of context in pragmatics.](image-url)
Apology:

“An act of saying that you are sorry for something wrong you have done” (Cambridge Dictionary)

How do we apologise? Some strategies (Leech, 2014):

► “Sorry” is the most common strategy in English. For example, “Sorry about that”, “Sorry to..”
► “I regret” is more formal
► “Excuse me”, “Pardon me” are for mild offenses, for example, sneezing or yawning.
► “I apologize”, “I beg you pardon” are not frequently used. They are used in formal contexts.
An apology consists of (Leech, 2014):

- One of the strategies mentioned
- An expression of responsibility
- An explanation of why the fault occurred
- An offer of repair
- A promise of forbearance

What’s wrong with these apologies?

- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=94Jv_-MZ8FU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=94Jv_-MZ8FU)
- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WwJ-dqFuGjA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WwJ-dqFuGjA)
Do you think is this better?

► https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9fEMKGFr-Sk
Appendix B

How to perform an effective apology in English

Always remember that we should use a specific language depending on context and culture.

Apologies are a kind of speech act, which means that when you apologize to somebody you are performing the act of apologize, which is a real action and not a mere statement.

How do we apologise? Some strategies (Leech, 2014):

- “Sorry” is the most common strategy in English. For example, “Sorry about that”, “Sorry to.”
- “I regret” is more formal
- “Excuse me”, “Pardon me” are for mild offenses, for example, sneezing or yawning
- “I apologize”, “I beg you pardon” are not frequently used. They are used in formal contexts

An apology consists of (Leech, 2014):

- One of the strategies mentioned
- An expression of responsibility
- An explanation of why the fault occurred
- An offer of repair
- A promise of forbearance
Appendix C

Suggested topics to discuss in Zoom sessions:

1. What do you like to do in your free time?
2. Do you practise any sports?
3. What type of TV series/films do you like the most? Why? Can you talk about one of them?
4. What type of food do you prefer? Why?
5. Do you like cooking? Has the pandemic changed your culinary skills? In what way?
6. Do you think Spanish food is similar or different to English/American food (or vice versa)? At what time do you usually eat (cultural differences)?
7. What type of music do you listen to? Why?
8. Do you like reading? Why yes/not? If yes, what type of books do you like the most?
9. What do you want to do after university? Which job would you like to have? How do you see yourself in the future?
10. How has the pandemic affected your everyday life? (Only for those who feel comfortable talking about that)
11. Do you think Education should be free? What do you think about University fees? Compare the fee systems between England/the US and Spain.
12. Educational system in Spain vs. United Kingdom/the US, life at university.
14. Chit chat. Differences between Spain and England/the US.
15. Tabu topics for social interaction in England/ the US and Spain (e.g., politics).
17. Any other topic that you would like to discuss.
Appendix D

Online discussion procedure on MeWe.com

Each group is composed of four or five students based either in Spain or the UK. For each online discussion, each group will have a leader who will start and wrap up the conversation. Each person needs to post at least 4 times, 2 per session (the leader will post 5 times). Each entry needs to have around 100-150 words.

For each online discussion the entire process takes around two weeks to be completed (as directed by the instructors). At the beginning of each topic, the instructors will ask you to read some material or watch videos to get ready for the discussion with your groupmates. The instructors will also provide you with a prompt, based on that topic, to continue the conversation.

The leader of each group answers the initial prompt and expands the scope and depth of the discussion by seeking out additional information from other sources. The leader also asks questions that will elicit critical and thoughtful responses to continue the discussion. The group members also search, post, describe, and elaborate additional information. They also ask further questions to maintain the conversation.

