

UNIVERSIDAD MAYOR DE SAN ANDRÉS
FACULTAD DE HUMANIDADES Y CIENCIAS DE LA
EDUCACIÓN

CARRERA DE LINGÜÍSTICA E IDIOMAS



L2 SOCIOLINGUISTIC COMPETENCE
PROBLEMS: A STUDY OF
UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT SITUATION
OF THE DEPARTMENT OF LINGUISTICS
AND LANGUAGES

Tesis para obtener el Título de Licenciatura

Por: MÓNICA ABI BARRAU VALDA
TUTOR: Mgter. FERNANDO ESPINOZA CENTELLAS

LA PAZ – BOLIVIA
Agosto, 2011

UNIVERSIDAD MAYOR DE SAN ANDRÉS

FACULTAD DE HUMANIDADES Y CIENCIAS DE LA
EDUCACIÓN

CARRERA DE LINGÜÍSTICA E IDIOMAS

Tesis de grado:

L2 SOCIOLINGUISTIC COMPETENCE PROBLEMS: A STUDY OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT SITUATION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF LINGUISTICS AND LANGUAGES

Presentada por: Univ. Mónica Abi BARRAU VALDA

Para optar al grado académico de *Licenciada en Lingüística e Idiomas,
Lenguas Extranjeras*

Nota numeral:

Nota literal:

Ha sido.....

Directora de la Carrera de Lingüística e Idiomas: Lic. Virginia Coronado

Tutor: Mgter. Fernando Espinoza Centellas

Tribunal: Lic. Roberto Quina

Tribunal: Lic. Virginia Coronado

To my parents, for teaching me the most important things in life.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am thankful to God for all the people and opportunities He used to bless my life.

Entre esas personas no pueden faltar mis papás Roxana y Joaquín, les agradezco mucho por su cariño, confianza y apoyo en toda mi vida académica y en especial por su paciencia en esta etapa que estoy terminando. También estoy muy agradecida por mis hermanas Lisa, Silvia, Nancy y Cecilia que son un ejemplo para mí, gracias por su cariño. Asimismo quiero que el resto de mi familia y amigos sepan que estoy sinceramente agradecida por su interés en mi bien, por sus oraciones y ayuda.

I am also thankful to my tutor Fernando Espinoza, for his guide, ideas, support and help in this research.

Je veux remercier aussi Silvia Parrado et Patricia Zapata pour leur aide et croire en moi dans un moment très important et spécial de ma vie. Merci beaucoup pour m'enseigner cette belle langue.

Grazie mille a tutti!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Pg.
ABSTRACT	VIII
RESUMEN	X
CHAPTER I	
PROBLEM	12
1 Problem Background	10
1.1 Problem Statement	14
1.2 Objectives	15
1.2.1 General Objective	15
1.2.2 Specific Objectives	15
1.3 Hypothesis	16
1.4 Justification	16
CHAPTER II	
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	19
2 Introduction	19
2.1 Related Research	20
2.2 Human Beings as Language Users	24
2.2.1 Human Society using Language	25
2.2.2 Language as a Social Factor	26
2.2.3 Linguistic Community	27
2.2.4 Communicative Competence	28
2.2.4.1 Linguistic Competence	31
2.2.4.2 Sociolinguistic Competence	32
2.2.4.3 Discourse Competence	33
2.2.4.4 Strategic Competence	34
2.2.5 Accuracy and Fluency	35
2.2.6 Real like Communication	36

2.2.7 Pragmatics in Linguistic Studies	37
2.2.8 Discourse Analysis	40
2.3 Model of Analysis	41
2.3.1 Politeness	42
2.3.2 Leech's Conversational Maxims	43
CHAPTER III	
METHODOLOGY	45
Methodology	45
3.1 Type of Study	45
3.2 Type of Hypothesis	45
3.3 Design	46
3.4 Population Delimitation	47
3.4.1 Analysis Unit	47
3.5 Place Delimitation	48
3.6 Activities	48
3.7 Discourse Completion Test	50
3.8 Instrument	50
3.8.1 Instrument Reliability	59
3.8.2 Instrument Validity	60
CHAPTER IV	
ANALYSIS OF DATA	62
4 Analysis of Data	62
4.1 General Considerations on the Sociolinguistic Factor	82
CHAPTER V	
CONCLUSIONS	85
5.1 Conclusions	85
5.1.1 Communicative Interference	87
5.2 Suggestions	91
5.2.1 Teaching Politeness Activities	92

APPENDIX I	
Pilot Test Results English Native Speakers	103
APPENDIX II	
Pilot Test Results Spanish Native Speaker	104
APPENDIX III	
DISCOURSE COMPLETION TEST RESULTS	106
Examples of the test	
BIBLIOGRAPHY	108

ABSTRACT

Sharyl Tanck found that “speakers who may be considered ‘fluent’ in a second language due to their mastery of the grammar and vocabulary of that language may still lack pragmatic competence; in other words, they may still be unable to produce language that is socially and culturally appropriate”. At the Universidad Mayor de Andrés, a given practise appears to support Tanck’s statement. This situation made us think of two things: How accurate or inaccurate is, from the grammatical point of view, the oral performance of non-native speakers of English (undergraduate students of English of the Department of Linguistics and Languages at UMSA), compared to their competence with regard to the adequate use of socio culturally-based utterances?” and “to what extent do these problems are interfering with the development of their overall communicative competence?

In consequence, the first part of this research endeavoured to determine if the communicative competence of these students reveals a tendency towards a concentration on the linguistic rules of the language rather than on the socio-cultural norms to communication. With this purpose in mind, we proposed to measure how ‘accurate’ the oral performances of undergraduate students are compared to the performances of native speakers, when encountering real communicative situations, as far as ‘linguistics rules’ are concerned and to measure how ‘adequate’ the oral performances of undergraduate students are compared to the performances of native speakers, when encountering real communicative situations, as far as ‘socio-cultural norms’ are concerned.

We then proposed a theoretical answer to the above queries: “The oral performance of the non-native speakers under study is fairly accurate, grammatically speaking, but inadequate or distant from the common socio-cultural norms of the target language in which specific utterances are used”.

In the theoretical background, this study concentrates on former related research. It also explains the main concepts related to the investigation and the model of analysis. This

study analyzes the presence of Leech's Politeness Principle in the discourse of English students. This analysis measures the cultural phenomenon of politeness. This principle is identified through six maxims: Tact Maxim, Generosity Maxim, Approbation Maxim, Modesty Maxim, Agreement Maxim and Sympathy Maxim.

The research model has been developed within the descriptive non-experimental design approach. We then used a Discourse Completion Test (DCT) as the instrument to collect our data from sample of subjects of 41 students of the fifth year of Linguistics and Languages (fourth+ level of English).

This DCT of fifteen tasks has been answered by three groups of people. The first one was our control group of native speakers that provided the optimal responses to the test. The second group was our sample of 41 students. A third control group was composed by Spanish speakers that answered the test in Spanish. The answers of the sample were compared to our reference of the first group. Both tests have been evaluated in relation to Leech's Maxims.

After analysing the data provided by our sample, we concluded that the language of the non-native speakers of English of the Department of Linguistics and Languages is not what should be expected. Actually, the situation appears to be a bit worse.

RESUMEN

Sharyl Tanck descubrió que “los hablantes que podrían ser considerados “fluidos” en una segunda lengua debido a su dominio de la gramática y el vocabulario de ese idioma podrían todavía carecer de competencia pragmática; en otras palabras, podrían no ser hábiles para producir un lenguaje social y culturalmente apropiado”. En la Universidad Mayor de San Andrés, pareciera que la realidad apoya la afirmación de Tanck. Esta situación nos hace pensar en dos aspectos: “¿Cuán correcto o incorrecto es, desde el punto de vista gramatical, el discurso de los hablantes no nativos de inglés (estudiantes de Inglés no graduados de la Carrera de Lingüística e Idiomas de la UMSA) en comparación con su competencia respecto al uso adecuado de enunciados socioculturales?” y “¿Cuánto afectan estos problemas al desarrollo total de su Competencia Comunicativa?”.

Consecuentemente, la primera parte de esta evaluación apunta a determinar si la competencia comunicativa de estos estudiantes revela una tendencia hacia la concentración en las reglas gramaticales del idioma en vez de en las normas socioculturales de comunicación. Con este propósito en mente, proponemos medir cuán “correctas” son las realizaciones de los estudiantes de pregrado en comparación con las realizaciones de hablantes nativos, cuando se encuentran en situaciones comunicativas reales, en cuanto a las “reglas gramaticales” se refiere y medir cuán “adecuadas” son los discursos de los estudiantes de pregrado en comparación con los discursos de hablantes nativos, cuando se encuentran en situaciones comunicativas, en referencia a las “normas socioculturales”.

Entonces proponemos una respuesta teórica a estas interrogantes: “La realización oral de los hablantes no nativos bajo estudio es bastante correcta, a nivel gramatical, pero inadecuada o distante de las normas socioculturales comunes de la lengua meta en que se usa enunciados específicos.”

En el marco teórico, este estudio se concentra en investigaciones previas relacionadas a la presente. Esto también explica los conceptos principales relacionados a la investigación y el modelo de análisis aplicado. Este estudio analiza la presencia del Principio de Cortesía de Geoffrey Leech en el discurso de los estudiantes de Inglés. Este análisis mide el fenómeno cultural de la cortesía. Este principio está identificado mediante seis máximas: La Máxima de Tacto, Máxima de Generosidad, Máxima de Aprobación, Máxima de Modestia, Máxima de Acuerdo y Máxima de Simpatía.

El modelo de investigación ha sido desarrollado dentro del diseño descriptivo no experimental. Luego usamos una Prueba Conclusiva de Discurso (Discourse Completion Test) como instrumento para coleccionar la información de nuestra muestra conformada por 41 individuos, estudiantes del quinto año de la Carrera de Lingüística e Idiomas (Cuarto nivel de Inglés).

Esta prueba de quince preguntas ha sido respondida por tres grupos de personas. El primer grupo fue nuestro grupo de control formado por hablantes nativos que nos dotaron de respuestas óptimas para la prueba. El Segundo grupo fue nuestra muestra de cuarenta y un estudiantes. Un tercer grupo fue un grupo de control compuesto por hispanohablantes que respondieron a la prueba en Español. Las respuestas de la muestra fueron comparadas con nuestra referencia del primer grupo. Ambas pruebas han sido evaluadas en relación a las Máximas de Geoffrey Leech.

Después de analizar la información provista por nuestra muestra, hemos concluído que el lenguaje de los hablantes no nativos de Inglés de la Carrera de Lingüística e Idiomas no es como se espera. En realidad, la situación aparenta ser peor.

CHAPTER I

PROBLEM

1 Problem Background

What is to learn a language? This is probably a question most people attempt to answer at the time of deciding to study a second or foreign language. Learning a language, in general, implies to be able to do some specific things with it, among other things, to speak, to listen, to read, and to write. However, from the *academic* point of view, learning a language actually involves much more than this. In fact, what it means is that learning a language consists of developing a suitable level of Communicative Competence.

According to the Encyclopedic Dictionary of Applied Linguistics, ‘Communicative Competence is the knowledge which enables someone to use a language effectively and the actual ability to use this knowledge for communication’¹. Increasing this competence is the main objective of a foreign language course. Therefore, at the end of an English course, it is expected that students will be competent enough to communicate. As Hymes would say, students will have both “knowledge of rules of grammar and rules of language use appropriate to a given context”².

In this context, recent research in Sociolinguistics and Second Language Acquisition has shown, in general, that L2 learners tend to have more difficulty in acquiring the rules for communicating appropriately in the target language than in learning the rules to form

¹ Edited by JOHNSON Keith and JOHNSON Helen, “Encyclopaedic Dictionary of Applied Linguistics”, Blackwell, 1999

² HYMES Dell, “On Communicative Competence”, 1972

grammatically correct expressions. Sharyl Tanck³ found, for example, that “speakers who may be considered 'fluent' in a second language due to their mastery of the grammar and vocabulary of that language may still lack pragmatic competence; in other words, they may still be unable to produce language that is socially and culturally appropriate”.

Although the information about syntax, phonology and morphology that students receive is a very important resource, it is true that they also need to know the appropriate contextual use of this resource. As Gabriele Kasper says, Pragmatic Competence “is a type of knowledge that learners possess, develop, acquire, use or lose. The challenge for foreign or second language teaching is whether we can arrange learning opportunities in such a way that they benefit the development of pragmatic competence in L2”⁴.

At the Department of Linguistics and Languages of the Universidad Mayor de San Andres in Bolivia, the situation appears to support Tanck’s statement; given that the majority of the students do exhibit problems in developing L2 socio-linguistic competence.

For example, some students would greet their teachers saying ‘hi teacher, how are you?’ probably trying to be kind and familiar, without considering that greeting a teacher requires culturally a formal register. Or, in a different situation, for example, to get the attention of one’s mother or father saying ‘Hey! Here...’ this expresses a bad attitude or misunderstanding of the usual social proprieties. Some other time, some students were greeted “hello, how are you doing?” and they gave answers like: “I’m work”, “I’m a student”, etc. showing communicative incompetence at a basic level.

3 TANCK Sharyl, “Speech Act Sets of Refusal and Complaint: A comparison of Native and Non-native English Speakers’ Production”

4 KASPER Gabriele, “Can Pragmatic Competence be Taught?”, Second Language Teaching & Curriculum Center, University of Hawaii’s, 1997

Within this context, undergraduate students⁵ of English of the Department of Linguistics and Languages at UMSA⁶, towards the end of their career, appear not to have developed sufficiently their Communicative Competence. Although it is true that they are able to speak, to listen, to read, and to write to a certain extent, even to teach the new learned language, many of them are only partially able to express thoughts which are socio-linguistically acceptable and contextually adequate, particularly in some socio-culturally bound settings which are less common, that is, weddings, funerals, games, and the like.

It all seems to show that these students have basically learned the new language developing more on the formal level, without sufficiently developing knowledge that explains how cultural behavior realizes such linguistic competence.

Under these circumstances, we now proceed to propose the following research question.

1.1 Problem Statement

- How accurate or inaccurate is, from the grammatical point of view, the oral performance of non-native speakers of English (undergraduate students of English of the Department of Linguistics and Languages at UMSA), compared to their competence with regard to the adequate use of socio culturally-based utterances?

⁵ Students who have finished the academic program of the career, but have not presented their academic grade dissertations.

⁶ Universidad Mayor de San Andrés at La Paz, Bolivia

- To what extent do these problems are interfering with the development of their overall communicative competence?

1.2 Objectives

1.2.1 General Objective

- To determine if the communicative competence of the undergraduate students of English of the Department of Linguistics and Languages at UMSA reveals a tendency towards a concentration on the linguistic rules of the language rather than on the socio-cultural norms of communication.

1.2.2 Specific Objectives

- ◊ To measure how "accurate" the oral performances of undergraduate students are compared to the performances of native speakers, when encountering real communicative situations, as far as "linguistics rules" are concerned.
- ◊ To measure how "adequate" the oral performances of undergraduate students are compared to the performances of native speakers, when encountering real communicative situations, as far as "socio-cultural norms" are concerned.

1.2 Hypothesis

- H₁: The oral performance of the non-native speakers under study is fairly accurate, grammatically speaking, but inadequate or distant from the common socio-cultural norms of the target language in which specific utterances are used.

Because the present research is descriptive in origin, it is not compulsory to propose a hypothesis (See 3.2). Nevertheless, we think it will be of significant benefit to propose a descriptive hypothesis in order to visualize the behavior of the two independent **variables** considered in this study: 1) the level of accuracy and 2) the level of cultural appropriateness.

1.4 Justification

In order to justify the development of the present research study, some criteria from Hernandez Sampieri[1] are set to be used. These criteria are related to the convenience of the study in its social relevance and its methodological usefulness.

Convenience

Education is a dynamic process. The methods, strategies, techniques and instruments change all the time. People also change, the students are influenced by media, they have access to a variety of new technology, etc. At the same time, the languages are evolving little by little.

At the Department of Linguistics and Languages, the students are being trained to teach languages, translate and do research. Consequently, they need to be communicatively

competent in order to be able to do that. But, as it was mentioned before, it seems that they are not. The comments and reflection of some students of the department makes us think about an inquiry of the obstacles students confront when developing themselves to become competent in communicating in an L2, particularly, with regard to the sociolinguistic aspect. Therefore, *the answers resulting from this research are expected to be useful to modify the current teaching - learning processes, in order to arrange learning opportunities for the future students, according to the actual needs and situations.*

Social relevance

The benefit of training communicative competent language teachers and translators is personal and social. *The benefit is personal because the L2 speakers are expected to communicate with native speakers correctly on a good base of sociolinguistic knowledge, of course, as an end result.* As Broersma⁷ says:

Good sociolinguistic skills in a second language are important because, if you make serious mistakes in this type of competence, people will not simply think that you are ignorant (which they may think if you have poor grammar); rather, they will think that you are ill-mannered, dishonest, insincere, rude, pushy, and what's so ever. If your grammar is excellent, you will be judged all the more severely for sociolinguistic gaffes. Misunderstandings result in amusement, contempt, disappointment, shock, bewilderment, serious insult, or ethnic stereotypes.

On the other hand *the social benefit of training linguists on sociolinguistic competence will be that future English students of the current undergraduate students will receive useful instruction.* They will have the motivation of learning something actually

⁷ BROERSMA David, "How do I learn sociolinguistic competence?", The Institute for Cross-Cultural Training, 2001

functional and the objective of teaching a language for communication will be achieved at the university as well as in classrooms outside the university.

Methodological usefulness

Another profit that justifies the development of this research is that *the methodology used to obtain the information can be applied to future research studies so as to evaluate the progress that the Department of Linguistics and Languages would probably have.*

There is a lot of work to do to prepare more communicative competent professionals and to go deeper onto the study of pragmatics and this paper is just a step on that direction.

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2 Introduction

This section of the research is going to show the collected information which is necessary to understand the problem explained above. Consequently, the first part of this chapter concentrates on former related research carried out so far. The second part is dedicated to the main concepts of the study, which are necessary to help the reader understand the research and the description of language use to be done. Finally, which is probably the most important part; we explain the model of analysis which is going to be used to answer our research question.

Part 1: A lot of research on politeness has been carried out by distinct researchers, but three of them appear to be the most representative of all. The first one is a good methodological example of politeness research carried out by Sheryl Tank. The second one supports our observation about the lack of pragmatics instruction in formal English teaching, which means that in the process of teaching contents skills, and thinking in structured English program, it is required more practice (Professor Antonio José Bacelar Da Silva). The third one highlights the relevance of language education focused on communicative competence. It was developed in China by Wilma O'Sullivan.

Part 2: The section on the anthropological background introduces the reader into the context of how human beings live in society, how important language is, how language functions with socio-cultural norms, and how studies on linguistics approach this phenomenon. In it, Communicative Competence and its sub-competences: Linguistic,

Socio-linguistic, Discourse and Strategic Competence are going to be explained in detail and in relation to our study objectives.

Part 3: This section focuses on what politeness is and the basic concepts needed to handle a good understanding of Communicative Competence, in this precise case, of the English language. Politeness is concerned with language use, say, pragmatics, and so it is important to carry out discourse analysis on the object of study in order to accomplish our study objectives. It is important for the reader to understand that this study is developed in the Pragmatics' field. As he would know, it is still there the discussion about the difference between Pragmatics and Sociolinguistics, if they are the same or if one is part of the other. We do not expect to solve that problem through this research, but we just decided to frame this research into Pragmatics. The correspondent concepts are developed in the third part of this research. Pragmatics studies, among others, Politeness and Communicative Competence. This competence is subdivided or composed by four competences. One of them is the Sociolinguistic Competence some authors call it Pragmatic Competence. In this research we are going to refer to this competence as Sociolinguistic Competence like Canale and Swain do.

