The Pragmatic Suitability of the Algerian ELT Secondary School Textbooks: The Case of Requests and Apologies

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Abstract

The present study investigates the extent to which the Algerian ELT secondary school textbooks are pragmatically-suitable with regard to the speech acts of request and apology. The study aims at exploring the appropriacy and adequacy of the input at the pragmalinguistic and the sociopragmatic levels. It also aims to explore the metapragmatic information associated with it. All the requests and apologies that appear in these books have been identified, then coded and analysed. The findings show that although the textbooks provide a minimum of the linguistic forms used for the production of these two speech acts, they are rather limited when it comes to associating them with the relevant contextual and cultural factors. Also, there is a paucity in supplying the metapragmatic information. In this respect, the material used cannot lead to the acquisition of these two speech acts. It is, therefore, recommended that the textbook writers should address these shortcomings.

Keywords: Algerian Secondary School textbooks, apologies, pragmatic instruction, requests, pragmatic suitability.

Introduction

The textbook is a part and parcel of the teaching/learning process in foreign language (FL) and second language (SL) contexts. In communicative language teaching (CLT), the textbook is not only supposed to provide learners with the linguistic knowledge, but also with the contextual and the pragmatic aspect of it. In Algeria, English is taught as a FL. The new curriculum for teaching English, as reformed by the Ministry of National Education in 2005, has incorporated the CLT. The textbooks writers state that the syllabus and, thus, the textbooks are prepared on the Competency-Based Approach with the objective to enable learners to interact orally in English, interpret and produce oral/written texts (Riche et al. 2006: 4). This amounts to saying that the pragmatic development is at the heart of the newly introduced syllabus.

Since then, no comprehensive study has ever been conducted to assess the extent to which the stated objectives have been fulfilled by the proposed input in the material. The present study aims to contribute in this direction. Requests and apologies have been selected as they are among the frequent speech acts in the target language.

The paper addresses two main questions:

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

Theoretical Background:

Linguistic proficiency and Pragmatic Competence:

The models of Communicative Competence (CC) which have been developed in the context of pedagogy sought to strike a balance between linguistic abilities that enable learners to produce grammatically acceptable sentences and the potential of being appropriate in a particular social context. Celce-Murcia (2007) proposed a model which includes the following competencies: the sociocultural, the discoursal, the linguistic, the formulaic, the interactional and the strategic. According to Celce-Murcia, this model gives importance to culture and discourse as well as strikes a balance between language as a system and as a formula (communicative means). It also focuses on the dynamic aspects of interaction as well as learners' strategies (2007: 51-54).

There is a controversy in the literature on the issue whether linguistic proficiency helps in better pragmatic achievement, especially at the level of speech acts production. That is, some studies have proven that proficient learners are better able to approximate the native performance, while others have not proven marked advantage for the proficient learners over the less proficient ones. Maeshiba et al. (1996) suggested that the more proficient the learners the less likely they were to fall back on their native language 'guidelines' and, thus, were better able to emulate American apologies. The study of Sabaté and Curell i Gotor (2007) suggested that the increase in the proficiency level leads to the decrease in 'non-L2-like' pragmalinguistic performance, but exhibition of more sociopragmatic 'non-native-like' performances in L2 apologies.

All in all, such studies show that, oftentimes, even advanced learners in terms of grammar are likely to face pragmatic problems (Salazar Campillo 2007: 208). For this reason, researchers are investigating the possible ways of direct and explicit teaching of pragmatic competence.

Teaching Pragmatics:

Kasper and Schmidt (1996: 160) state that, "There is every reason to expect that pragmatic knowledge should be teachable," especially in the FL setting where the chances of the full range of human interactions are very limited. To test whether pragmatic knowledge is really teachable, many studies have been conducted to realize the outcome of instructions on learners' performance. Olshtain and Cohen (1990, cited in Cohen, 1998) dealt with the effect of explicit teaching on the performance of advanced EFL learners in apologies. The learners were first pretested to determine the state of their pragmatic knowledge, then posttested after exposing them to three 20-minute lessons on the strategies for performing the speech act sets of apology and the different modifications that go with this act. The researchers concluded that aspects like intensification and downgrading as well as differences between strategies and the situational features can really be taught. Eslami-Rasekh et al. (2004) exposed a group of Iranian EFL learners to twelve-sessions on metapragmatic instruction like teacher-fronted discussion, role play of the intended speech acts, discussion of the frequent pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic deviations of examples produced by students, then responding to a discourse completion task. The subjects were pretested and posttested regarding their comprehension of request, apology and complaint. The authors concluded that explicit metapragmatic instruction facilitates interlanguage pragmatic development. This, therefore, suggests that pragmatic competence does not seem resistant to explicit instruction. To put it in Cohen's words "[d]espite the studies with mixed results, it would still appear that learners stand to benefit from explicit focus on pragmatics (2005: 287)."