Table 1. Schedule and activities of discussion board postings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Activities involved</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Step 1</td>
<td>Students start a discussion regarding the cultural topic based on the instructors’ prompt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>At the beginning of the discussion, the group leader comments on the prompt providing (1) personal opinion, (2) information retrieved from external sources, (3) analysis of the information and (4) questions to promote the conversation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 2</td>
<td>Group members post in response to their leader’s initial comments and to another class member providing (1) personal opinion, (2) information retrieved from external sources, (3) analysis of the information and (4) questions to promote the conversation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Step 3</td>
<td>Each group leader summarises findings from the entire group discussions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**ZOOM sessions**

You have all answered the *cuestionario sobre gustos*, so we have paired you with a student from Bath/Valencia based on your profile. **The oral sessions** will take place with your assigned partner on Zoom, once a week. In these sessions you will perform two **role-plays**, one in Spanish and one in English. Sofia Di Sarno will post a PDF file with the two role plays every **Monday** on the **MeWe project site**, “Bath-Valencia Telecollaboration Project”. Please, remember that you do not need to write or prepare anything when performing the role-plays, it has to be something **spontaneous and natural**. After that, you are expected to give **feedback** to your partners. Don’t be afraid to do that!

It will be very useful for everybody to receive feedback from a native speaker 😊 After that, you are expected to **practice oral language** (both English and Spanish). We believe that the sessions will last more or less 45 minutes, but if you wish to speak more that’s perfect! **IMPORTANT**! Remember to **record every Zoom session**, from the beginning to the end. After each session, please remember to send Sofia the video to sodisar@doctor.upv.es.
Appendix E

Answer the first 3 questions about you. Then, chose the best option for the other questions.

1) Age
2) Gender:
   - Female
   - Male
   - Prefer not to say
3) Where are you from?
4) You borrow your sister’s dress for a party. Somebody pours a drink on it. How would you apologise?
   - I beg your pardon
   - I’m sorry about that
   - I apologise
5) You work in a restaurant. Somebody orders a gluten free meal, but you forget about it. The person gets sick. How would you apologize?
   - Sorry
   - Pardon me
   - I’m extremely sorry about the mistake
6) You were expected to submit a report for your boss, but you did not have enough time so you do not submit it on time. How would you apologize?
   - I apologise
   - Excuse me
   - Pardon me
7) You are at a dinner with your friends. You sneeze. How would you apologize?
   - I apologise
   - Sorry about that
   - I’m extremely sorry
8) You ask for directions to a person you do not know. How would you stop him/her?
   - Excuse me
   - Sorry about that
   - I apologise
9) You say something that offends your friend. How would you apologize?
   - I beg your pardon
   - I apologise
   - Sorry about that
10) Your friend invites you to his/her birthday party. You cannot go because you have to work. How would you apologize?
    - I apologise for the inconvenience
    - I’m sorry but I can’t go
    - Pardon me
11) You are at a restaurant and you have to ask something to the waiter/waitress. How would you catch his/her attention?
   • Excuse me
   • Sorry
   • I apologise

12) You have bought a computer online, but when you receive it, it is not the one you ordered. How are they expected to apologize?
   • Sorry about that
   • Excuse me
   • We apologise for the mistake

13) You are cheating during an exam. The teacher sees it. How would you apologize?
   • Pardon me
   • I apologise
   • I beg your pardon
Appendix F

1. ¿Cómo te llamas? (nombre y apellidos)
2. ¿Cuáles son tus aficiones?
3. ¿Qué te gusta hacer en tu tiempo libre?
4. ¿Qué series de televisión te gustan más?
5. ¿Qué tipo de comida te gusta?
6. ¿De qué temas te gusta debatir con amigos, familia, pareja, etc.?
7. ¿De qué te gustaría hablar con tu pareja virtual?

8. ¿Te sabe mal que Reino Unido haya salido de la Unión Europea con el Brexit? ¿Por qué sí/no?
   
   OR

9. ¿En qué horario sueles estar disponible?
Appendix G

This is the last step of the telecollaborative project. Please, answer all the questions. Remember that in this 5-points scale 1 stands for “completely disagree” and 5 for “completely agree” with the statement provided. There is not a right or wrong answer. We just want to know your impression about the project and the tools used. Thanks for participating.