2.1 Related Research

One important research study is “Speech Act sets of refusal and complaint: A Comparison of Native and Non-Native English Speakers' Production”. The author, Sheryl Tank, says that “speakers who may be considered 'fluent' in a second language may still lack pragmatic competence in spite of their mastery of the grammar and

vocabulary of that language; in other words, they may still be unable to produce language that is socially and culturally appropriate.”⁸

Besides that, the referred document shows the differences between native and non-native English speakers’ production of refusals and complaints. Comparatively, in the present study, native and non-native production is compared in a wider range, not only analyzing speech acts but the application of conversational maxims in different real-like situations. Tank shows in her paper what other studies exhibited comparing native and non-native refusals. In relation to the method, we did something similar to what Tank did: to compare the pragmatic competence of adult EFL speakers with that of adult native English speakers when performing the speech acts of complaints and refusals. All participants were given Discourse Completion Tests (DCT) wherein they were asked to write their responses to six prompts, representing the two speech acts and two distracters. In our study, similarly, again, we used a DCT to elicit the data. We make the comparison between native and non-native speakers. Tank set baseline responses from the responses of native English speakers. Each of the non-native English-speaking subjects of Tank's research had studied English in a formal ESL or EFL setting for at least one year. Subjects were asked to participate in the study in person by the researcher, and then they completed an Informed Consent, a Demographic Survey and the DCT. They answered the DCT by writing what their oral response would be.

Another interesting research is the one of Antonio José Bacelar Da Silva, “The Effects of Instruction on Pragmatic Development: Teaching Polite Refusals in English”. This study from the University of Hawaii attempted to find out whether relatively explicit instruction may facilitate L2 pragmatic development, and the most appropriate and

⁸ TANK Sharyl, “*Speech Act Sets of Refusal and Complaint: A comparison of native and non-native English Speakers’ Production*”, TESL 523 Second Language Acquisition, American University, Washington, DC, 2002

effective ways to deliver pragmatic information to L2 learners⁹. Adopting a pre-test/post-test design with treatment and control groups, it incorporated meta-pragmatic awareness into task-based methodological principles in its instructional treatment in order to teach the socio-pragmatic and pragma-linguistic components of the speech act of refusals. What called our attention about this paper is that it analyzes something that is missing in our language formal instruction. About the methodology, it has not been applied a pre-test/pos-test design because this study is only intended to describe a reality and not to propose yet a method to change it.

Wilma O'Sullivan made a study on *Politeness Teaching to English learners in China*¹⁰. She says that language is a reflection of culture and accepted cultural norms. She adds that polite conduct and interaction are inseparable in culture.

“Accepted norms of behavior and linguistic appropriateness in one culture are not necessarily acceptable in another culture. What is considered polite in one society may be considered impolite in another. When learning a second language such as English and wishing not only to achieve Linguistic Competence but also Communicative Competence, people need the function of cultural awareness in teaching and learning. With the wide spread of English in China more and more people are acquiring Linguistic Competence however teaching Communicative Competence is lacking in politeness”. O’Sullivan, pg. 1

This work shows again that the difficulty to exercise on Communicative Competence is a usual problem and we need to change it. Something that the study detected is that examination results are only a minor factor that has led to impolite use of English in that

⁹ BACELAR DA SILVA Antonio, “The effects of instruction on pragmatic development: teaching polite Refusals in English”, University of Hawaii

¹⁰ O’SULLIVAN Wilma, “A Study on Politeness teaching to English Learners in China”, The International Journal of Language Society and Culture, University of Tasmania

country. A major factor proved by O'Sullivan, is that (Chinese) teachers and learners do not realize that language is a part of culture that reflects it; they think that learning a language is just to learn the language system. When they admitted the problem, they shifted towards Communicative Competence in English learning and teaching, taking into account the culture and context awareness in language acquisition to be able to produce appropriate polite intercourses.

The author also shows some examples of transfer that Chinese students do from Chinese to English, demonstrating linguistic competence and lack of sociolinguistic competence:

Example 1 (pg. 2)

Greeting

- a. Hey, where are you going?
- b. Hey, where have you been?
- c. Hey, what are you doing?
- d. Hey, what are you up to?

A, b, c and d are direct transfers from Chinese and are often used by English learners as greetings.

English has become the lingua franca and is used with many variations. As a result it is important for English learners to be aware that they will not always be communicating with native speakers. Therefore clear polite use of the English language will play an important role in communicative understanding with other language learners and will also help to avoid communicative misunderstanding. It is important to cultivate in English students openness to new and challenging ideas in the language classroom demonstrating respect, understanding and acceptance of different cultural points of view. That will help to shape their sociolinguistic competence. In sum, O'Sullivan says that politeness cannot be separated from culture and appropriate norms. This is a clear indication of the importance of cultural and context awareness in teaching and learning

English. If the aim of language learning is Communicative Competence –the language learner can function effectively and appropriately in the target language-, then culture and context awareness must play a main role in language teaching.

2.2 Human Beings as Language Users

A look at the anthropological background is important in this study because the treatment of politeness takes place in the context of human behavior. Anthropology is a comprehensive study of human beings and our interactions with each other and the environment¹¹. Linguistics and Anthropology are also related. A branch of this science is Anthropological Linguistics which seeks the relationship between language and culture, the social uses of language, the variation in language across time and space and processes of human communication. It has its own subfields: descriptive linguistics, historical linguistics, ethno linguistics and sociolinguistics. The two last catch our particular interest because they are respectively focused on the relationship between language and culture and the study of the social functions of language.

One of the particularities of human beings is the ability of communication through linguistic system. We need to understand the language users and the rules they have for interacting. In this work, one of our concerns is the use of socio-cultural norms of language. These norms are "people rules". As Mey says (pg. 215), "they belong to societies, rather than to sciences, practitioners. In other words, conversational rules are rules of discourse, in the widest sense of the term". These rules are learned by people naturally or through a formal process: Naturally while growing up, when being taught by relatives, when observing and imitating behaviors; and formally when the learning process is framed on a program.

¹¹ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anthropology>

2.2.1 Human society using Language

Human beings always try to express themselves and exchange ideas with other individuals. We act in social structures formed by groups, from families to nations and international communities or societies. The interaction produced the recognition of values, rituals, hierarchies and social norms which differentiates human societies among themselves. Society from Latin *societas* is the union of persons, families, peoples and nations¹². This relation is built so as to accomplish, through mutual cooperation, the aims of life.

In these groups, humans interact with each other developing economic, cultural, religious and professional activities, in one word, their whole life. Through the history, intellectuals have focused their interest on diverse branches of knowledge from different points of view as economics, politics, philosophy, etc.

Our focus now is going to be directed to politeness, because this aspect is important in any society groups. Even when politeness is not fundamental to society constitution, it has a great importance for the relational quality. There are hierarchies to respect, particular positions and situations with appropriate expressions to use considering all of them. For example: a General is greeted by other military personnel of lower range because of his high position in a specific organization. The same man changes his hierarchical position in a familiar context and he/she will probably have to show respect towards his/her parents because the situation has changed. To ignore these changes and situations can end up in an L2 Sociolinguistic Competence problem.

Because of this social interaction, there are rules in constant change, which allow the participants to be adapted to new personal realizations. Therefore, most of the societies

¹² SOPENA Enciclopedia Universal, Vol. VIII, Ramon Sopena Editorial, S.A. 1977, pg. 8107

have conventional constructions based on individual behavior, and the L2 students need to acquire the knowledge of these constructions.

2.2.2 Language as a social factor

A language is a particular kind of system for encoding and decoding information. Languages are not inventions or discoveries; on the contrary, they are the organized expression of ideas of the different cultures around the world. They are acquired unconsciously and progressively while the child is in contact with other people, most of the time relatives. As languages reflect social thoughts, we can understand social schemas while analyzing language use. That is what a foreign language speaker needs to do: to get the differences between languages in order to find a place in the new society, without getting disturbed. For example, in Aymara, people do not have an expression to say ‘thanks’, they borrowed an equivalent from Spanish because of their geographic proximity. If the Aymara learner or someone in contact with Aymara people understands this cultural characteristic, he will not be disappointed when expecting a gratitude expression.

“Since every people is a People, it has its own national culture expressed through its own language”

Herder

So, when dealing with language learning, it is a must to pay attention to these factors of language to language difference so that learners are aware of what is or is not available in the L2.

2.2.3 Linguistic Community

The previous analysis forces us to accept the fact that not all people speak the same language around the world. There are a lot of different groups of people and languages with their own culture and therefore their own politeness rules.

Therefore, a linguistic community is many times, not always, equivalent to an ethnic group which shares a common language to communicate. Many of these communities can be spread in many different countries and be also subdivided into sub communities with regional variations. For example, English is spoken by around three hundred million of speakers but there are important differences between them, for example, British people speak differently from African people.

Gumperz (1962/71:101) defines 'linguistic community' as "a social group which may be either mono-lingual or multilingual, held together by frequency of social interaction patterns and set off from the surrounding areas by weaknesses in the lines of communication". As a purely social concept, he says that it "may consist of small groups bound together by face-to-face contact or may cover large regions, depending on the level of abstraction we wish to achieve."¹³

The linguistic unity of speech communities lies in shared linguistic practices and evaluations. The shared attitudes and evaluations in a community are most clearly evidenced by common directions of style shifting. Although rarely explicitly stated, the conventional practice in sociolinguistic research is to assume that linguistic constraint effects are stable across different speech styles. However, given that different speech

¹³ Mentioned by PATRICK Peter, <http://courses.essex.ac.uk/lg/lg232/SpeechComDefs.html>, 1999

communities can show distinct constraint effects, the possibility arises when some speakers appear to command different dialects (or registers), with dissimilar constraint effects, and alternate among them in appropriate social circumstances¹⁴. This shifting from register to register is learnt as required but there exists a standard of language. A student of English needs to know the basic socio-linguistic norms but a professional in English needs to know the standard norms and be able to interact shifting his register according to the socio-cultural norms considered necessary in each situation.

2.2.4. Communicative Competence

As mentioned in the problem statement, there are socio-cultural norms of communication problems that English students of the Department of Linguistics and Languages appear to encounter when using and responding to language and we question the extent of interference that these pitfalls may cause on their communication activity, say, their Communicative Competence.

Communicative Competence is the knowledge which enables someone to use a language effectively and their actual ability to use this knowledge for communication. The term is most usually attributed to Dell Hymes's paper "On Communicative Competence" (1970) He distinguishes four components of Communicative Competence: knowledge of what is possible, feasible, appropriate and actually done. In an important reinterpretation, which is generally accepted nowadays, Canale and Swain (1980) alternatively propose three sub-competences: grammatical, sociolinguistic (comprising socio-cultural and Discourse Competence), and Strategic Competence¹⁵.

¹⁴ LIM Lauren and GUY Gregory, *The Limits of Linguistic Community: Speech Styles and Variable Constraint Effects*, <http://homepages.nyu.edu/~l2219/Lim&GuyNWAV32.pdf>

¹⁵ ENCYCLOPEDIA OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS, <http://www.blackwellreference.com/public/tocnode?query=communicative+competence&widen>

Language teaching is based on the idea that the goal of language acquisition is Communicative Competence, which is the ability to use the language correctly and appropriately to accomplish communication goals. These goals come one after the other, all the time second language learners need to be ready to reach this goal in the second language, just the way they do it in their mother tongue. In our mother language, we learn it practicing every day, making mistakes, trying again until having good results. Similarly, it is necessary to do all that to learn and acquire a second language.

Rini Ekayati¹⁶, in a more descriptive approach to what is involved in Communicative Competence; propose that the following are essentially the components of communication that go into the building up of the Communicative Competence:

- A. Linguistic Knowledge and the Para-linguistic Cues:
 - i. Verbal elements (sentences, clauses, phrases, etc.)
 - ii. Non-verbal elements (aspects of communicative behavior, such as: facial expression, body movement, eye gaze, gestures, proximity, etc.)
 - iii. Elements of discourse and their organization in connective speech and writing.
 - iv. Range of possible variants (possible variations and their organizations).
 - v. Meaning of variants to a particular situation.

=1&result_number=1&from=search&fuzzy=0&type=std&id=g9780631214823_chunk_g97806312148237_ss1-38&slop=1

¹⁶ EKAYATI Rini, *Linguistics and Communicative Competence*, The Indonesian Student Association in India Press, 2007

B. Interaction Skills:

- i. Norms of interaction and interpretation
- ii. Strategies for achieving desired goals
- iii. Perception of features (verbal as well as non-verbal) in communication situation (situation of communication)
- iv. Understanding appropriateness in any given situation

C. Cultural knowledge

- i. Social structure
- ii. Values and attitudes
- iii. Cognitive scheme (verbal as well as non verbal) and the cultural transmission processes

When we imagine a professional in language, we expect that this person is communicatively competent. In this respect, what we may find is that the undergraduate students of the Linguistics and Languages Department at UMSA do not count with that competence, at least, not on this expected level. That is why, in our hypothesis, we propose that the studied population may be grammatically accurate, which means that they are linguistically competent; but socio-linguistically inadequate.

Thus, although our main concern is with linguistic competence and pragmatic competence, regarded from the Communicative Competence theory point of view, it is well-known that in actual speech it is impossible to separate the four competencies, because there is always something involved from every competence when producing communicative utterances. Let us then look at in more details what these four competencies actually involve.

2.2.4.1 Linguistic Competence

As John Phillips and Chrissie Tan say “Linguistic Competence defines the system of rules that governs an individuals’ tacit understanding of what is acceptable and what is not in the language they speak”¹⁷. Linguistic Competence is a term created by Noam Chomsky in 1956 which refers to the system of linguistic knowledge that makes possible for speakers to produce and understand an infinite number of sentences in their language, and to distinguish grammatical sentences from ungrammatical sentences. It is referred to the knowledge of a language as system rather to its use.

In 1966, Dell Hymes coined another term "grammatical competence", in disagreement with the grammatical competence vs. performance competence proposed by Chomsky. Grammatical competence involves, from Hymes' point of view, knowledge which is not enough to help participate effectively in communicative situations; instead, he proposes an ethnographic exploration of communicative competence which includes "communicative form and function in integral relation to each other"¹⁸

As Linguistic (or Grammatical) Competence is integrally related to the other three sub-competences, next we will see how is it complemented with Sociolinguistic Competence.

¹⁷ PHILLIPS John, TAN Chrissie, *Linguistic Competence*, The Literary Encyclopedia, <http://litencyc.com/php/stopics.php?rec=true&UID=208>

¹⁸ HYMES, D.H., “Two Types of Linguistic Relativity”, 1996 in BRIGHT, W., (ed) “Sociolinguistics”, pp. 114-158, The Hague: Mouton

2.2.4.2 Sociolinguistic Competence

Sociolinguistic Competence is the ability to interpret the social meaning of the choice of linguistic varieties and to use language with the appropriate social meaning for the communication situation. Even in one's first language the process of acquiring Sociolinguistic Competence is challenging. "Having good Sociolinguistic Competence means to know how to give every person his or her due. Good sociolinguistic skills in a second language are important because if the speaker makes serious mistakes in this type of competence, people will not simply think that *he* is ignorant rather they will think that *he* is ill-mannered."¹⁹ Socio-linguistic Competence includes the rules and conventions for using language items in context and other factors like attitudes, values, and motivation.

Socio-cultural Competence is the knowledge of the relation of language use to its non-linguistic context. It is for example the ability of a person who has a medical appointment and knows how to address the staff at the doctor's office: if they will require a person to get naked or not, the kind of medication the doctor would recommend ("western" medicine would be strange to people from other sides of the world), the terms that would be used (some words would be considered vulgar), etc. People would also say that it is not a situation of every day, so we can mention that a socio-linguistically competent person should be able to express apologies, disappointment, to offer and accept things and favors, to greet people considering age and position, etc. But, as it is mentioned in the first chapter, it seems that undergraduate

¹⁹ BROERSMA David, "How do I learn sociolinguistic competence?", Institute for Cross-Cultural Training, <http://www.wheaton.edu/bgc/ICCT/slars/FAQ9.html>

students of Linguistics and Languages appear not to have developed sufficiently their communicative competence, including Sociolinguistic Competence.

When we talk about the need of future linguists of being socio-linguistically competent and in general to count with Communicative Competence, we mean that they should be able to act in different speech events with native English speakers and non-native speakers. But, as we think that level has not been achieved yet, our objective is to determine if the communicative competence of the undergraduate students of English of the department of Linguistics and Languages at UMSA reveals a tendency towards a concentration on the linguistic rules of the language rather than on the socio-cultural norms of communication. They must know the cultural characteristics and differences between cultures in order to use the right words in the right moment. That is the minimum we can expect from language professionals.

2.2.4.3 Discourse Competence

Discourse Competence is a term coined by Canale and Swain in 1980 to refer to a speaker's knowledge of rules governing the combination of utterances and communicative functions in discourse. It is the knowledge of rules governing cohesion and coherence.

The term discourse is, many times, used to refer to conversational interaction, so that discourse competence could also refer to the ability to participate effectively in conversations. Learning a language involves learning how to relate different types of discourse in such a way that hearers or readers can understand the idea and identify what

is important.”²⁰ Of course, all teachers are supposed to have developed discourse competence in order to teach a foreign language properly, but it seems that their learners, at the Department of Linguistics and Languages, are not getting all the information, therefore at the time of using the language in an Anglophonic context, they tend to fail.

2.2.4.4 Strategic Competence

Strategic Competence is the knowledge of how to use one’s language to communicate an intended meaning. Faerch and Kasper (1983) define communication strategies as “potentially conscious plans for solving what to an individual presents itself as a problem in reaching a particular communicative goal”. Foreign language learners may develop competence in grammar, discourse and strategy, but all are important in developing communicative competence²¹. A strategy implies a plan. As language is very dynamic, one needs to develop the competence of knowing what to say and how to act in determined situations and the ability to react appropriately in unexpected situations. Tarone mentions that there are two aspects of Strategic Competence that should be considered: “the overall skill of the foreign language learner in successfully conveying information to a listener and the ability of the learner to use communication strategies when problems are encountered in the process of conveying information”. She also sets out the following criteria as characteristic of a communication strategy:²²

²⁰

<http://www.sil.org/lingualinks/languagelearning/otherresources/gudlnsfralnggandeltrlrnngrpm/whatisdiscoursecompetencetextu.htm>

²¹ TARONE Elaine, Teaching Strategic Competence in the Foreign Language Classroom, 1983, http://eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2sql/content_storage_01/0000019b/80/34/92/54.pdf

²² TARONE Elaine, Teaching Strategic Competence in the Foreign Language Classroom, 1983, pg. 5

1. A speaker desires to communicate a meaning x to a listener.
2. The speaker believes the linguistic or sociolinguistic structure designed to communicate meaning x is unavailable, or is not shared with the listener.
3. The speaker chooses to do one of the following:
 - a. avoid, that is, not attempt to communicate meaning x , or
 - b. Attempt alternate means to communicate meaning x . The speaker stops trying alternatives when it seems clear to the speaker that there is shared meaning.