Among the very likely ways to present learners with pragmatic input is through the textbook. The growing literature on studies which assess the pragmatic input reveals a shortage in pragmatic information in learning/teaching materials. Vellenga (2004) and Salazar Campillo (2007) are archetypal of such studies. Vellenga (2004) analysed eight ESL and EFL textbooks to determine the amount and the quality of the pragmatic information. As her findings indicated, there was a dearth in metapragmatic and metalinguistic information as regards the spoken language; the EFL textbooks included more information while the ESL textbooks had better quality regarding variety of the speech acts and the metapragmatic cues. Additionally, the included metapragmatic information was limited in the range of options. This led the author to conclude that the acquisition of pragmatic competence via these materials is highly unlikely. Salazar Campillo (2007) analysed request mitigation in ELT textbooks. The findings suggest the ignorance of a number of mitigators and the focus on a small number of them, namely the use of *please* and some other combinations.

Producing and Analysing Requests and Apologies:

The appropriate production of the illocutionary force requires *sociocultural* and *sociolinguistic* abilities (Cohen, 1996). That is, the skill to choose the appropriate strategies given the target culture, age, gender of the interlocutors, their social class etc. and the skill to select the appropriate linguistic forms to realise the speech act like the choice between *sorry* or *excuse me* in apology (p. 22-23).

To cope with the different semantic formulae/strategies used for realising these two acts, many models have been developed for analysing them.

Requests:

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

Example 1:

Could you please lend me your dictionary? [Core request] *I just need it for a minute.* [Peripheral element]

Table 1 represents the taxonomy suggested by Trosborg (1995) for HA strategies.

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

Request Strategies (Increasing Directness)		
Situation		Speaker Requests to Borrow Hearer's Car
Indirect	*Hints* mild Strong	*I have to be at the airport in half an hour.* *My car has broken down.*
Convention- ally Indirect	*Hearer-oriented conditions* Ability Willingness Permission Suggestory Formulae *Speaker-based conditions* Wishes Desire/needs	*Could you lend me your car?* *Would you lend me your car?* *May I borrow your car?* *How about lending me your car?* *I would like to borrow your car.* *I want/need to borrow your car.*

Direct	Obligation
	 Performatives
	    Hedged
	    Unhedged
	Imperatives
	Elliptical phrases
		You must/have to lend me your car.
		
		I would like to ask you to lend me your car.
		I ask/require you to lend me your car.
		Lend me your car.
		Your car (please).

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

Example 2:

I forgot my wallet at home and I need some money to make photocopies.[External; SM] *Do you think that* [Internal] *you could lend me 30 cents?*

Alcón et al. (2005) suggested this taxonomy for SMs.

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

Type	Sub-Type	Example
Internal Modification	Openers	*Do you think* you would open the window? *Would you mind* opening the window?

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

Apologies:

Bergman and Kasper (1993: 82) define apology as a "compensatory action to an offence in the doing of which S [the speaker] is causally involved and is costly to the H [hearer]." The following strategies make up the speech act set of the apologising act (Cohen 1998: 386):

1. *An expression of apology [IFIDs: illocutionary force indicating devices]*, a word, expression or sentence which contains a relevant performative verb like *apologise, forgive, excuse, be sorry*.
2. *An explanation or account of the situation* which indirectly caused the apologiser to commit the offense.
3. *Acknowledgement of responsibility*, the offender recognises his or her fault in causing the infraction.
4. *An offer of repair*, the apologiser makes a bid to carry out an action or provide payment for some kind of damage which resulted from the infraction.
5. *A promise of nonrecurrence,* the apologiser commits himself or herself not to have the offence happen again.

Each of the above strategies may stand by itself as an adequate apology, but often they appear in combination (Example 3). The expression of apology may also be intensified by means of adverbials like *very, so, terribly, awfully* and emotional expressions like *oh no!, oh crap!, oh my gosh, oops!!*

Example 3

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

The Study

 Data:

  The data for this study incorporates speech acts of all the requests and apologies, whether spoken or written, that appear in the Algerian secondary school manuals. Both the textbooks and the Teacher's Books are considered in this paper. Therefore, the pairs of textbooks and Teacher's Books of the three levels are referred to as Book 1, Book 2, and Book 3 respectively.