1) In general, I found the project useful 
2) I found the Zoom sessions useful 
3) I found the MeWe discussions useful 
4) I think the cultural topics discussed on MeWe were interesting 
5) I found the MeWe platform difficult to use 
6) I found Zoom difficult to use 
7) I felt at ease with my partner 
8) I had problems trying to arrange a meeting with my partner 
9) I met once a week with my partner 
10) I had communication problems with my partner 
11) When I came across communication problems with my partner, we solved them 
12) I had technical problems with my computer or the connection during the online sessions 
13) We practiced both languages in the Zoom sessions 
14) I have learnt something about my partner’s culture 
15) Would you like to keep on meeting with your partner after the end of the project? 
   • Yes 
   • No 
   • Maybe 
16) Do you have any comments or suggestions?
Appendix H

Please, answer all the questions. Remember that in this 5-points scale 1 stands for “completely disagree” and 5 for “completely agree” with the statement provided. There is not a right or wrong answer. We just want to know your expectations about the project and the tools used. *Please use your ETSID email to register for this questionnaire*. Thanks for your time.

1) I think the project will be useful in general
2) I think the synchronous Zoom sessions will be useful
3) I think the cultural discussions on MeWe will be useful
4) I think the MeWe platform will be difficult to use
5) I think Zoom will be difficult to use
6) I think it will be difficult to arrange meetings with my virtual partner
7) I think I will be able to meet once a week with my virtual partner
8) I think I will have communication problems with my virtual partner
9) If we have communication problems I think we will be able to solve them
10) I don’t think we will have technical problems during the sessions
11) I think we will practice both languages (Spanish and English) in the Zoom sessions
12) I think I will learn something about my partner’s culture through this project
13) I think the Global Conversations event will help me in acquiring cultural knowledge
Appendix I

Instructions

Please, remember that you should not prepare or write anything to perform these role-plays. It has to be something natural and spontaneous as in a real conversation.

You should perform these role-plays in pairs or groups of three. Please, remember that when Bath students perform the role-plays in Spanish, they have to be the ones that apologise, while when performing the role-plays in English, Spanish students are the ones who have to apologise. The purpose is that you perform apologies in the language that you are studying.

After you have performed the role plays you should practice oral language. In the document “List of students and topics” you have a series of suggested topics to practice conversation. Also, remember to record all Zoom sessions from the beginning to the end.

Role play A

You borrow your elder’s brother car. When you are parking, you hit the car behind you. The result is that now your brother’s car is dented. When you come back home you tell him what happened, so he gets angry. You apologise and you promise that it will never happen again.

Role play B

You are late for your English lesson at the university. You know that the lecturer cannot stand latecomers, but this is an important lesson and you cannot miss it. When you enter the class, you apologise and you promise this will not happen again.

Role play C

One of your best friends invites you to his/her birthday party on Saturday. You cannot attend it because you have to study for an exam you have on Monday. You know your friend will be sad, but you refuse the invitation and apologise.
Role play D

Your final project degree tutor invites you to a conference at the university. However, you cannot attend it because it is the same day of your sister’s wedding. You know it is an important conference, but of course, you cannot miss the wedding, so you refuse the invitation and apologise.

Role play E

One of your best friends lives abroad. He/she invites you to his/her wedding, but you cannot attend it because the flight is too expensive. You know he/she will understand the problem. You congratulate him/her and apologise for not coming.

Role play F

A friend of yours /Your friend’s wife is pregnant and she is organising a baby shower. You cannot go because you have to work that day. You congratulate her for the pregnancy and apologise for not coming.
Appendix J

Publications derived from the study in this thesis:


Di Sarno-García, S. (2022). Does participating in a telecollaborative project foster the acquisition of apologies? Insights from the English for specific purposes context. In B. Arnbjörnsdóttir, B. Bédi, L. Bradley, K. Friðriksdóttir, H. Garðarsdóttir, S. Thouësny, & M. J. Whelpton (Eds.), Intelligent CALL, granular systems, and learner data: short papers from EUROCALL 2022 (pp. 95-100). Research-publishing.net. https://doi.org/10.14705/rpnet.2022.61.1441


**Edited volumes:**

Di Sarno-García, S., Montaner-Villalba, S., & Gimeno-Sanz, A. (Eds.). (2023). *Telecollaboration Applications in Foreign Language Classrooms*. IGI Global. [https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-6684-7080-0](https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-6684-7080-0)