2.2.5 Accuracy and Fluency

As discussed above, communicative competence is rather a broad matter that resembles intricate processes occurring simultaneously. As such, we have considered rather impractical to try to study the whole communicative competence to identify the oral performance of the students under study. Therefore, two practical indicators that appear to help better the study are the so-called communication factors known as "accuracy" and "fluency"

People from all over the world learn English in order to communicate with each other. Accuracy and fluency are two factors which can determine the success of English language students in the future. Accuracy is the ability to produce correct sentences using correct grammar and vocabulary. It is relative to the particular characteristics of the speaker as age, education, etc. On the other hand, fluency is the ability to read, speak, or write easily and expressively. In other words, the speaker can read and respond in a language clearly and concisely while relating meaning and context. The

aspect of fluency generally increases as the learners progress from beginning to advanced readers and writers²³.

Accuracy and fluency should not be understood independently one from the other or as opposites. In the case of second language learners those aspects will reveal the level of education that they received. If the students are not accurate speaking this foreign language in a real context, they will be hardly comprehended by their interlocutors. The opposite would mean that they are fluent because fluency in English teaching focuses on the meaning and context, rather than on grammar.

In our hypothesis, it is stated that undergraduate students of English of the Department of Linguistics and Languages have a fairly good grammatical knowledge, but, that some problems related to the socio-cultural norms of the language arise. Their accuracy on English would not guarantee their fluency and Socio-linguistic Competence. Therefore, if this hypothesis is positive, these students would not be communicatively competent.

How would anybody express himself correctly without a good or regular grammar? After all, a good non native speaker will be able to speak in different situations only with enough grammar and socio-cultural appropriateness.

2.2.6 Real-like communication

Speech situations and speech events are culturally determined. In the process of learning a language, learners learn how to use it in order to do certain things that people do with that language. A socially realistic linguistics tries to account for these patterns. It is not concerned with idealized speakers, but with “persons in the real social world”.

²³ ICAL WIKI web page, http://www.icalweb.com/wiki/index.php?title=Accuracy_vs_Fluency

Thus, in order to be communicatively competent, the speaker should know what is formally possible in a language; what is feasible in the language concerned; what is appropriate according to the socio-cultural setting; what is technically known as attestedness and the collocations; and how to interpret paralanguage, understand pragmatic intention and distinguish different genres²⁴.

Real-like communication must be taught and practiced by foreign language students because whenever people speak, they organize their speech in ways over and above those governed by rules of grammar, as we have seen before. Choices as to which language to use in a particular social situation, how to address an interlocutor, whether to delete or add sounds to words, whether to speak or remain silent, are not in free variation; but are patterned according to rules which are part of the social knowledge of a particular community.

2.2.7 Pragmatics in Linguistic Studies

According to Jacob Mey, “Pragmatics is the study of the conditions of human language uses as these are determined by the context of society”²⁵. Similarly, for David Crystal, “Pragmatics studies the factors that govern our choice of language in social interaction and the effects of our choice on others.” These imply that every social group, every linguistic community has rules at many levels, and those determine the language use. In language, these rules are distinguished by politeness conventions and its expressions.

²⁴ TORABI Mohammad, *Linguistics and Ethnography of Communication*, Journal of Faculty of Letters and Humanities N°190, http://www.sid.ir/en/VEWSSID/J_pdf/874200419003.pdf, pg. 3

²⁵ MEY Jacob L., *Pragmatics (an introduction)*, Blackwell, 1996, pg. 42

To study pragmatics means to be occupied on the linguistic use²⁶. Pragmatics is a discipline that studies linguistic acts and the context where they occur. As a branch and activity of Linguistics, it studies the contextual adaptation and interaction among the speaker, the hearer and the world where the speech acts happens. Sometimes, while studying, we could forget the social function of language.

It is important to remember that people use language to search for acceptance and reaffirm their ethnic characteristics. For example, when someone writes, he needs to be sure that people is going to understand what has been written, to make sure that the message has been accepted; or when a foreign person emphasizes on his/her accent in order to communicate without words.

A simplified way of thinking about pragmatics is to recognize, for example, that language needs to be kept interesting. Humans strive to find linguistic means to make a text, perhaps, shorter, more interesting, more relevant, more purposeful or more personal; pragmatics allows this.²⁷

The study of Pragmatics includes felicity conditions, conversational maxims, speech act theory and politeness²⁸. In this research the six Conversational Maxims of Geoffrey Leech are used to measure the Communicative Competence, making emphasis on the pragmatic aspects, of the English Students of the Department of Linguistics and Languages.

²⁶ BERTUCELLI Marcella, *Qué es la Pragmática*, Paidós, 1st. Spanish Edition, 1996, pg. 71

²⁷ CAMPSALL Steve

²⁸ MOORE Andrew, 2001, <http://www.shunsley.eril.net/armoore/>

As pragmatics means to work on the linguistic use, we need to remember the basic concepts of *langue-parole*. *Langue* or language is the linguistic system that peoples use for communicating. *Parole* is characterized by Ferdinand de Saussure as an individual act of will and intelligence in which it is important to distinguish²⁹:

- The combinations of the language code that the speaker uses to express its own thoughts;
- The psychophysical mechanism that allows the speaker the mentioned combinations.

The *langue* is necessary to make the *parole* understandable and produce all its effects. In addition, Coseriu considers that the analysis of the locutive activity cannot do without the social activity of language³⁰. It means that *langue* and *parole* are interrelated and they need each other. Students learn in classes the language and teachers should help them to behave right in its individual way with social norms. Coseriu introduces an intermediate level of abstraction and formalization between the concrete characteristics of the observed objects and their functional characteristics: it is the level of norm, the one of the isoglosses which meets the different phenomena of *parole* in its manifestations as individual realizations recognized as part of a language.

Assuming as fundamental pragmatic components a) the speaker subjects about his relation with the receiver, b) the concrete situation in which the interaction happens and c) how much it is intended to modify one of the two first conditions, Lakoff proposes the existence of a pragmatic component essentially constituted by two rules: 1. to be clear

²⁹ BERTUCELLI Marcella, “Qué es la Pragmática”, Paidós, 1st. Spanish Edition, 1996, pg. 73

³⁰ BERTUCELLI Marcella, “Qué es la Pragmática”, Paidós, 1st. Spanish Edition, 1996, pg. 77

and 2. To be polite; the second one prevails over the first one and is articulated in the following rules³¹:

1. Do not impose yourself
2. Offer alternatives
3. Contribute to your interlocutor comfort –be friendly—

2.2.8 Discourse Analysis

Discourse Analysis is best described as the study of speech and texts. It is close related to Pragmatics as it analyses language in use. In this case in particular we need to know and use Discourse Analysis in order to identify possible socio-cultural drawbacks and their effects that English students may encounter when speaking this foreign language.

Discourse Analysis was born in the 1960's and 1970's decades from disciplines such as Linguistics, Anthropology, Semiotics, and Sociology, etc. Discourse research offers routes into the study of meanings of social actions³². This discipline is focused on the study of structures above the sentence level, developing theories to describe the components of utterances; because studying only linguistic matters is not enough. Discourse has power and influence on recipients. This explains that language is a part of a social strait.

³¹ BERTUCELLI Marcella, "Qué es la Pragmática", Paidós, 1st. Spanish Edition, 1996, pg. 95

³² WITHERELL Margaret, TAYLOR Stephanie and YEATES Simeon, *Discourse as Data: A guide for analysis*, SAGE Publications, London

Sociolinguistics opposes the knowledge for the linguistic system, that is the Speech in the Saussures conception; to the situational use knowledge where many factors as channel, speakers' status and time-space context. This branch of Linguistics shows that the world follows some codes, social rules where the knowledge makes part of the "Communicative Competence" opposite to the "Linguistic Competence". We learn about the difference between *knowing* and *knowing doing*.

Traditionally the degree of proficiency is described in terms of the mastery of "structures" (phonology, morpho-syntax, and lexicon of the target language). Even so, it is not adequate for those who want to use the language rather than knowing about it.

There are many methods and instruments to analyze discourse appropriate to obtain the needed information. For this research, in order to measure the accuracy and adequacy of the performances of undergraduate students compared to the performances of native speakers, particularly on the politeness level, we will employ the following model:

2.3 Model of Analysis

This study analyzes the presence of Leech's maxims in the discourse of English students. The premise is a learner is communicatively competent when he/she is able to speak in a polite way, paying attention to both accuracy/fluency and the cultural norms of the target language. We propose that the phenomenon of politeness can be measured by way of analyzing the behavior of Geoffrey Leech's conversational maxims.

2.3.1 Politeness

Politeness is a culturally defined phenomenon. Its goal is to make feel interlocutors comfortable of one another. Languages have specific means to show politeness between speaker and hearer; for example, it can be seen through lexicon and morphology use. For instance, in Italian, the use of the third person pronoun “Lei” and the third person conjugation are used to show deference to a second person, which of course does not happen in every language, but Italian. However, this is just a little example of what can actually be measured by analysis of the different occurrences of politeness maxims.

Stephen Levinson and Penelope Brown formulated in 1978 the Politeness Theory based on concepts as the following: “Politeness is the expression of the speakers’ intention to mitigate face threats carried by certain face threatening acts toward another”; “Politeness is a battery of social skills whose goal is to ensure everyone feels affirmed in a social interaction”³³, it means that the face of hearer and speaker will be safe. Then they also identified positive and negative politeness, say, positive or negative face. Positive politeness intends to establish a good relationship between parties considering the need that every person has to be accepted, liked and understood. Negative politeness is not impoliteness but expresses just the right of a person to act freely avoiding or not paying attention to the establishment of a relationship between the interlocutors. If politeness is not communicated, we can assume that the polite attitude is absent. Both aspects of face represent the basic wants of social interaction. Consequently positive and negative politeness exists universally in human culture.

Besides, Brown and Levinson outlined four main types of politeness strategies: bald on-record, e.g. *Help!* Negative politeness, e.g. *Only if you have time, would you help me please?* Positive politeness, e.g. *Hey, give me a hand please!* and off-record, e.g. *It’s harder than how it looks.* These strategies are appropriated to particular situations and

³³ MILLS, 2003, p. 6, mentioned on http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Politeness_theory

reveal the level of confidence between speakers. These strategies are not universal or we can say that their frequency of use varies from culture to culture.

Brown and Levinson agreed with Paul Grice's argument that indicates that *all conversationalists are rational beings who are primarily interested in the efficient conveying of messages*. Therefore they choose the same politeness strategy as any other would, under the same circumstances, so as to mitigate a face. In that understanding, people who learn a new language should be able to use politeness strategies of communication in the second language as well as they would do in their mother tongue. In order to choose a strategy, the speaker will consider three aspects: a) the desire to communicate the content of the face treating act in question; b) the desire to be efficient or urgent and c) the desire to maintain the hearer's face to any degree.

2.3.2 Leech's Conversational Maxims

Geoffrey Leech defined politeness as forms of behavior that establish and maintain comity. In 1983, he introduced a theoretical model to analyze the behavior of people while being polite. He called it "Politeness Principles", which is a group of six maxims with their correspondent sub maxims. By these principles, Leech proposed a way of explaining how politeness operates in conversational exchanges. He defines politeness as forms of behavior that establish and maintain comity. That is the ability of participants in a social interaction to engage in interaction in an atmosphere of relative harmony. Each maxim is accompanied by a sub-maxim, which is less important. It is also important to note that speakers may adhere to more than one maxim of politeness at the same time.³⁴ These are the maxims and their use:

³⁴ <http://www.teachit.co.uk/armoore/lang/pragmatics.htm#top>, PRAGMATICS AND SPEECH ACTS

- Tact Maxim: minimize cost to other; maximize benefit to other
- Generosity Maxim: minimize benefit to self; maximize cost to self
- Approbation Maxim: minimize dispraise of other; maximize praise of other
- Modesty Maxim: minimize praise of self; maximize dispraise of self
- Agreement Maxim: minimize disagreement between self and other; maximize agreement between self and other
- Sympathy Maxim: minimize antipathy between self and other; maximize sympathy between self and other

It is central to note that the maxims are not equally important but they can be used by the speakers at the same time. What is important first of all is that speakers choose a polite strategy and in second place, that it is the appropriate to apply the maxims adequately in order to save the face or public self-image that every member of society wants to claim for self.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

3 Methodology

3.1 Type of study

The present piece of research is a descriptive study. Descriptive studies permit to describe situations and events so as to show their characteristics and learn how they work. These studies search to specify the importance of properties, persons, groups, communities, processes, etc. From the scientific point of view, to describe is to measure and the descriptive studies are up to measure concepts and their traits. Hernandez Sampieri (2003) states that “in a descriptive study, we make a selection of a series of questions and each one is measured independently. In that way, it is possible to describe what is studied”³⁵. Actually that is what we did to obtain the data that will show the state of things about the socio-linguistic competence of the subjects of our sample. This type of study allows us to make predictions and propose hypothesis, when necessary.

3.2 Type of Hypothesis

Acting in consequence, this study poses a descriptive hypothesis. Although it is not always necessary to propose a hypothesis in descriptive studies, we do so in order to

³⁵ HERNANDEZ Roberto, FERNÁNDEZ, BAPTISTA; *Metodología de la Investigación*, Tercera edición, McGraw Hill, pg. 149

precise the results of our study. In so doing, the following is the single hypothesis proposed:

H₁: “The oral performance of the non-native speakers under study is fairly accurate, grammatically speaking, but inadequate or distant from the common socio-cultural norms of the target language in which specific utterances are used.”

The only variable to measure in this hypothesis stands for the quality of language used to communicate effectively, with reference to the parameters of effective Communicative Competence level performed by non-native English language learners.

3.3 Design

The plan to obtain the information that we need for this research is based on the parameters of non experimental design. Non experimental research does not manipulate behavior deliberately (Hernández Sampieri, pg. 267) subsequently, we do not intend to provoke variation in our single variable; we just want to observe it in a specific context so as to analyze it.

The instrument we chose to collect our data is a test, which is better known as Discourse Completion Test. This will be described in detail below. The test is used to elicit data concerning the actual condition of the subjects under study in order to describe the current state of affairs.

3.4 Population delimitation

Sample means the subjects, objects, events and situations that we are going to analyze³⁶. First, to select a sample we need to define the analysis unit:

3.4.1 Analysis unit

The analysis unit is the particular person, organization, event, situation, etc., about which we planned to collect data, according to the statement of the problem and the research type. Our first research question is: How accurate or inaccurate is, from the grammatical point of view, the oral performance of non-native speakers of English (undergraduate students of English of the Department of Linguistics and Languages at UMSA), compared to their competence with regard to the adequate use of socio culturally-based utterances? Therefore we considered that our analysis unit is the students of the fifth year of the English Area of the Department of Linguistics and Languages.

The subjects' background information is the following:

Age: from 18 to 30 years old

Academic level: fifth year of Linguistics and Languages, fourth + level of English

Mother tongue: Spanish

To calculate the sample size on the normal distribution, we used the sample size calculator by Raosoft, Inc.³⁷ considering the following factors:

³⁶ HERNANDEZ, Roberto; FERNÁNDEZ Carlos and BAPTISTA, Pilar, *Metodología de la Investigación*, 3th Edition, McGraw Hill Publishing, 2003, pg. 300

Margin of error: 5%

Confidence level: 95%

Population size: 45

Response distribution: 50%

Sample size: **41**

In consequence, the test for this research has been applied to forty one students of the English Area.

3.5 Place delimitation

To ensure the participation of all subjects of the sample, the application of the test took place in the classrooms during class hours.

3.6 Activities

Native English speakers and undergraduate students of the English Area of the Department of Linguistics and Languages were requested to provide with answers to a set of proposed real-like communicative situations connected to specific socio-cultural settings. All the questionnaires from both native and non native speakers were evaluated according to the Leech Conversational Maxims for Politeness to appraise for divergence. The differences between non-native speakers (subjects of the study) were compared to those of the native speakers.

³⁷ <http://www.raosoft.com/samplesize.html>

The test has included 15 recorded open tasks. It has been answered by native speakers (control group in English), by native Spanish speakers (in Spanish), and by the forty one subjects of our sample, say, non native speakers of English being tested in the foreign language.

Indistinctively, the subjects (and control group - the native speakers) were explained that it was necessary to answer each task as naturally as possible. The subjects were given the following example: “If you meet at the street your friend’s mother what would you say? - Hello Mrs. Jones, how are you?” Then, they were explained that they were going to listen a recording of the text they had on their desks and that they needed to answer the questions in a limited time period, right after each question was listened to. The response lapse was lengthened, according to the situation, from one to two blank lines. After the first question, the researcher asked the students if the recording was clear for them. Having the instructions clearly explained, the test proceeded without interruptions until the end when the researcher asked to give back the tests and thanked the students and teacher for their help and participation.

The test had Spanish and an English version. The English version was intended for the native speakers of English and for the sample. The Spanish version was intended for a group of native Spanish speakers.

The purpose of the three tests is the following: the first test activity helps to identify what is optimal response to given socio-cultural situations in English, answered by native English speakers; the second test helps to identify what is optimal response to given socio-cultural situations in Spanish, answered by native Spanish speakers; and finally, the most important, the third test activity helps to show the divergent responses (divergent from appropriate English or Spanish correct models) to given socio-cultural situations in English, answered by non native English speakers.

3.7 Discourse Completion Test

Discourse Completion Test (DCT) is a technique used to elicit data in sociolinguistic research, and effects of systematic modification to its situational prompt on subject response. The DCT is a questionnaire containing situations, briefly described, and designed to draw out a particular speech act. Subjects read each situation and respond in writing to a prompt³⁸. Although important researches point out some deficiencies of this method of data collection it is recognized that it is the one that approximates more closely to the authentic performance. Many sociolinguistics researches took their information through the DCT.

3.8 Instrument

In order to measure the level of accuracy and the level of sociolinguistic appropriateness we have designed a special instrument. The instrument is a test developed on the basis of Discourse Completion Test theory. The test consists of 15 open situations which are described as follows, in English and in its corresponding Spanish version:

Please read the following situations and answer the question written at the end in the blank area. It is important that you answer naturally what you think you may say in each situation.

³⁸ VARGHESE, Manka; BILLMYER, Kristine, “*Investigating the Structure of Discourse Completion Tests*”, Working Papers in Educational Linguistics; v12, 1996

1. At the religious service following the death of her husband George, your aunt Ellie shared some time with her friends and family. It was impossible for you to go to the funeral. What would you say next time you see her?

.....

2. You received the bad news that your neighbor has a terrible disease; everyone is concerned about that. When he's back home from the hospital you decide to go see him. What would you tell him?

.....

- Thank you for your concern. I hope I'll pull through.

3. You are the best man of your friend at his wedding. It is a very important event and you have to speak at the rehearsal dinner. What would you say?

.....

4. You are invited to dinner at your boy/girlfriend house and you think it would be a good idea to bring a dessert. What would you say while giving it to your boy/girl friend's mom?

.....

5. It's second week of classes and you notice a foreign student who arrived a week late, you feel you wouldn't like to be in her situation and offer her your help and friendship. What would you say first?

.....

6. You are visiting abroad a friend of yours and he organizes a meeting to introduce you to his family. They receive you very well and decide to play a totally strange game to you. Then you try to follow them but without success, so you need to ask an explanation. What would you say?

.....

7. You're invited to dinner and you attend the invitation but before going you meet at the street an old friend who insists to invite you a hamburger in order to have a time to talk with you, after that you're not hungry at dinner but take a dish, food never ends and the hosts really want to make you try all they have prepared for you. What would you say?

.....

8. Your cousins' baby is just born and they are very happy for that. As they are active in a strange religious group they want to baptize him according to their tradition. They want to share this important event with their beloveds and invite you to go. You do not share their faith, even though you attend the ceremony to be kind with them. They are happy to see you there and ask you to participate and do things you do not agree and do not feel comfortable with. What would you say in order to maintain your position without mistreating your relatives?

.....

9. Your brother organized a New Year party with a lot of people you don't know. Everybody is having fun as well as you but the best part is you met an awesome girl, you like her and want to know her better but that's hard in a party with loud music so you decide to ask her out. How would you ask her for a date?

.....

10. You have heard that someone you know is telling lies about you to other people. So you're upset but you are not sure that rumor is true. Then you go somewhere you know that guy is, but he's with other people and you need to talk alone with him. What would you say in order to get his attention?

.....
.....

11. You have sent your resume to a company where you want to work, after some days they call to tell that you have been classified to the next phase of recruitment and they need you to go to an interview with your possible future boss. In the interview this person asks you to introduce yourself and explain why you would be good for the job. How would you do it?

.....

12. You have at home internet service for a while, it is supposed to have all the benefits you can imagine but one morning you go to check your e-mail and it takes too long to run the service on your computer; when it finally does it comes and goes, it is not the first time so you decide to call to the service supplier... what would you say to the client service functionary?

.....

13. Your child had an accident playing with his friends at home and you need to get him to the hospital as soon as possible so you take your child in your car and run to the hospital. In your desperation you are distracted and pass running a red light, a police officer saw you and makes you to stop... what would you say to this authority?

.....

14. You went to a school trip to Paraguay with a group of classmates and a History teacher. When you go back home your families have organized a meeting to watch pictures and share experiences and anecdotes. One of your friends said that it was awesome to learn more about the Pacific War; you know that he's mixing places and you actually learnt about another war, how would you correct him?

.....
.....
.....

15. You are at the bank in New York City. You want to keep your money safe for one or two years. You also need to withdraw and deposit from time to time. What would you say in order for the clerk to proceed with the papers?

.....
.....
.....

Por favor lee los siguientes enunciados y responde las preguntas en las líneas punteadas. Es importante que tu respuesta sea lo más natural posible de acuerdo a lo que dirías en cada situación.

1. Después del servicio religioso ofrecido por la muerte de su esposo Jorge, tu tía Eli compartió un tiempo con sus amigos y familiares. Para ti fue imposible ir al funeral. Entonces, ¿Qué dirías a tu tía la próxima vez que la vieras?

.....

2. Te enteraste de que tu vecino tiene una terrible enfermedad; todos están preocupados por eso. Cuando él vuelve a del hospital a su casa tu decides ir a verlo. ¿Qué le dirías?

TÚ:

.....

....

Vecino: Gracias por preocuparte. Espero salir de esta.

3. Eres el padrino de boda de tu amigo. Es un evento muy importante y tienes que hablar en la recepción. ¿Qué dirías?

.....

4. Estás invitado a cenar a la casa de tu chico(a) y piensas que sería un lindo gesto llevar el postre. ¿Qué le dirías a la mamá de tu chico(a) al entregarle el postre?

.....

.....

5. Es la segunda semana de clases y te das cuenta de que una estudiante extranjera se incorporó a clases como una semana tarde, sientes que no te gustaría estar en sus zapatos y le ofreces tu ayuda y amistad. ¿Qué le dirías primero?

.....

6. Estás visitando a un amigo tuyo en el extranjero y él organiza una reunión para presentarte a su familia. Ellos te reciben muy bien y deciden jugar un juego absolutamente extraño para ti. Entonces tú tratas de seguirlos pero no lo logras, por tanto necesitas pedir una explicación. ¿Qué dirías?

.....

7. Estás invitado a cenar y te diriges a la invitación pero antes de llegar al lugar te encuentras en la calle con un viejo amigo que insiste en invitarte a comer una hamburguesa para poder así tener tiempo de charlar contigo. Después de eso no tienes hambre en la cena pero te sirven un plato de todos modos. La comida no se termina nunca y los anfitriones quieren hacerte probar todo lo que han preparado para ti. ¿Qué les dirías?

.....

8. El bebé de tus primos acaba de nacer y ellos están muy felices por eso. Como participan activamente de una secta religiosa quieren bautizar a su hijo de acuerdo a sus tradiciones. Ellos quieren compartir este importante evento con sus seres queridos y te invitan a asistir. Aunque tú no compartes su fe asistes a la ceremonia por amabilidad. Ellos están felices de verte ahí y te piden que participes y hagas cosas con las que tú no estás de acuerdo y te sientes cómodo. ¿Qué les dirías de manera que mantengas tu posición sin ofender a tus familiares?

.....

9. Tu hermano ha organizado una fiesta de Año Nuevo con mucha gente que tú no conoces. Todos se están divirtiendo al igual que tú pero lo mejor de todo es que ahí conoces a una chica maravillosa, a ti te gusta y quieres conocerla mejor pero es difícil hacerlo en una fiesta ruidosa así que decides invitarla a salir. ¿Cómo le pedirías una cita?

.....

10. Has oído el rumor de que alguien que conoces está diciendo mentiras acerca de ti a otra gente. Naturalmente estás molesto pero no estás seguro de que ese rumor sea cierto. Entonces vas a un lugar donde sabes que esa persona está pero está acompañado con otra gente y tú necesitas hablarle a solas. ¿Qué le dirías para captar su atención?

.....

11. Has enviado tu hoja de vida a una empresa donde te gustaría trabajar. Después de algunos días ellos te llaman para decirte que has sido seleccionado para la segunda etapa de reclutamiento y necesitan que vayas para una entrevista con tu posible futuro jefe. En la entrevista esta persona te pide que te presentes y expliques porqué serías adecuado para el puesto. ¿Cómo lo harías?

.....

12. Tienes por un tiempo conexión a Internet en tu casa, se supone que deberías gozar de todos los servicios posibles pero una mañana vas a revisar tu cuenta de correo electrónico y tarda mucho en conectar el servicio en tu computadora; cuando finalmente se establece la conexión ésta va y viene. No es la primera vez que esto pasa así que decides llamar a la empresa... ¿qué le dirías al operador de la línea de servicio al cliente?

.....

13. Tu hijo tuvo un accidente jugando con sus amigos en tu casa y necesitas llevarlo al hospital lo antes posible así que pones a tu hijo en tu auto y corres al hospital. En medio de la desesperación estás distraído y pasas sin ver una luz roja. Entonces un policía que te vio te hace parar. ¿Qué le dirías a esa autoridad?

.....
.....

14. Fuiste a un viaje de estudios al Paraguay con un grupo de compañeros y un profesor de Historia. Para su regreso sus familiares organizaron una reunión para ver sus fotos y compartir experiencias y anécdotas. Uno de tus amigos dice que fue maravilloso aprender más de la Guerra del Pacífico; tú te das cuenta de que está confundiéndola con la Guerra del Chaco. ¿Cómo lo corregirías?

.....
.....
.....

15. Estás en un banco en Nueva York. Quieres mantener tu dinero seguro por uno o dos años. También necesitas hacer retiros y depósitos de vez en cuando. ¿Qué le dirías a la persona que te está atendiendo en el banco para que proceda con el trámite?

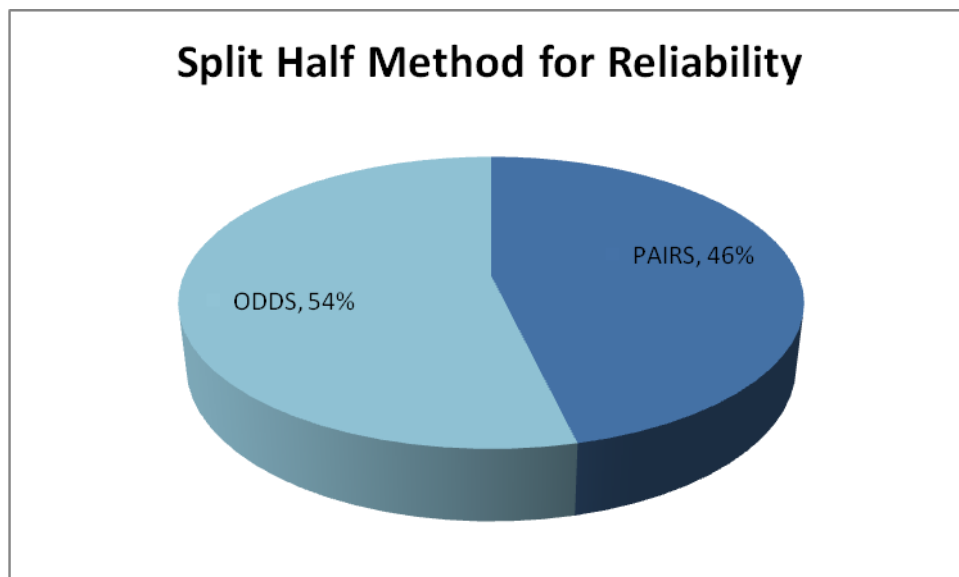
.....
.....

3.8.1 Instrument Reliability

We would like to compare the research process with baking. We can follow certain recipes for baking cakes in La Paz and be sure of obtaining good results; but, it will be necessary to consider some changes when using the same recipe in the coast. In this example, the altitude and the kind of some ingredients would make vary the taste and texture of the cake. The cultures, people, and situations change; and we, as researchers, have to take this into account when we choose or develop a test. It is necessary to prove the reliability of our instrument. There are diverse procedures to calculate the reliability of measure instruments. All of them use formulae to obtain a reliability degree³⁹. The one chosen is the Split-Halves Method, suggested by Hernández in “Metodología de la Investigación”. The Split-Halves Method requires applying the measure only once. Specifically, the whole of items (or components) is divided in two halves and punctuations are compared. If the instrument is reliable, the punctuation of both halves will be correlated. A person with low score in a half should show also a low punctuation in the other half. The reliability varies according to the number of items included in the measurement instrument. In our case, there are fifteenth items or tasks, so we split them in eight and seven, eight odd numbers and seven pair numbers that we have compared to obtain the following results:

³⁹ HERNÁNDEZ, Roberto; FERNÁNDEZ Carlos and BAPTISTA, Pilar, *Metodología de la Investigación*, 3th Edition, McGraw Hill Publishing, 2003, pg. 353

Chart N°1



We can see that there is not a large difference between the two halves results; therefore, according to Hernandez Sampieri, we can fairly rely on this test.

3.8.2 Instrument Validity

When we talk about the validity of a test, we look at the relationship between evidence from test performance and the inferences about candidates' capacity to perform in the criterion that are drawn from the evidence⁴⁰.

Proving the validity of a test is testing the test. As Hernandez, et al, say, once the codification of the test's items is determined, a pilot prove must be applied. It means the test is applied to people with similar characteristics as the sample or population of the research⁴¹. In consequence, the present test has been originally tried out with English

⁴⁰ McNAMARA Tim, *Language Testing*, Oxford University Press, 2000, pg.138

⁴¹ HERNÁNDEZ, Roberto; FERNÁNDEZ Carlos and BAPTISTA, Pilar, *Metodología de la Investigación*, 3th Edition, McGraw Hill Publishing, 2003, pg. 366

native speakers, that is, test number 1 (see 3.6 Activities). This was accomplished to make sure if our sample subjects can understand the instructions and, mainly, to know what a normal or natural answer could be. Secondly, this study's control group was composed of Spanish speakers who answered the DCT in their mother tongue. After all this trial an error process, we modified some items of the measurement instrument and established the time for the real test to apply to the actual sample of subjects.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF DATA

4 Analysis of data

In this section, we analyze the results of our test in terms of numbers and most relevant characteristics and, after it; we make another analysis on the use of Conversational Maxims of Geoffrey Leech. Let's remember that this analysis only corresponds to the test applied to the sample (not to the native English speakers or native Spanish speakers - see 3.8.2 Instrument Validity). Each task has its results represented on statistic charts. These charts show the percentage of students that used the Leech's Conversational Maxims in their answers. On the right side of each graphic, the reader can see a scale, from zero to six, which represents the maxim number measured in the answers. Next to this numbers are the different colors that appear on the graphic. For example, if 10% of the 41 students from the sample included five maxims in their answers, the 10% in the graphic would be painted on orange, as this color corresponds to five maxims in the answer.

The analysis consists of the measurement of accuracy and of socio-cultural competence. Accuracy is measured with regard to the grammatically correct use of language, including syntax, word formation, and vocabulary. Socio-cultural competence is measured according to the six maxims of politeness above described.

Task Number 1

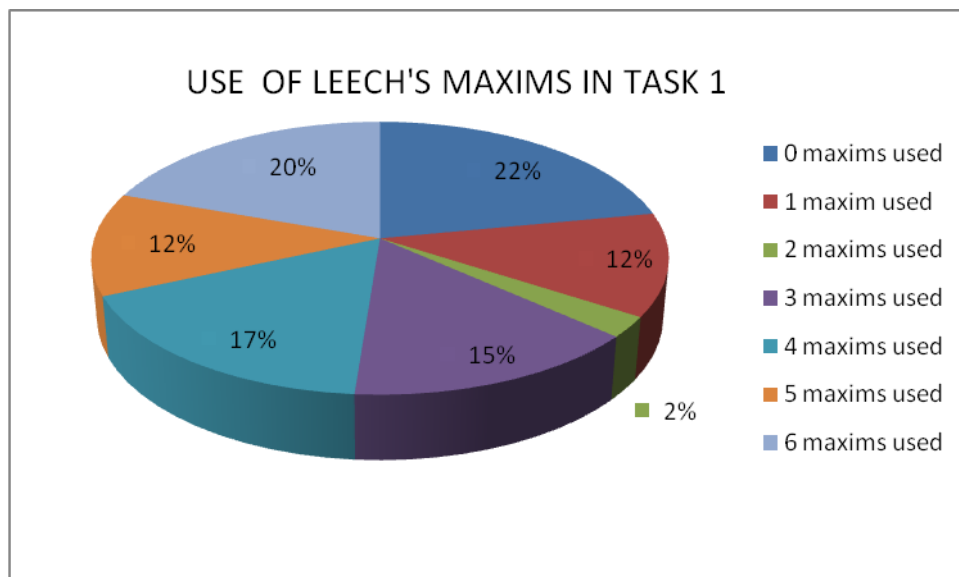
In task Number 1, all 41 subjects who shaped the sample were confronted to a specific situation where they needed to express condolences. 22% of the answers to this task are rather inadequate in that the subjects did not include in their answers any of the six

Conversational Maxims of G. Leech. They neither used accurate grammatical structures, giving as a result inappropriate answers, at least, according to the proposed situation.

The stated task was: *At the religious service following the death of her husband George, your aunt Ellie shared some time with her friends and family. It was impossible for you to go to the funeral. What would you say next time you see her?* Giving condolences is never easy, in any language, but it is eventually necessary. Basically the expected answer to this task was a condolence and an excuse for missing the event. For example, a subject answered: (Subject 1) “Sorry, I couldn’t come because it was impossible. Sorry for your husband”. An answer like this shows both linguistic and adequate socio-cultural competence. In contrast, many answers were not so logical. For example: (Task 2) “I will be excused with him and I may be offer if we can go to his mother”. First of all, the answer is not natural. It does not reflect the instruction to fill the test. Secondly, it shows confusion about gender, time and the whole situation itself that derives on an incoherent answer caused by sociolinguistic and linguistic competence lacks. Therefore, based on this task, it is observed that the subjects are not grammatically accurate as they were supposed to be (see our hypothesis) and their language was distant from the common English socio-cultural norms.

The chart shows the percentage of students that used a specific number of Conversational Maxims. For example, 20% of the sample used the six maxims to answer to this task, and as it is mentioned before, 22% did not use any of them.

Chart N°2



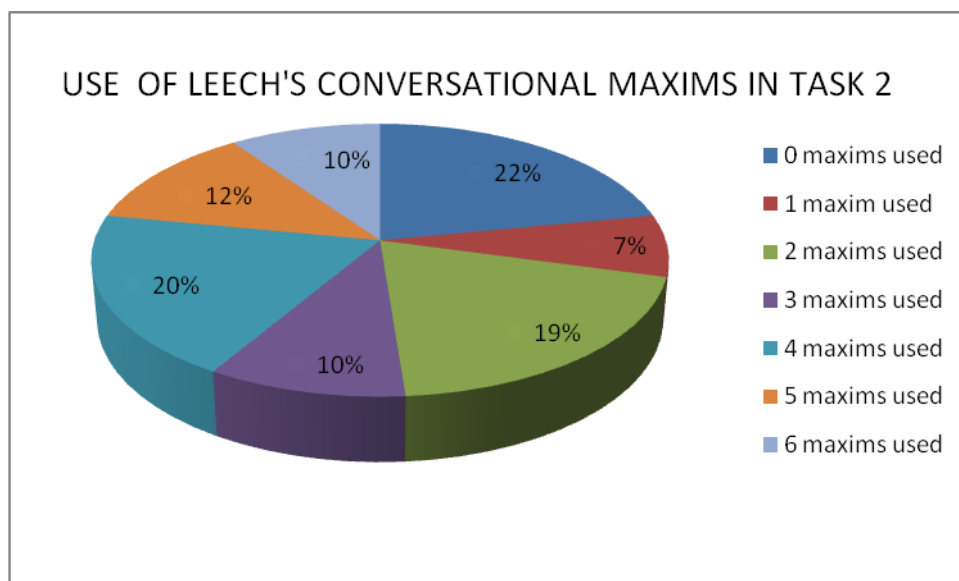
Task Number 2

In this task, the subjects demonstrated to be grammatically accurate as hypothetically they should have been. But considering that, in theory, politeness is about giving preference to others, many answers to this task show the lack of consideration that the subjects have, which means that they are not aware of the need to be polite, in general, and the need to be polite according to the English socio-cultural norms. Only 10% of the answers included the six Conversational Maxims of Leech.

The task was: *You received the bad news that your neighbor has a terrible disease; everyone is concerned about that. When he's back home from the hospital you decide to go see him. What would you tell him?* A correct answer should have included a condolence and an expression of courage and support. For example, an acceptable answer was: (Subject 27) "How are you feeling? Remember you can count on me". But other answers didn't follow the conversational maxims, for example, one said: "Sorry, but life is like this".

The chart shows the important percentage (22%) of subjects that did not use any conversational maxim, plus those who used only one or two maxims. It is, so, observed an inadequate knowledge of common socio-cultural norms of the target language.

Chart N°3



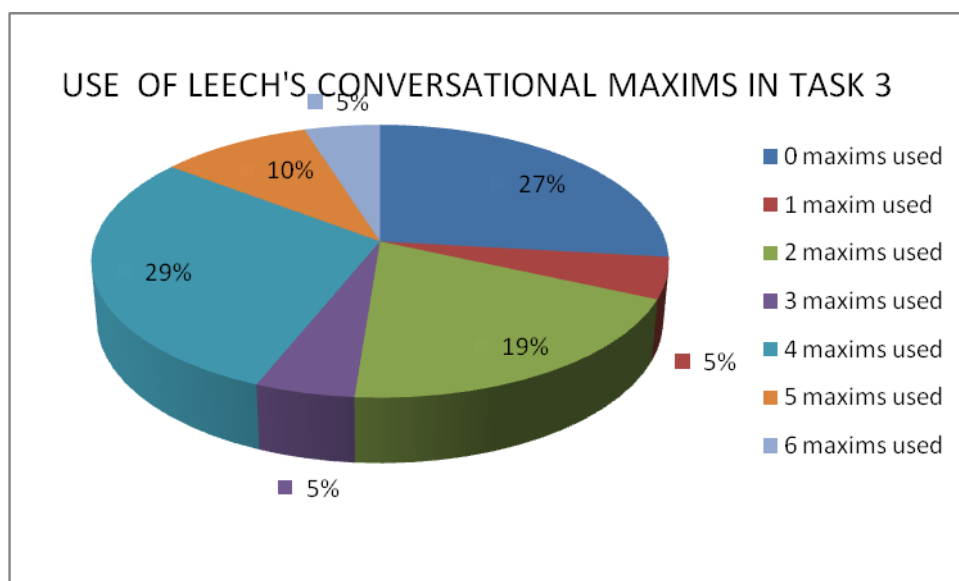
Task Number 3

From the grammatical point of view, most of the subjects demonstrated accuracy answering to this third task.