**Publications under review:**


## Appendix K

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session No.</th>
<th>Feedback received</th>
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<td><strong>Session 1</strong></td>
<td>A: Yeah ehm yeah so in English yeah ehm you’d say like accept accept my apologies ehm also like in more formal situations ehm or I don’t know what else you can say ehm yeah well but for example as you just said like ehm so you if you if you talk to you brother and say I’m sorry and say I eh L: (overlapping) for example A: (overlapping) you don’t say accept my apologies because that’s just not that L: (overlapping) Yeah this is so formal or I beg your pardon this is A: (overlapping) I beg your pardon exactly that’s also another formal way say it yeah or you can say pardon but that’s also more more ehm informal yeah. I think basically these are ways you can say sorry I don’t much you know. I apologise. You can also say I apologise L: Yes I apologise A: (overlapping) if you say I I think you’ve said that. L: Yes.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Session 2</strong></td>
<td>A: All right so yeah it was I think pretty good. Ehm first things the first few things like for example you don't say ehm I think you said something like I'm so sorry I I actually forgot but yeah you said something about arriving in time or- L: I have said I'm so sorry I I regret eh A: (overlapping) not being in time sorry. You've said I regret not being in time L: Not being in time yes. A: Yeah so that that's not correct so you have to say be on time. L: Be on time yeah I think I think I have said on time I don't know I don't know exactly A: I think well I heard in maybe I I misheard. L: Yes yes this is I don’t know what I have said but I know that it is arrive on time with the preposition A: (overlapping) Oh ok ok than good but it's also be on time you know that as well? L: And arrive on time A: (overlapping) I regret not being on time not being on time. L: Not being on time? A: It is yeah you've said like I regret not being in time I think that's what you said and it's correctly it's not I regret not being on time so be on time that's the expression yeah. L: Ok thanks. A: Yeah ehm arrive on time yeah or actually you can say arrive in time and arrive on time 'cause if you arrive in time that may means that you arrive before the class starts if you arrive on time that means that the you arrive just when the class starts so just like one minute before and if in time that may be like ten minutes before you know that's the difference basically.</td>
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L: Yeah ok ok I understand
A: Ehm yeah so what can I say ehm I don't know should I also reflect on like the way you like ehm you apologise like what else you could have said like what other expressions 'cause I you know this is also a more formal situation just as the one in with the with the boss but I mean I guess it's a little bit still formal I think maybe in you have more pressure in that in the office you know like with your with your boss it's more pressurising than than and then the situation is like
L: (overlapping) I think mmh the the teacher have have given us some some instructions like and I think that I regret was an expression that it was more formal than I'm sorry or...
A: Oh okay.
L: So I think that this situation was more formal than the the last week –
A: yeah
L: So I I use I regret instead of I'm sorry or something similar.
A: Oh okay oh alright ok that's good.
L: But it was I understand that it's possible that in a real situation that you have experience for example you would use another expression
A: Mmh I would use a what sorry? Another expression yeah yeah yeah no no I mean (overlapping) I think you used a really good expression so that
L: (overlapping) Ah ok.