From the sociolinguistic point of view, people have rituals and related traditions that require a particular language. Common rituals are weddings where formal and familiar language is required. As it is illustrated in the chart below, the results obtained from the tests exhibit that 29% of the subjects are not capable at all of acting in a wedding, or similar situation, appropriately because they did not answer to the task, and when answered, 66% of the answers did not include the six conversational maxims.

The task required from the subjects was to make a toast: *“You are the best man of your friend at his wedding. It is a very important event and you have to speak at the rehearsal dinner. What would you say?”* The subjects didn’t have to make a long toast speech but welcome the concurrence and express congratulations to the new couple. For example: *“Good evening, this is an important night for us, my better wishes to my friend and his future wife”*, for instance.

Chart N°4



Task Number 4

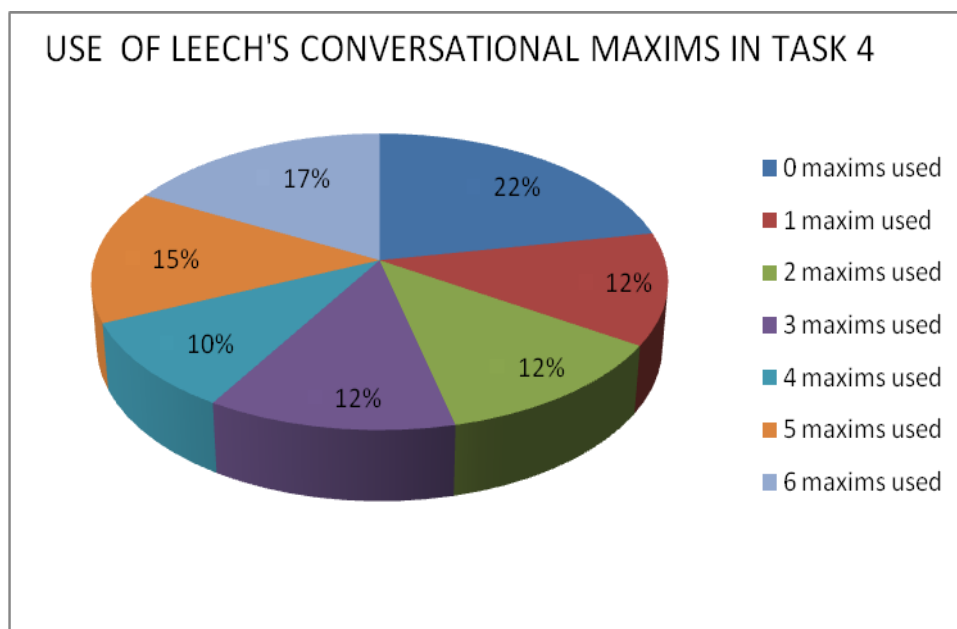
The answers to this task evidenced linguistic competence problems, particularly at the syntactic level.

In relation to sociolinguistic competence, the answers revealed poor knowledge of language usage and socio-cultural norms of the target language. Only 17% of the answers included the six Conversational Maxims of Geoffrey Leech; while 22% did not include any. Offering help, services, gifts or anything else is in itself a courteous act,

but it is necessary to express through words the intention of providing a benefit in an appropriate attitude. While offering, we can commit mistake and show a paternal or imposing attitude that can threaten the listener's face. Therefore language used to offer things can vary according to the kind of relationship that the interlocutors can have.

This task situation was intended to measure if students know what to say when offering something. The task said: *You are invited to dinner at your boy/girlfriend house and you think it would be a good idea to bring a dessert. What would you say while giving it to your boy/girl friend's mom?* They had to address it to an older person, always following the Politeness Maxims. A good answer was: (subject 27) "I brought this dessert. I hope you enjoy it Mrs. ...". But an important number of students didn't know what to say or just gave answers like the following: "Sorry, do you have a dessert for my mother if it is not so much ask"

Chart N°5



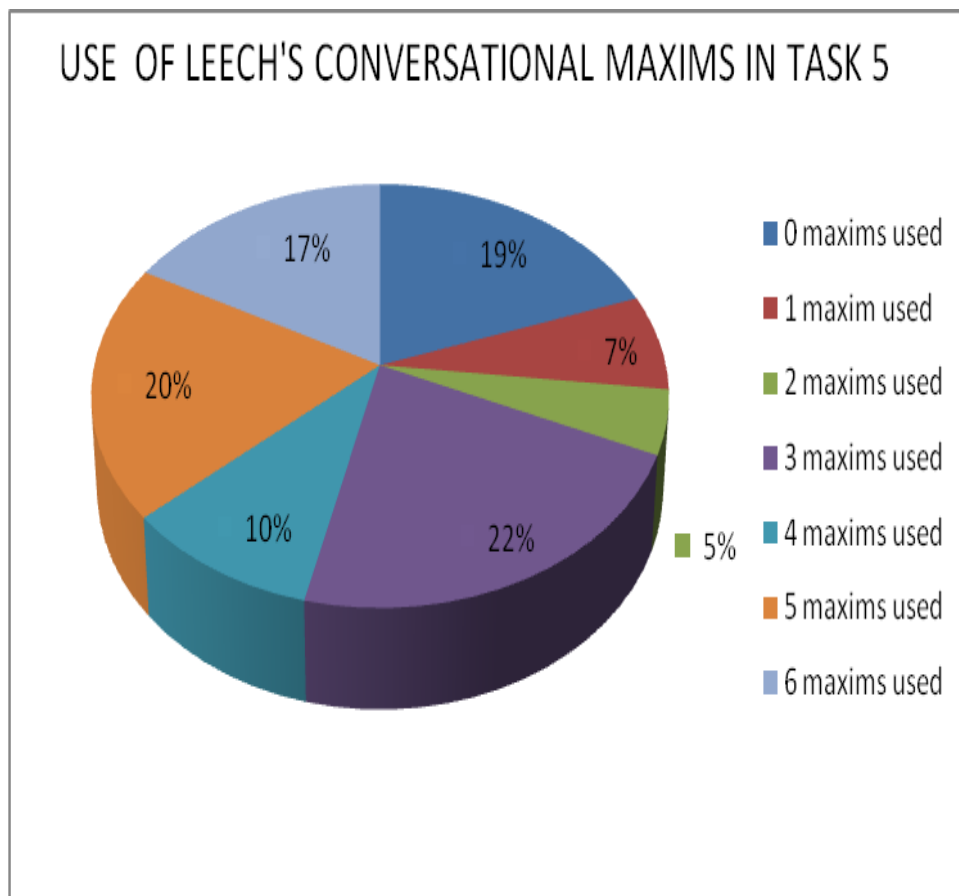
Task Number 5

This task was intended to measure if the subjects were able to start a conversation with someone they do not know and offer help. The 33 subjects that answered the task demonstrated accuracy of structure, but rather poor performance with regard to sociolinguistic competence.

Only 17% used the Conversational Maxims. It means that 83% exhibited socio-cultural competence problems. The question read: *“It’s second week of classes and you notice a foreign student who arrived a week late, you feel you wouldn’t like to be in her situation and offer her your help and friendship. What would you say first?”* One good example was: (Subject 28) “Hi, my name is... What do you think about the school?” Or (Subject 27) “I noticed you arrived a week late. Do you need help?” On the contrary, some subjects answered the following: (Subject 24) “Please, the next, you can’t arrive late”. As you can see, this response is not polite at all, and does not resemble the use of the six maxims under study. And although it is not so grammatically incorrect, the expression “the next” is a clear negative transfer from Spanish.

The chart shows that a high percentage of the studied population (19%) does not use any of the conversational maxims in English, which suggests inadequacy to the target language cultural norms.

Chart N°6



Task Number 6

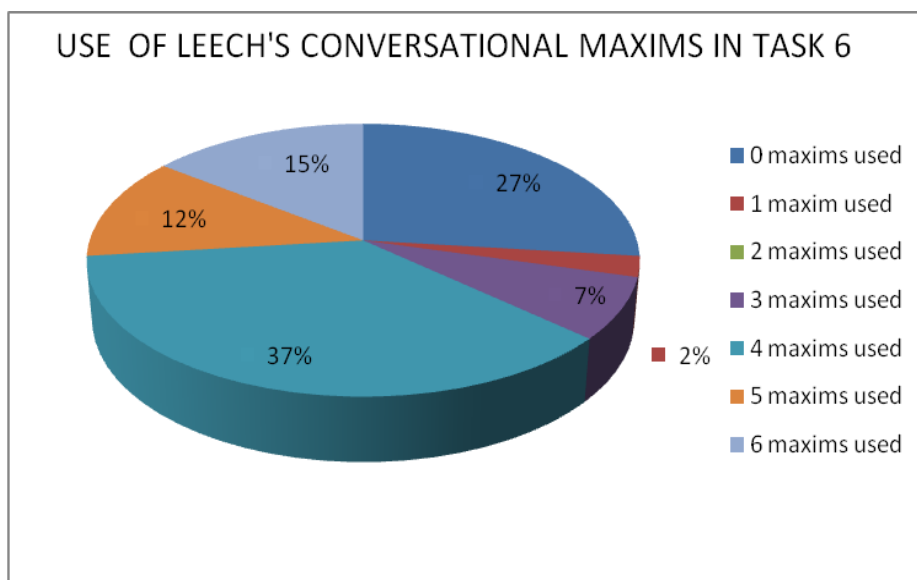
The answers to this task are grammatically correct, which confirms the hypothesis of this study. Considering the socio-cultural aspect, the statistics illustrate that 37% of the answers included four of Leech's Conversational Maxims. The general result showed that the subjects had Sociolinguistic Competence difficulties, but most of them (64%) were able to use from four to six maxims.

When we ask for a favor, we position ourselves on a dependent condition and it is necessary to be more careful to avoid face threatening. A clear polite use of language plays an important role in communicative understanding between speakers. This kind of

language would also help to avoid communicative misunderstandings. In task 6, the subjects needed to ask for instructions politely demonstrating respect, considering that they may be interrupting. The actual task was: *“You are visiting abroad a friend of yours and he organizes a meeting to introduce you to his family. They receive you very well and decide to play a game that is totally strange to you. Then you try to follow them but without success, so you need to ask an explanation. What would you say?”* Some subjects did not answer; others, though, understood the idea and answered: *“(Subject 23) Sorry, but I would like you to explain me the game again”*. An example of a bad answer would be: (Subject 18) *“I’m sorry but I can play that”*

The chart below presents a better use of socio-cultural norms than in other tasks:

Chart N°7



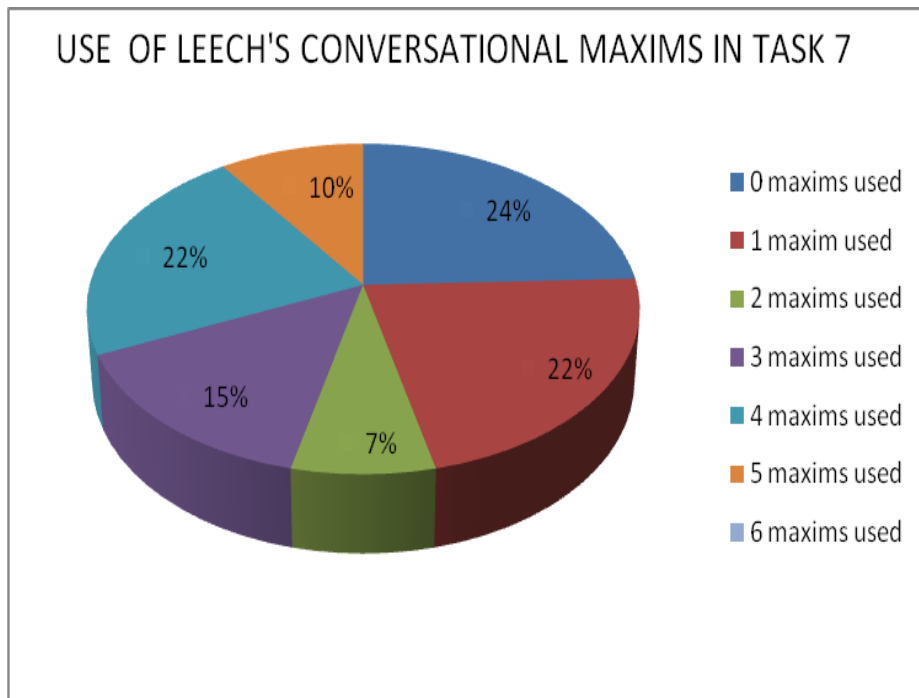
Task Number 7

In this task, the respondents demonstrated to be grammatically accurate, just as it was stated in the hypothesis. Their sociolinguistic competence was tested in this task in a

context by which they needed to reject an offer. This awkward situation placed the speakers in a position of disadvantage, which required using extreme polite expressions. Most of the subjects were not able to do what they were required to. 24% of the answers did not include any of the six Conversational Maxims of Geoffrey Leech. Besides that, none of the subjects used the six maxims.

The task was: *You're invited to dinner and you attend the invitation but before going you meet at the street an old friend who insists to invite you a hamburger in order to have a time to talk with you. After that you're not hungry at dinner but take a dish, food never ends and the hosts really want to make you try all they have prepared for you. What would you say?* By answering this question, subjects revealed their competence of rejecting politely. For example, a student answered (Subject 18) "Sorry I don't like cook", showing in this way very poor comprehension. But there were right answers, too, for example: (Subject 6) "Oh, I'm sorry, but I can no longer finish it, I am full"

Chart N°8



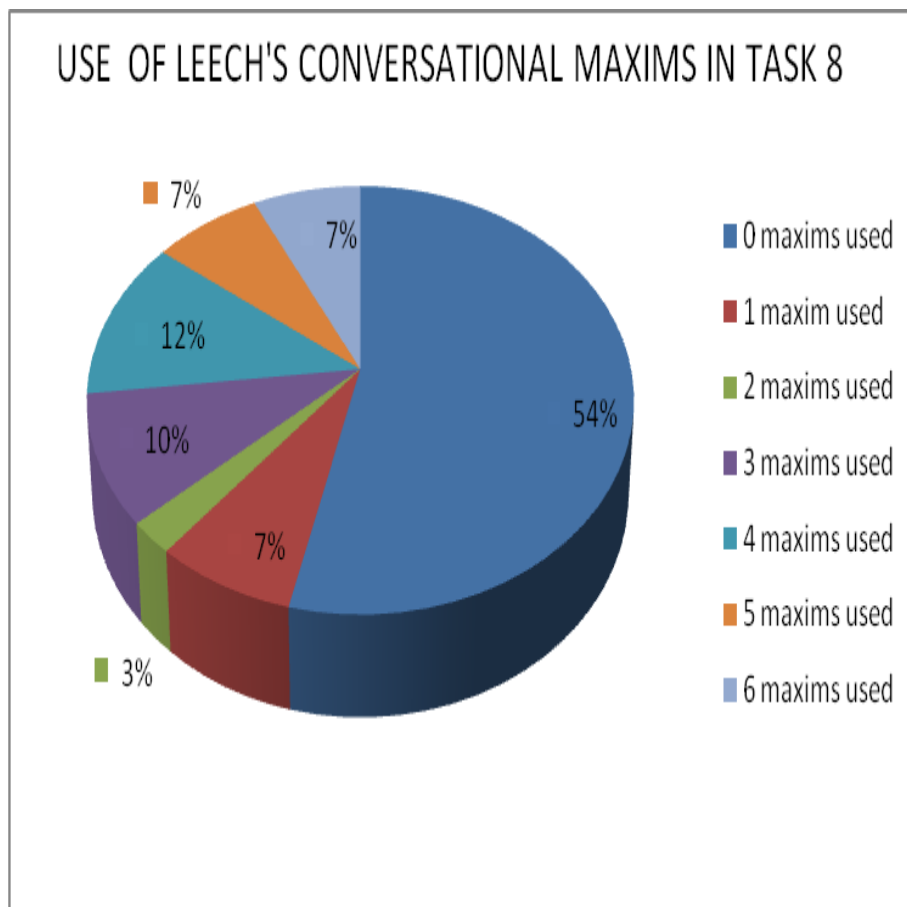
Task Number 8

One of our research questions pointed to the socio-cultural norm-based difficulties that the testees would find when interacting with English native speakers. But first, the answers clarified that it was hard for the subjects to express themselves in a grammatically accurate way.

Evaluating the Sociolinguistic Competence, the answers to this task showed that 62% did not include any of Leech's Conversational Maxims in their answers. In the formulation of this task, particularly, it was considered that in the multicultural, multi-religious and globalized world where we live, it is quite possible to be confronted to a situation when we have to stand on our position without damaging the image of others. The socio-cultural norm would make the speakers respect the religious practice and be frank to say that they do not want to be part of that. The student's impossibility of expressing in a sentence their disagreement proves that the speech act of rejection is a socio-cultural pitfall that English students encounter.

The task was: *"Your cousins' baby is just born and his parents are very happy for that. As they are active in a strange religious group they want to baptize him according to their tradition. They want to share this important event with their beloveds and invite you to go. You do not share their faith, even though you attend the ceremony to be kind with them. They are happy to see you there and ask you to participate and do things you do not agree and do not feel comfortable with. What would you say in order to maintain your position without mistreating your relatives?"* Most of the subjects answered what they would do in a similar situation but not what they would say as we asked them. For example: (Test 6) "I would be honest to them and I will try to avoid..." but what they needed to do was to avoid the uncomfortable situation saying something like: (Test 25) "Sorry, I'm going to observe you but not participate".

Chart N°9



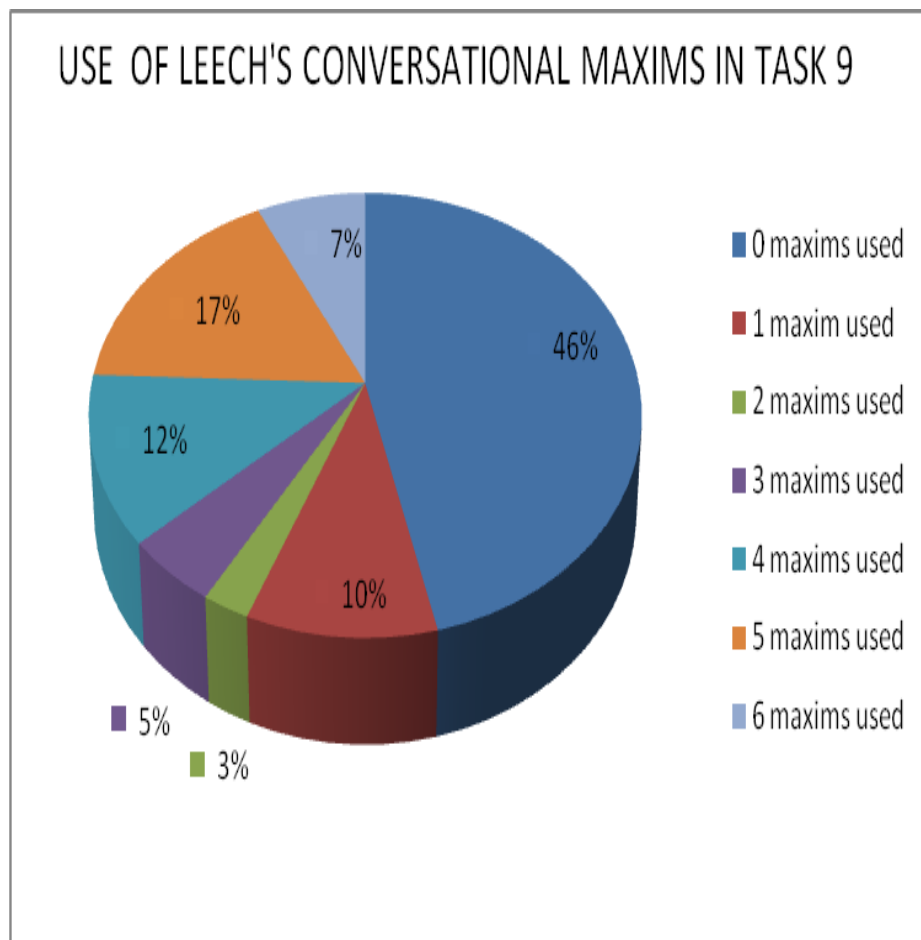
Task Number 9

Grammar, in the answers to this question, was poor, revealing comprehension and reading problems, too.

What is observed in this task is that proposing is for almost the half of the population (47%) a drawback. 44% of the answers did not include all the Conversational Maxims and only 7% of the students used the six maxims in their answers. This task put together two socio-cultural rules that derived on speech acts that occurred commonly: to propose or suggest doing something and 'dating protocol'. The task said as follows: "*Your*

brother organized a New Year party with a lot of people you don't know. Everybody is having fun as well as you but the best part is you met an awesome girl, you like her and want to know her better but that's hard in a party with loud music so you decide to ask her out. How would you ask her for a date? It was clear that the intention of this question was to see if the students knew how to propose or ask somebody to do something, and we obtained acceptable answers such as: (Subject 25) "What about if we meet again?" Which is acceptable but not ideal; but worst, there were answers like: (Subject 10) "It's so noisy, please would you mind out?"

Chart N°10



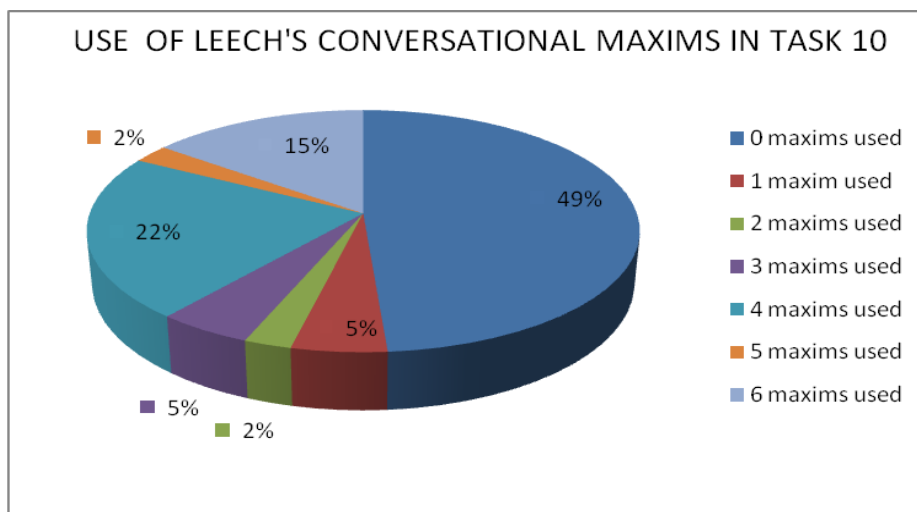
Task Number 10

49% of the subjects were not able to answer this question with acceptable grammar, which means that they were not linguistically competent to ask for attention.

Due to the fact that between Bolivian and American cultures at the sociolinguistic level, there are not too different norms to ask for attention, we expected better answers of the subjects. But the figures showed that only 15% of the tested population included the six conversational maxims in their answers, and 49% did not include any.

The task was: *You have heard that someone you know is telling lies about you to other people. So you're upset but you are not sure about that rumor is true. Then you go somewhere you know that guy is, but he's with other people and you need to talk alone with him. What would you say in order to get his attention?* The most important part of a good answer to this question would be a phrase asking the interlocutor to talk apart and, next, ask for an explanation. Some students answered with phrases like: (Subject 8) "May I please talk to you for a while? But others said for example: (Subject 10) "Sorry what time is it?"

Chart N°11



Task Number 11

The answers to this task do not show grammatical accuracy, as it was expected. Socio-cultural competence was also poor. The statistics showed that exactly 49% of the subjects did not use any of Leech's Conversational Maxims. On the opposite, only 2% made use of the six maxims.

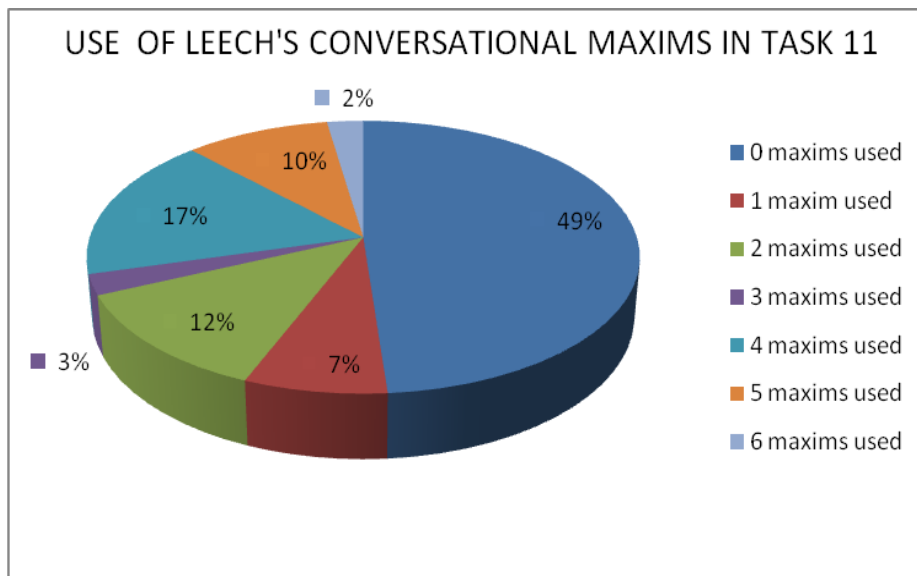
Through this study, it was planned to know how much do communicative deficiencies interfere with student's communicative competence development. An identified difficulty in this task was reading comprehension and syntactic problems. We have seen that the short answers in this task are not effective to achieve the expected communicative purpose. According to the four components of Communicative Competence that Dell Hymes describes, we know that the subjects should have seen what is possible to say in this kind of situation. We also found out that they knew that it is possible for them to express what they needed to say. Anyhow, there were a few appropriate answers, and that means that what was actually done does not reflect learning what is possible, feasible and appropriate. Therefore, based on this task, it is not possible to say that people of the sample is communicatively competent because they are not accurate and they are distant from the common socio-cultural norms of the target language.

The task was: *You have sent your resume to a company where you want to work, after some days they call to tell that you have been classified to the next phase of recruitment and they need you to go to an interview with your possible future boss. In the interview this person asks you to introduce yourself and explain why you would be good for the job. How would you do it?* It is very likely that these students had a similar exercise at their English classes, so they only needed to introduce themselves, to express that they would be glad of being hired and explain the benefits for the employer to employ each one of them. For example: "Good morning Mr.... thank you for calling me to this

interview. First I would like you to know that I would be happy working with you because I think I can contribute my knowledge and capacity to this company...” but most of the answers were like this one: (Subject 13) “I have the *requirement* knowledge and experience”.

The results showed that 49% of the sample did not answer, while only 2% managed to use the six Conversational Maxims of Leech.

Chart N°12



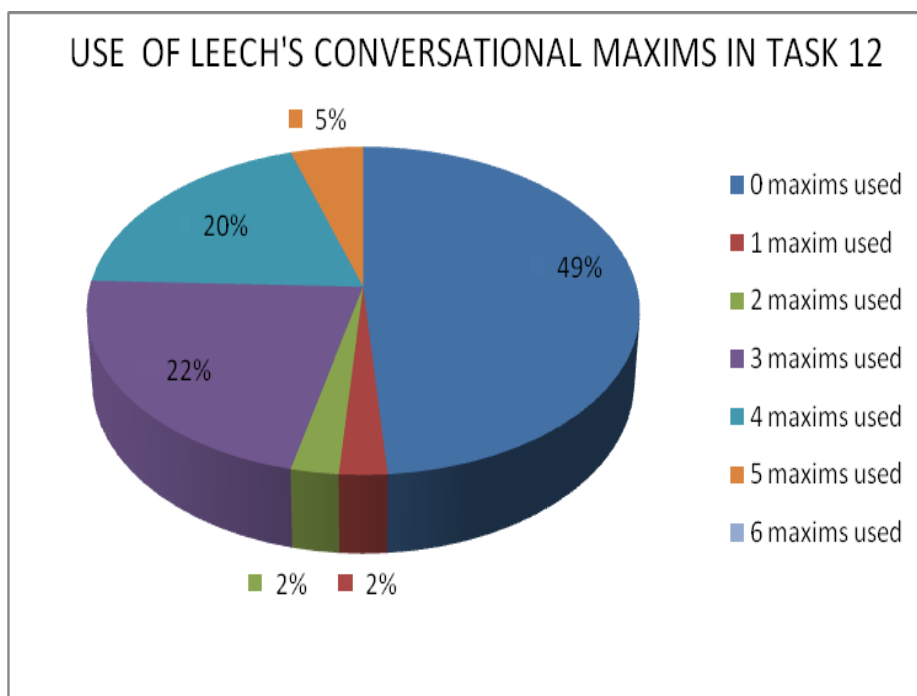
Task Number 12

As it has been stated in the hypothesis, the subjects appeared not to be accurate, basically because of their reading comprehension problems – we guess. On the other hand, a socio-cultural drawback that undergraduate students encounter is the ability to complain. In this task, no one used the complete set of six Conversational Maxims, while 49% practically used any of them. The task required them to complaint about a

bad service. That positioned the subjects on advantage because they were not receiving the service for what they paid. They needed, at the same time, to be kind, asking for the service, but they demonstrated not to be able to communicate adequately, because of lack of language use, knowledge at both levels: grammatical and pragmatic.

Task 12 was: *You have at home internet service for a while, it is supposed to have all the benefits you can imagine but one morning you go to check your e-mail and it takes too long to run the service on your computer; when it finally does it comes and goes, it is not the first time so you decide to call to the service supplier... what would you say to the client service functionary?* In this question, we expected a greeting and a complaint as an answer. For example: (Subject 17) “Good morning my internet doesn’t work can you and someone to help me?” Nevertheless, there were also wrong and impolite answers such as: (Subject 18) “All the time the computer broke”.

Chart N°13



Task Number 13

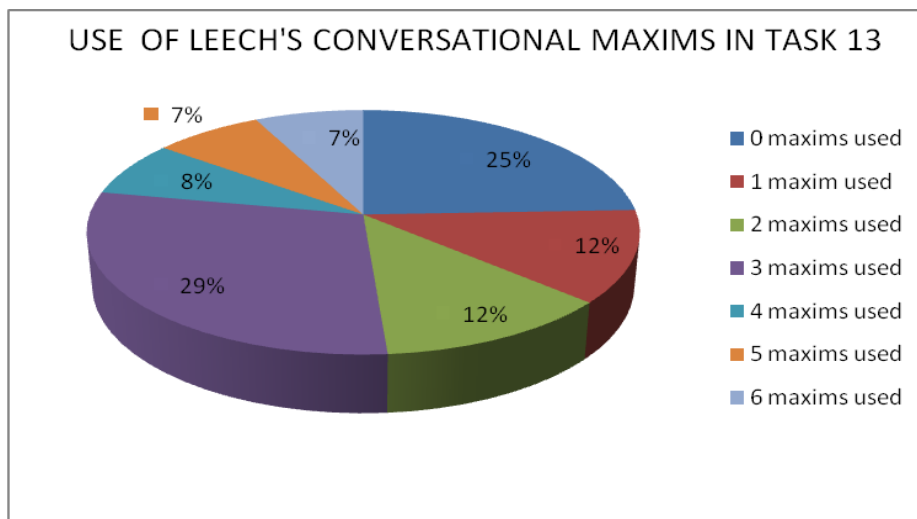
The subjects did not use the correct words in their answers, to this task. They did not demonstrate to be grammatically accurate, either.

Analyzing the socio-cultural competence component, the results show that only 7% of the students used the six Leech's Conversational Maxims; while 25% did not use any. It means that they are not competent to communicate.

In here, it was identified that a socio-cultural norm-based pitfall that English students encounter in native-like situations is the ability of approaching to an authority. In this task, they should have revealed to have cultural problems related to politeness, because they would eventually be in a similar situation in their own country; however, they did.

The proposed task was: *Your child had an accident playing with his friends at home and you need to get him to the hospital as soon as possible so you take your child in your car and run to the hospital. In your desperation you are distracted and pass running a red light, a police officer saw you and makes you stop... what would you say to this authority?* To answer this question, it was very important to address the authority and apologize with him/her. For example: (Subject 26) "Sorry officer. This is an emergency, my son had an accident". But this is not what happened in the majority of the cases.

Chart N°14



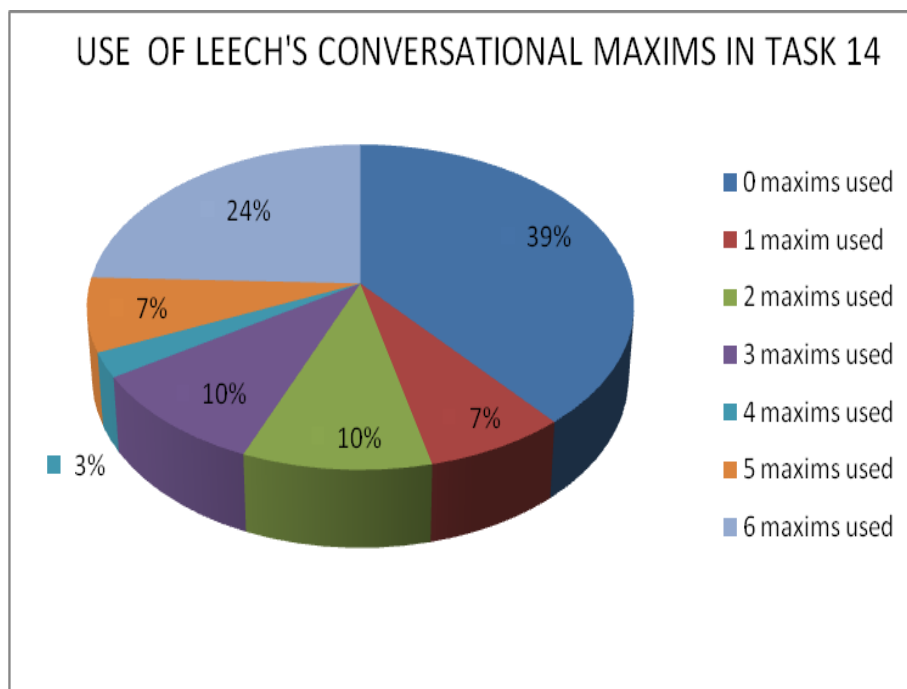
Task Number 14

What was detected again through this task is a significant level of linguistic lack of competence in the subjects.

In general, the subjects were not able to say anything correct, not even to correct mistakes. 39% of the students was not able to answer this simple task while only 24% answered well, using the six Conversational Maxims. Silence in this case was not an option. They needed to say something and many of them did not. The poor use of *parole* demonstrates the poor knowledge of *language* and pragmatic competence, because the proposed aim was not achieved due to the lack of comprehension and inability to express ideas in English. The task specifically was: *You went to a school trip to Paraguay with a group of classmates and a History teacher. When you go back home your families have organized a meeting to watch pictures and share experiences and anecdotes. One of your friends said that it was awesome to learn more about the Pacific War; you know that he's mixing places and you actually learnt about another war, how would you correct him?* The answers to this task showed how polite, students

are at the moment to correct other people. Some of them were not able to answer and others wrote for example: (Subject 7) “I think you are missed it isn’t it?”

Chart N°15



Task Number 15

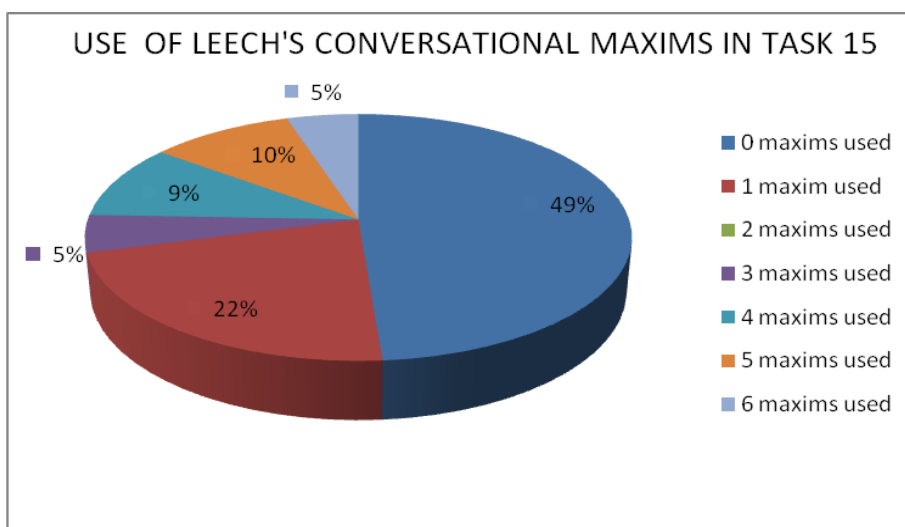
The answers to this task demonstrated that the subjects have considerable difficulty acquiring the rules for communicating in English pragmatically, which begins with the appearance of grammar problems. Based on this answers, it is possible to say that they are not grammatically accurate, in general.

The rules of politeness, for the proposed task, are not so different from Bolivian culture to American culture. Even so, they could not ask for a service, which is a sociolinguistic problem. Almost half of the sample (49%) did not answer, but if they did, they did it

without applying any Conversational Maxim. Besides that, only 5% used the six maxims in their answers.

The task was: *You are at the bank in New York City. You want to keep your money safe for one or two years. You also need to withdraw and deposit from time to time. What would you say to the clerk in order to proceed with the papers?* Answering correctly to this question would show the readiness to live abroad and do habitual operations like the described above. Some answers were, for example: (Subject 7) “Excuse me I would like to open a money account here, could you help me?”

Chart N^o16



4.1 General considerations on the Sociolinguistic factor

As it has been mentioned before, politeness is important for human relationships. Particularly, in our society, there are basic norms that people follow. Therefore, it is a pity that the subjects can hardly employ usual words and expressions such as please, thanks, thank you and greetings in general. It has also been seen problems in the use of modal verbs, among other things.

Within such a context, let us now analyze the use of the Conversational Principle of Geoffrey Leech. Each task has been evaluated according to his Politeness Maxims, and in so doing, we obtained the following general results:

The maxim of Tact: This maxim is the highest scored by the subjects. An average of 8.4 of our sample applied “Tact” answering to the test.

The maxim of Generosity: This maxim is closely related to the tact maxim. The final result of the use of this maxim is of average 5.4 in the scale one to ten.