Session 3
A: Ok so should I give you feedback now right? And then after that (unintelligible) It was basically good ehm I don't know if you did the right thing by eh by agreeing on a compromise 'cause maybe you should I shouldn't have either accept or refused your apology
L: It it is better that you accept accept my apologise (laughter)
A: I know but like I accepted but basically I accepted it because you offered the compromise you know.
L: Yes
A: I don't feel sure about that. But okay so yeah basically I'm just gonna tell you I think two things about like this English grammar basically so you said I'm really sorry about not attend your party so you say I'm really sorry I'm terrible sorry about not attending your party about not being to not being able to attend it
L: I I don't know yes I I know that it is with with gerund I don't know if yeah I've have the same problem
A: (overlapping) Gerundio yeah
L: (overlapping) I have the same problem every eh in every session that I-
A: every session yeah
L: I know I know what the eh the correct form
A: (Overlapping) What is the correct way to say it but sometimes when you have
L: (overlapping) but I I don't know if when I speak I do it correctly
A: Yeah that makes sense because yeah you don't want to mean the other one way so yeah that's honest okay if you know that's good the other what I think that you were quite unsure about was the if I something you said like if I had scheduled my time better I would have been able to come but you said it in a different way so this the ehm conditional past so I think in Spanish is called like condicional
L: Sí
A: Condicional de pasado
L: Sí condicional condicional perfecto yes
A: Perfecto so you say so
L: (overlapping) Yes if I had you say-
A: (overlapping) How would you say
L: (overlapping) I I think I have said if if I had organized my schedule better
A: If I had organized that's good yes.
L: I could eh I could have time to attend your party I think
A: I could have had time 'cause have is the the eh how's it called the part-
L: Yes the the past participle yes
A: Yeah the participle which means that you have to say another time I could have had time or I would have had time yeah
L: But like it is something that hasn't eh eh happened yet it could be could have like tendría. Could have tendría
A: Oh oh ok ehm...
L: Because the party hasn't happened yet I could have time tendría I think
A: (overlapping) Yeah you're right basically. Yeah you can say that. I think you can say both 'cause usually these two they use ehm a lot of times I think they use this like in the same tenses like it doesn't matter what has happened you can still I think use it I could have attended your party because the possibility it's not there anymore basically I'm saying but I think but tendría yeah so if you use just the normal conditional
L: (overlapping) Yes I think this because eh en castellano sería como tendría tiempo para asistir a tu fiesta
A: Mmh
L: Y y no habría habría tenido because this eh would be something that
A: (overlapping) If had happened already okay. Yeah I think in English you can use both so yeah basically right. Ok I think these are the two ehm yeah well you said sorry once so we can you can really show harmony you know ehm different ways you can say sorry but don't know if this is the point of the exercise so I think it was good all you know
L: Yes I have said sorry because it is like it is your friend
A: Yeah yeah
L: As it is your friend it is something informal
A: (overlapping) Yeah yeah you're right so basically yeah you don't have to say like
L: And I have I have apologised and I have said eh some possibility instead of attend- attending the party
| Session 4 | A: Yeah yeah ok I think it was good  
A: So well I think you did really well you explained why you can't go and yeah I don't I don't think I can you know say point anything out that was not that like it was incorrect maybe just a few grammar things like oh but that wasn't even in the role play that's what you said before so yeah you said I beg your pardon that's yeah yeah as we talked about this before this is a formal situation basically  
L: (overlapping) Yes it is  
A: (overlapping) it depends in what relationship you are with your teacher but...  
L: Yes I I think that it is a formal situation because it is a professor in the university so I don't have many I don't know how to say trato many trato eh tener trato con alguien...  
A: Like...  
L: Como tener confianza eh I don't have confidence I don't have any confidence with  
A: (overlapping) I trust  
L: Trust trust. I don't have any trust with with him so I think it is a formal situation so I have used I beg your pardon because it is a very formal [way of  
A: Yeah] so I basically think I basically think that was that was a good expression I beg your pardon. Yeah you were very polite so yeah I think you did well  
L: Perfect (laughter)  
A: Alright then ok it was pretty quick and easy ehm yeah just feedback so yeah this is again a an informal situation so and so you don't have to be that polite but you were still quite and that was good I think so like you actually show that you know that it is important to me for you to come to my wedding so you were like kind of still polite in the way we can be polite with your friend you know so so I I think that was really good and I also think that it's good that whenever this is in the first time that this has happened but that whenever like you have to apologise for something or you have to discuss the situation you don't just say oh I'm sorry I cannot come to your wedding because the flight is too expensive you actually like sophisticated you actually give more reasons so the person can understand it much better than if you just said one or two sentence about like ok I can't come sorry you know so I think you did pretty well  
A: Ok so just a bit of feedback on yeah I think it was good just like the ones before you know it wasn't any anything much different ehm yeah I mean you know again it's informal situation is one of your friends you can just say sorry you don't have to use any you know more formal phrases or anything ehm yes so I think you did pretty well ehm yeah maybe can just elaborate more what I mean like I just yeah basically I mean like ehm yeah I don't know actually I I think it was good I think it was good I was just going to say something like like you could like be more enthusiastic about or something but this is just like if you had if you were to be an actor you probably had to be more enthusiastic about like  
L: (overlapping) Yeah  
A: (overlapping) Oh (unintelligible) the baby shower is so great  
L: (laughter) |
| A: but sorry I cannot go but it's gonna be wonderful you know so like like this but you know you don't have to do that it's just yeah maybe that's how eh you could have (unintelligible) |