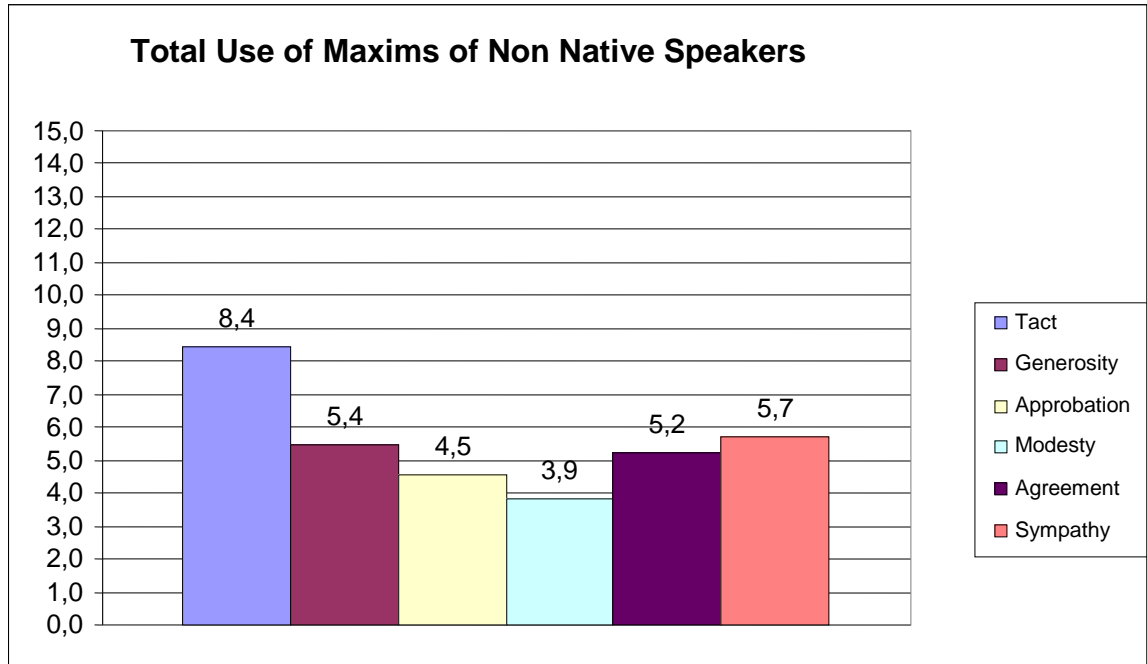
The maxim of Approbation: The obtained mean in this task is 4.5. It means that almost half of the students do not express approval of others. They probably can communicate what they think, but not what they feel.

The maxim of Modesty: The lower score corresponds to the employment of this maxim. Only 3.9 students out of ten employed this maxim. It was proved that the subjects concentrated more on themselves than in their interlocutors when giving their answers.

The maxim of Agreement: The result represents a mean of 5.2 of ten students that employed this maxim. It is better than others but still it is only a half. It means that it is hard for the students to agree or put the ideas together with other people, something basic to have harmonious relationships.

The maxim of Sympathy: The average of 5.7 of right answers. Someone not sympathetic in his speech will hardly be able to demonstrate tact, generosity, etc.

Chart N°17



CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS

5 Conclusions

After having reviewed in depth the theory on politeness and having designed, applied and evaluated our DCT, in order to collect the data for this research study, we believe that we have finally arrived to an important conclusion, which is connected to the essence of our study objectives and hypothesis. Therefore, we think it is possible to conclude the following:

Our hypothesis was confirmed, but not in a categorical way.

- H₁: The language of the non-native speakers under study is fairly accurate, grammatically speaking, but inadequate or distant from the common socio-cultural norms of the target language in which specific utterances are used.

Different from what was expected, the subjects of the study exhibited important problems in accuracy, say, in the use of grammatically correct expressions. Many of the answers of the subjects proved to be poorly grammatical, although, in general, their expressions were comprehensible. This means that the students of the Department of Linguistics and Languages are not always competent in the use of grammar. For example, in test 26, we extracted the following answer: “Sorry, I’m enough but I could help you. Washing the dishes”. In the answer, we identified a semantic problem, problems with tenses and punctuation.

On the other hand, the level of Sociolinguistic Competence was rather low, too, concluding that the most important problem of politeness may reside in this factor. As

observed in the different charts, less than 50% of maxims are used by the non-native English speakers, which is really distressing.

Based on a summary of the whole analysis, we can conclude that **the language of non-native speakers of English is rather inaccurate in terms of both grammar and sociolinguistic competence**. Different from our hypothesis, **the sample exhibited problems of communicative competence not only at the level of linguistic rules, but also at the level of socio-cultural norms use**.

We arrived to this conclusion after carrying out a detailed analysis, which did not only help us measure our hypothesis, but also identify an amazing number of other insights which derived from the data obtained through the test used to elicit the required data. Hence, let us consider the following details:

With regard to the first specific objective, which was "to measure how 'accurate' the oral performances of undergraduate students are compared to the performances of native speakers, when encountering real communicative situations, as far as "linguistics rules" are concerned, the results obtained show 41% of communicative failure, which is understood as inadequate or failed attempt to communicate politely.

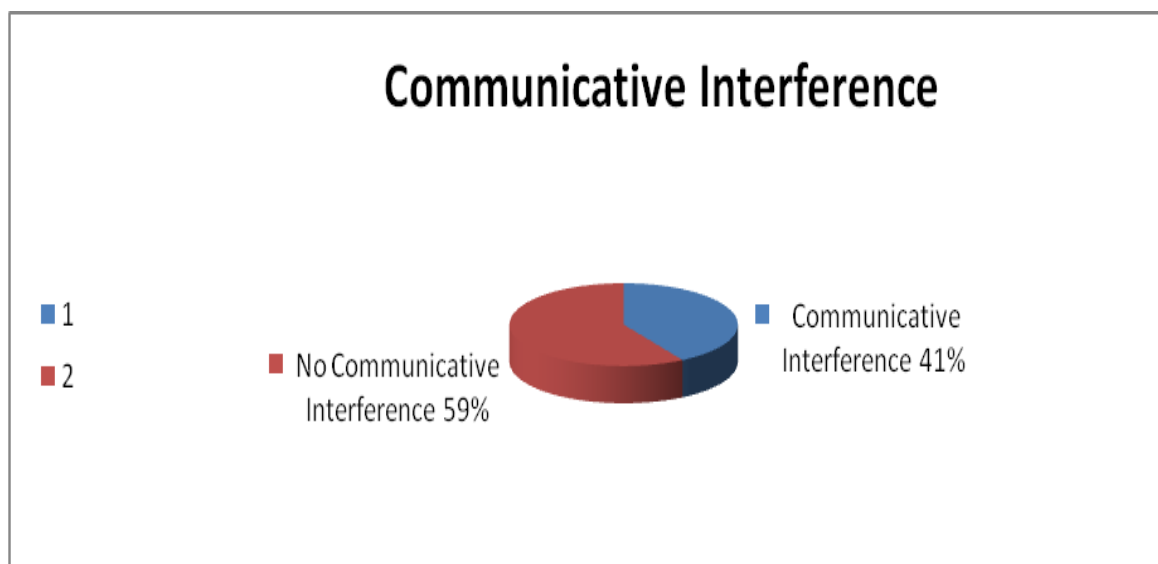
On the other, with regard to accuracy, we actually expected a level of accuracy which is higher than the reached percentage. Among other things, the most important problems of grammar identified have been: lack of tense concordance, modal verbs, spelling, and vocabulary.

In sum, considering that the people of our sample are soon going to graduate as linguists in English, we do not think this is a promising result.

As follows, we propose to elaborate a bit more on the insights of this research which, we think, broadly supports our final conclusion.

5.1.1 Communicative Interference

Chart N°18



The second specific objective is to measure how “adequate” the oral performances of undergraduate students are compared to the performances of native speakers, when encountering real communicative situations, as far as “socio-cultural” norms are concerned. To achieve this objective, a discourse completion test with fifteen different tasks has been designed and applied. We applied it first to a control group of English Native speakers in order to have a real reference about a usual effective performance. Next, the same test in Spanish was applied to a control group in order to know if it was possible for the students of the Linguistics Department to answer to the 15 tasks in their mother language. Finally the English test was applied to the sample.

Chart N^o19

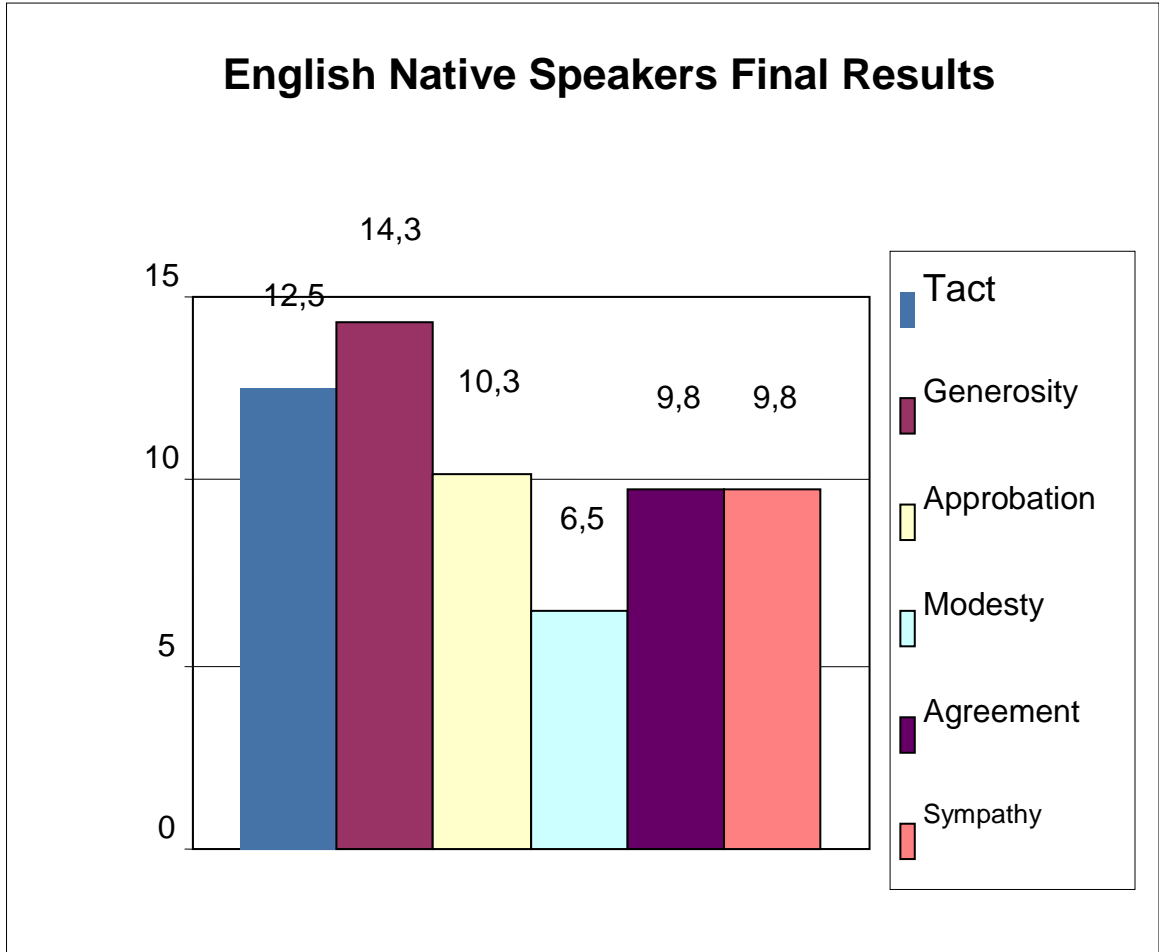
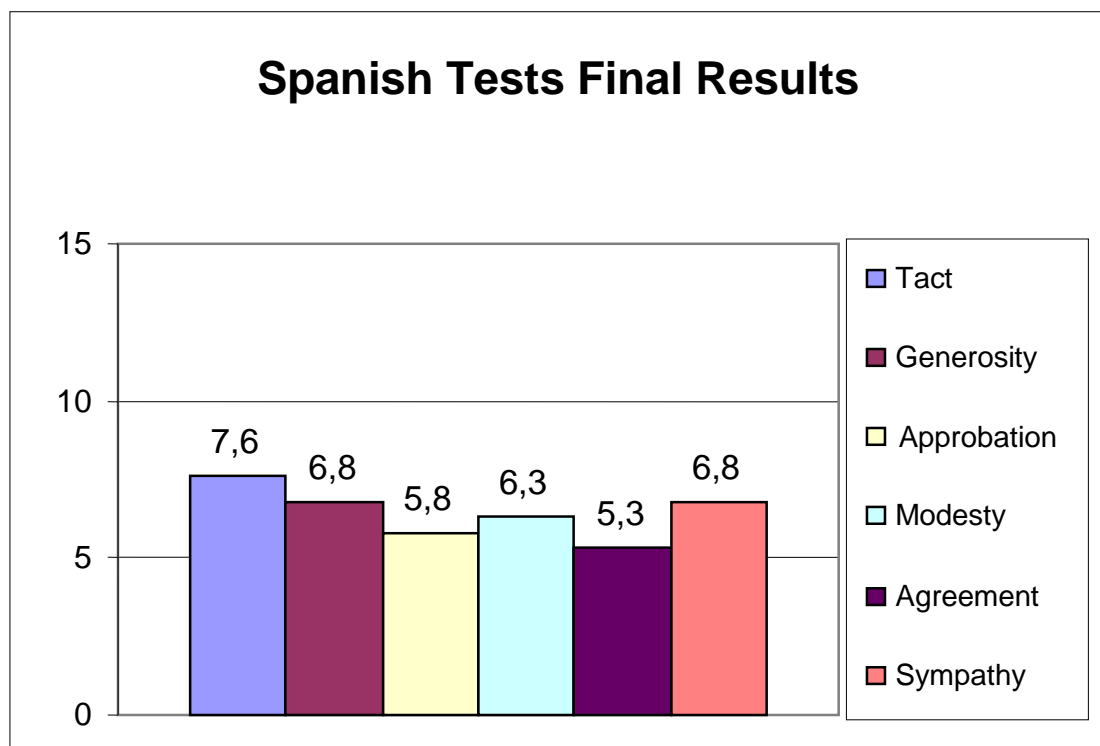


Chart N°20



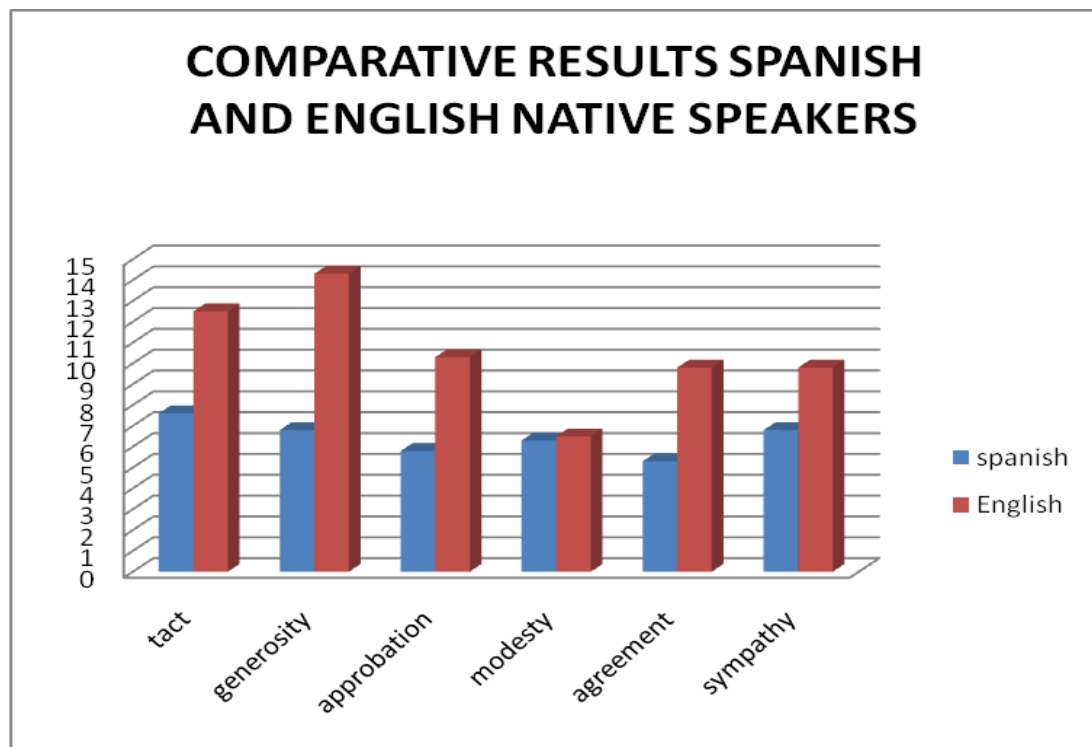
Here we arrived to very interesting results. Making the comparison between the use of politeness of English and Spanish speakers in their mother tongue languages, it is clearly seen that English speakers from the control group are more polite than the Spanish speakers from our sample that answered the same tasks. This data shows that students of Linguistics and Languages Department would need to emphasize the study of socio cultural norms in the foreign language they are learning, going beyond the socio-cultural norms learned in Spanish.

Now, coming to the most important, comparing the results of English native speakers and the non native speakers' results, we found important differences. In the first maxim, Tact, the English speakers have an advantage of 4.1 points. For the Generosity maxim, we can see a larger difference of 9.2 times. In the maxim of Approbation, the difference is 5.8. The shorter distance between results appears in the Modesty maxim. The

Agreement maxim is used by native speakers 4.6 times more than the non native speakers. And finally in Sympathy, the native speakers were 4.1 times better than the non native speakers. This chart also shows that not even native speakers reached an excellent score of 15 on any maxim and it is important to say that it was not expect because, as it was said before, the maxims are not always used in the same way.

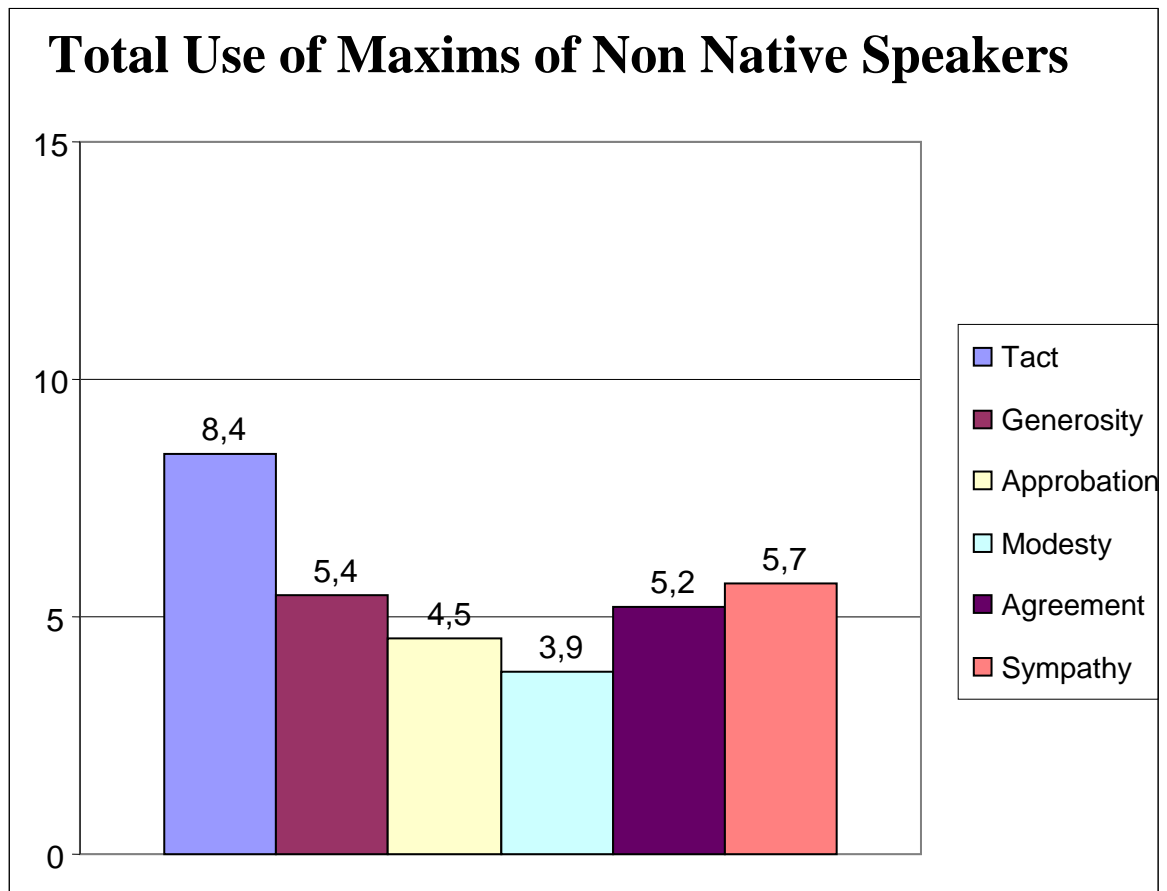
As we can see in the following chart, English native speakers of the control group reveal to be a bit more polite in their mother language than Spanish native speakers that answered the same test in Spanish. The non native speakers of English expressed themselves more politely in their second language than in their first language. The chart below shows an average of how many times the speakers used each maxim; it is measured in the scale from one to fifteen according to the number of tasks that they answered on the tests.

Chart N°21



The chart below illustrates the frequency that the students from the sample used each maxim, answering the fifteen tasks of the test. For example, on the average, the students used the Modesty maxim only 3.9 times.

Chart N°22



5.2 Suggestions

This research has proven that the students of the Department of Linguistics and Languages are not communicatively competent yet. However, that reality can change if teachers and students work together for it. On this regard, we would like to suggest

some changes for this Department and some activities to practice politeness in the classroom:

First, we would suggest reinforcing the learning process with programmed “communication workshop”. The main objective of this workshop would be to train sociolinguistic competent linguists. The activities should be led by a monitor in charge of making participate to all the students in conversations, to create real-like situations where the students would use socio-cultural norms and specific expressions. The students would have to fulfill a minimum of participation hours in this workshop before graduation to make sure that they have practiced what they learned. This kind of practice will surely help to improve fluency in the students’ discourse.

In second place, but related to the first suggestion, we propose to look for a cooperation program with universities from English speaking countries. It would consist on offer to the English students from those universities to make an internship in the Linguistics Department. This intern, as native speaker would provide a very useful input to the EFL students in the Communication Workshop.

Finally, our last suggestion is to evaluate periodically the Communicative Competence of the English students. In this case we evaluated the Linguistic and the Sociolinguistic Competences. It gave us a clear idea of the weakness and needs of the undergraduate students. However, Discourse and Strategic Competences also need to be evaluated. The results of the frequent analysis of the four competences will guide to a better learning process and more satisfactory results of the teachers’ effort.

5.2.1 Teaching Politeness Activities

Politeness is never a specific topic in English text books. It is something that can be learnt progressively. Sometimes the text books present politeness strategies. To make

sure that the students acquire that knowledge and be able to use it appropriately the politeness strategies should be presented in a contextualised manner⁴². For example:

Activity #1

After reading dialogues students should write down on a separate piece of paper the answers to these questions:

1. *Where are the people?*
2. *What is the relationship between them?*

E.g.:

1. A: Hello. Nice day, isn't it?
B: Yes, very nice.
2. A: The traffic's terrible this morning, isn't it?
B: Yes, awful. It took me an hour to get here.⁴³

1. Where are the people?
- *They are in a public place.*
2. What is the relationship between them?
- *They do not know each other but the circumstances make them to share a space.*

⁴² MORENO Soledad, POLITENESS AND TEXTBOOKS: HOW TO APPROACH THE TEACHING OF COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE IN A SECOND LANGUAGE, Jornades de Foment de la Investigació, Universitat Jaume

⁴³ AXBEY Susan, REAL TIME AMERICA 4, Student's Book, Page 34, Richmond Publishing, 2000

The teacher can explain that people often talk about the transportation or weather when they meet to be friendly and polite.

After that, knowing the context, students can practice with other students how to start conversations politely.

Activity #2

In one speech situation speakers can perform different speech acts using different utterances. Teachers can guide the students to identify the different polite expressions and its use. In these activities we can employ instruments like films scenes and letters. For example:

- In a separate piece of paper answer:

How many times Judy does ask for information? What does she say each time? What greetings does she use? What does she say to express she is thankful? When Judy says 'I'd be really grateful if you can send this stuff pretty soon' is she saying is she being thankful or asking for a quick answer, or both?

Dallas, Monday, April 21

Dear Karen,

Hi! How are you? I'm writing to get some ideas and help about a vacation in Canada. David and I want to visit the Great Lakes. We'd like to find out about places to stay and also how to get around. We've heard that renting a car costs an arm and a leg. Is that true? Please send us any info you have on car rentals. We'd also like information about youth hostels and other cheap places to stay.

I'd be really grateful if you can send this stuff pretty soon. Thanks a lot for your help. Looking forward to hearing from you.

Love,

Judy⁴⁴

Greeting:

Hi! How are you?

Love,

Asking for *information*:

I'm writing to get some ideas and help...

We'd like to find out...

We've heard that... is that true?

Please send us any info you have on...

We'd also like information about...

Thanks:

Thanks a lot for...

⁴⁴ AXBEY Susan, REAL TIME AMERICA 4, Student's Book, Page 55, Richmond Publishing, 2000

After identifying the polite expressions students work in pairs and create a dialogue to ask information to a friend and perform it in front of the class.

Activity #3

A possible a fun activity to make with a class is to separate a day for role-playing directed to practice politeness strategies. Separate the students in small groups and assign each group to set a particular scene. For example: a wedding, a birthday party, a souvenir store, a funeral, an information desk, etc. The students will not need to change the entire classroom, only to bring something representative to contextualize the situation, for example birthday decoration. The teacher will have ready some ‘situation’ cards where each character will be described as well as the situation in particular. For example:

Play: Tourist shopping

Role: Mark Johnson (tourist)

Place: Souvenir store

Task: Ask the salesman for some stuff you are interested in, choose some items, talk about the cost, pay and leave the store.

At the beginning of the role-playing day, the teacher will design a role to each student and give them the correspondent card. After reading the cards the students will perform the role-play in front of the class. The teacher should make sure that the students are being polite. If they are not or they do not know what to say another student can suggest a possible utterance. If any student knows an appropriate way to continue the interaction, the teacher will give them options to choose the right way to say. When they would know the correct manner the students can perform the role-play again.

Activity #4

Politeness strategies are culturally bound and what is appropriate in one culture may not be appropriate in another. The students need to be told about these aspects of the language. The teacher can lead them to reflect on what strategies they use in their own language and the language they are learning. For example:

- 1. In what situations do you apologize more often?*
- 2. What would you say in those situations in English?*

Write the answers on the board and explain them if they need to act in the same way in an English speaking country or not. For example in a Hispanic society people do not often apologize when being late to an informal meeting, but they need to do it in an Anglophonic society.

Activity #5

For this activity the teacher will provide the students a formal letter, in this case we took one from a text book⁴⁵. Students will read this letter and pick out some of the characteristics that make it fairly formal. After that, the teacher will explain the Politeness Principle of Geoffrey Leech and all the class together will evaluate if the letter follows that principle. For example:

I know you are very busy, but if you would like to suggest a time and day to suit you, I could come to your hotel.

⁴⁵ FRIED-BOOTH Diana, “*RICHMOND FIRST CERTIFICATE COURSE*”, Richmond Publishing, 1997, pg. 46

In this phrase we can observe the Tact Maxim that minimize cost to other; the Generosity Maxim that maximize cost to self; the Approbation Maxim that maximize praise of other; the Modesty Maxim that minimize prise of self; the Agreement Maxim that maximize agreement between self and other and the Sympathy Maxim that maximize sympathy between self and other.

Rua Vitoria 759
10660 Buenos Aires
Argentina

April 10th 1997

Dear Ms. Crawford,

An article about you in our local newspaper last month mentioned that you will be staying in Buenos Aires for a week at the beginning of May.

I am a nineteen-year-old student studying fashion and design and I am preparing a dissertation for my end-of-year portfolio entitled 'Supermodels'. I am writing to ask whether you would be willing to allow me to interview you when you are in Buenos Aires. I know you are very busy, but if you would like to suggest a time and day to suit you, I could come to your hotel. Alternatively, if it would be more convenient I could go to the TV studios where I read you will be doing a photographic session.

I would particularly like to ask you some questions about the early part of your career and what made you interested in modelling. However, I shall quite understand if you prefer not to answer all my questions.

I look forward to hearing from you and very much hope you will be able to see me.

Yours sincerely;

Jorge Mendoza

Finally, the students can perform an interview representing Jorge Mendoza and Cindy Crawford. The teacher should control the use of the Politeness Principle and formal register.

Activity #6

(From englishbanana.com)

Polite or Impolite Sentences – Matching Activity

*Print and cut out the cards, then mix them up. Students have to find the twelve matching pairs shown below, which each contain one polite sentence and one impolite sentence. Students should then identify which sentence is polite and which is impolite in each matching pair, and discuss why (e.g. Using the imperative form – “**Give me** your money” – can be impolite)*

Polite	Can I help you, madam?
Impolite	What do you want?
Polite	Would you be able to type in your pin number, please?
Impolite	Type in your PIN number.
Polite	Can I have a non-smoking seat?
Impolite	I want a non-smoking seat
Polite	Is it possible for me to take my bike on the train with me?
Impolite	I'm going to take my bike.
Polite	Could you remove your card, sir?
Impolite	Take out your card.
Polite	Would you like to pay by cash or debit card?
Impolite	Give me your money.
Polite	Have you got any timetables for Derby to London trains?
Impolite	Give me a timetable for Derby to London trains.
Polite	I would like a return ticket to Nottingham, please.
Impolite	I want a return ticket to Nottingham.
Polite	Excuse me- where are the toilets?
Impolite	Where are the toilets?
Polite	Is that everything?
Impolite	Is that it?
Polite	Sorry, would you mind repeating that, please?
Impolite	What?
Polite	Please take a seat.
Impolite	Sit down over there.

Activity #7

Practicing Requests⁴⁶

After teaching the four ways of making requests in English, assign activities to the ESL students as practice. For example:

- **Writing practice:** Have the students write one request using all four request strategies, e.g., Bake me a cake (bald on-record); Please bake me a cake, darling (positive politeness); You wouldn't mind baking me a cake, would you? (Negative politeness); and I would really love a cake.
- **Spoken practice:** Divide the class into small groups and have the students practice making and granting or denying requests orally, e.g., Could you open the window? Sure! Or please call me tomorrow. I can't; I'll be out of town tomorrow.
- **Identification practice:** Provide the students with a list of requests and have them identify the politeness strategy used, e.g., Could you bring a dessert to dinner? (negative politeness)

The teacher must always test the activity before applying it checking if the possible answers may include the Politeness Principle of G. Leech.

⁴⁶ <http://www.brighthub.com/education/languages/articles/64944.aspx>

APPENDIX I

PILOT TEST RESULTS ENGLISH NATIVE SPEAKERS

This table shows the final results of the tests applied to English Native Speakers. The column on the left shows the number of tests. The six next columns are labeled according to the six Conversational Maxims of G. Leech. Therefore each cell contains the result of every test according to the maxims. At the end of each column is the average of correct answers of the tests.

TEST	MAXIMS					
	TACT	GENEROSITY	APPROBATION	MODESTY	AGREEMENT	SYMPATHY
1	13	8	10	8	9	7
2	14	21	12	9	13	14
3	13	8	9	3	7	8
4	10	20	10	6	10	10
	12,5	14,3	10,3	6,5	9,8	9,8

APPENDIX II

PILOT TEST RESULTS SPANISH NATIVE SPEAKERS

The following graph shows the results of every test applied in Spanish to students of the Department of Linguistics and Languages. The column on the left shows the number of tests. The six next columns are labeled according to the six Conversational Maxims of G. Leech. Therefore each cell contains the result of every test according to the maxims. At the end of each column the average of correct answers of the tests is shown. For example, in the first column we see that the Tact Maxim is used in average 7.6 times in the answers to the fifteen proposed tasks.

PRUEBA	MÁXIMAS					
	TACTO	GENEROSIDAD	APROBACIÓN	MODESTIA	ACUERDO	SIMPATÍA
1	14	11	10	10	10	9
2	5	5	4	3	3	3
3	2	2	1	0	2	2
4	12	13	13	14	9	14
5	1	1	1	1	1	2
6	10	9	7	8	6	9
7	2	2	1	2	0	2
8	12	13	13	14	9	14
9	6	5	3	3	7	6
10	12	7	5	8	6	7
	7,6	6,8	5,8	6,3	5,3	6,8

The next table shows the comparison of the results of the two Pilot Tests:

COMPARATIVE RESULTS SPANISH AND ENGLISH NATIVE SPEAKERS						
TEST	MAXIMS					
	TACT	GENEROSITY	APPROBATION	MODESTY	AGREEMENT	SYMPATHY
SPANISH	7,6	6,8	5,8	6,3	5,3	6,8
ENGLISH	12,5	14,3	10,3	6,5	9,8	9,8

APPENDIX III

DISCOURSE COMPLETION TEST RESULTS NON NATIVE ENGLISH SPEAKERS

This table illustrates the final results of the Discourse Completion Tests applied to forty one students of the Linguistics and Languages Department. The first column on the left correspond to each test. The six next columns are labeled according to the six Conversational Maxims of Geoffrey Leech. Therefore each cell contains the result of each test according to the six maxims. Finally on the bottom of the columns is the average of correct answers.

TEST	MAXIMS					
	TACT	GENEROSITY	APPROBATION	MODESTY	AGREEMENT	SYMPATHY
1	9	7	6	7	7	5
2	0	0	0	0	0	0
3	9	7	6	3	6	6
4	1	0	1	0	0	1
5	3	1	3	1	2	2
6	7	6	11	1	6	8
7	15	10	7	8	1	13
8	13	13	0	6	13	7
9	6	5	3	3	7	6
10	12	7	5	8	6	7
11	11	8	9	8	6	8
12	5	5	6	3	12	5
13	10	6	6	7	4	9
14	5	3	5	1	9	4
15	3	2	2	1	5	1
16	8	4	3	2	0	4
17	4	4	5	2	2	2
18	5	1	3	1	3	3
19	3	1	0	1	3	2
20	9	6	2	1	1	7
21	4	3	1	3	5	3
22	7	5	4	4	3	5
23	9	3	1	0	4	4
24	8	4	2	4	0	7
25	12	8	5	5	4	9
26	15	6	9	9	7	7
27	14	7	7	8	10	10
28	13	9	7	5	7	6
29	3	2	2	1	11	1
30	8	4	4	2	2	2
31	11	13	10	6	10	12
32	8	4	3	3	2	4
33	9	3	1	0	0	4
34	8	4	2	4	4	7
35	12	8	5	7	7	9
36	15	6	9	9	10	7
37	14	7	7	8	7	10
38	13	9	7	5	11	6
39	6	5	4	3	4	5
40	8	4	3	2	2	4
41	11	13	10	6	10	12
	8,4	5,4	4,5	3,9	5,2	5,7

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. BACELAR DA SILVA Antonio, *The effects of instruction on pragmatic development: teaching polite Refusals in English*, University of Hawaii
2. BERTUCELLI Marcella, *Qué es la Pragmática*, Paidós, 1st. Spanish Edition, 1996
3. BROERSMA David, *How do I learn sociolinguistic competence?*, The Institute for Cross-Cultural Training, 2001
4. CAMPSALL Steve (s.a.)
5. EKAYATI Rini, *Linguistics and Communicative Competence*, The Indonesian Student Association in India Press, 2007
6. ENCYCLOPEDIA OF APPLIED LINGUISTICS, http://www.blackwellreference.com/public/tocnode?query=communicative+competence&widen=1&result_number=1&from=search&fuzzy=0&type=std&id=g9780631214823_chunk_g97806312148237_ss1-38&slop=1
7. HERNÁNDEZ Roberto, FERNÁNDEZ Carlos, BAPTISTA Pilar, *Metodología de la Investigación*, McGraw Hill, tercera edición, 2003
8. HYMES Dell, *On Communicative Competence*, 1972
9. ICAL WIKI web page, [http://www.icalweb.com/wiki/index.php?title=Accuracy_vs_Fluency\(s.a.\)](http://www.icalweb.com/wiki/index.php?title=Accuracy_vs_Fluency(s.a.))
10. Edited by JOHNSON Keith and JOHNSON Helen, *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Applied Linguistics*, Blackwell, 1999

11. KASPER Gabriele, *Can Pragmatic Competence be Taught?*, Second Language Teaching & Curriculum Center, University of Hawai'i, 1997
12. LIM Lauren and GUY Gregory, *The Limits of Linguistic Community: Speech Styles and Variable Constraint Effects*, <http://homepages.nyu.edu/~lz219/Lim&GuyNWAV32.pdf>
13. LINGUALINKS, <http://www.sil.org/lingualinks/languagelearning/otherresources/gudlnsfralnggandcltrlrngprgrm/whatisdiscoursecompetencetextu.htm>
14. McNAMARA Tim, *Language Testing*, Oxford University Press, 2000
15. MEY Jacob L., *Pragmatics (an introduction)*, Blackwell, 1996
16. MILLS, 2003, p. 6, mentioned on http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Politeness_theory
17. MOORE Andrew, 2001, <http://www.shunsley.eril.net/armoore/>
18. MOORE A., *Pragmatics and speech acts*, <http://www.teachit.co.uk/armoore/lang/pragmatics.htm#top> (s.a.)
19. O'SULLIVAN Wilma, *A Study on Politeness teaching to English Learners in China*, The International Journal of Language Society and Culture, University of Tasmania
20. PATRICK Peter, <http://courses.essex.ac.uk/lg/lg232/SpeechComDefs.html>, 1999
21. PHILLIPS John, TAN Chrissie, *Linguistic Competence*, The Literary Encyclopedia, <http://litencyc.com/php/stopics.php?rec=true&UID=208>
22. RAOSOFT, <http://www.raosoft.com/samplesize.html>

23. SOPENA Enciclopedia Universal, Vol. VIII, Ramon Sopena Editorial, S.A. 1977
24. TANCK Sharyl, *Speech Act Sets of Refusal and Complaint: A comparison of Native and Non-native English Speakers' Production*, 2002
25. TARONE Elaine, *Teaching Strategic Competence in the Foreign Language Classroom, 1983*, http://eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2sql/content_storage_01/0000019b/80/34/92/54.pdf
26. TORABI Mohammad, *Linguistics and Ethnography of Communication*, Journal of Faculty of Letters and Humanities N°190, http://www.sid.ir/en/VEWSSID/J_pdf/874200419003.pdf (s.a.)
27. VARGHESE, Manka; BILLMYER, Kristine, *Investigating the Structure of Discourse Completion Tests*, Working Papers in Educational Linguistics; v12, 1996
28. WIKIPEDIA, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anthropology> (s.a.)
29. WITHERELL Margaret, TAYLOR Stephanie and YEATES Simeon, *Discourse as Data: A guide for analysis*, SAGE Publications, London (s.a)