 Results and Discussion:

 Requests:

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

Table 3: *Number of Requests in the Three Textbooks*

Requests No. (%)	Book 1	Book 2	Book 3	Total
	61 (62.50%)	23 (22.12%)	16 (15.38%)	100 (100%)

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

Table 4: *Use of HA Strategies in the Three Textbooks*

HAs No. (%)	Sub-Types	Book 1	Book 2	Book 3
Indirect	Hints	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
Convention-ally Indirect	*Hearer- Oriented* Ability	40 (61.54%)	7 (30.43%)	5 (31.25%)
	Willingness	6 (9.23%)	6 (26.09%)	1 (6.25%)
	Permission	3 (4.62%)	1 (4.35%)	0 (0.00%)
	Suggestory Formulae	0 (0.00%)	4 (17.39%)	0 (0.00%)
	Speaker-Based Wishes	2 (3.08%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
	Desires/Needs	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
	Total	51 (78.46%)	18 (78.26%)	6 (37.50%)

Direct	Obligation	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	2 (12.5%)
	Performatives	2 (3.08%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
	Imperatives	10 (15.38%)	5 (21.74%)	5 (31.25%)
	Elliptical Phrase	2 (3.08%)	0 (0.00%)	3 (18.75%)
	Total	14 (21.54%)	5 (21.74%)	10 (62.50%)
General Total		65 (100%)	23 (100%)	16 (100%)

In Book 1, the use of conventionally indirect HAs outnumber the use of direct ones. The indirect HAs (hints) have not been used at all, though the author has encountered some utterances that can be considered indirect requests in the three textbooks. He has not been able to take them into consideration, because the interpretation of hints as such requires contextual information like the description of the situation, the intent of the speaker etc. that the textbooks do not offer. The conventionally indirect HAs found in the textbooks correspond, in terms of frequency, their presence in native production (e.g. Blum-Kulka et al, 1989). It is also shown in the table that the hearer-oriented HAs are more frequent than the speaker-oriented ones. This, we assume, is motivated by the use of modal verbs which is an interactive feature in English requests and, presumably, has nothing to do with context. In most cases, the contexts used in the textbooks are rigid where participants have not been specified, though in a number of cases they are, and their relationship could be inferred from the context like *friend-friend*, *chairman-attendants*, *teacher-student*, *customer-secretary*, *phonecaller-answerer*, *interviewee-interviewer* and *pedestrian-passerby*. It is obvious that *ability* is the most used sub-type (61.54%), then *willingness* (9.23%), *permission* (4.62%) and *wishes* (3.08%). In direct forms *Imperatives (*15.38%) are the most used than *performatives* (3.08%) and *elliptical phrases* (3.08%). The *elliptical phrases* need the teacher's intervention to draw the learners' attention to show that they function as requests. They are always dependent on the contextual factors to be interpreted as requests. All in all, Book 1, disregarding the absence of hints, provides the learners, at this level, with common forms for realising requests. We recommend that teachers give enough attention to direct forms and highlight the cases when there is a taboo (i.e. impoliteness) against using them as presenting them with such high frequency might lead learners to think that they are a common choice in the target requests. These forms need not be analysed in a vacuum since they have been accompanied with mitigating devices that we will consider later.

Like Book 1, Book 2 offers the common linguistic forms for realising requests. The conventionally indirect strategies are more frequent than the direct ones while the indirect strategies are totally absent. We notice the decrease in the use of *ability,* the appearance of *suggestory formulae* and the disappearance of speaker-oriented HAs. As for the direct strategies, they are limited to some *imperatives*. Generally speaking, there is a reduction in the overall number of requests and an insertion of certain forms like *suggestory formulae*. The question that arises here is whether that is purposeful or haphazard?

Book 3 includes very few HA strategies. Here, the direct forms outnumber the indirect ones. Like Book 1 and Book 2, *imperatives* and *ability* are the most used forms, 30.43% and 21.74% respectively.

One important aspect of the requestive act in English is the use of modality since it has pragmatic consequence. In the three textbooks, a variety of modals have been employed as shown in Table 5:

Table 5: *Use of Modals in the Three Textbooks*

Modals No. (%)	Can	Could	Will	Would	May	Shall	Total
Book 1	24 (74.06%)	16 (31.37%)	0 (0.00%)	7 (13.73%)	3 (5.88%)	1 (1.96%)	51 (100%)
Book 2	1 (7.14%)	5 (35.71%)	1 (7.14%)	5 (35.71%)	1 (7.14%)	1 (7.14%)	14 (100%)
Book 3	2 (28.57%)	0 (0.00%)	1 (14.29%)	2 (28.57%)	0 (0.00%)	2 (28.57%)	7 (100%)

In Book 1, the modals *can* (74.06%) and *could* (31.37%) are the most used respectively. The high frequency of these two modals seems to be counterintuitive. The textbook writers may have done that to push learners to learn these two modals, but presenting them with such frequency may lead learners to over-learn them and, thus, open the door for *induced errors* i.e. errors resulting from the faulty presentation of a structure in the textbook (Stenson, 1974). *Would* has been used less frequently (13.73%), also *may* (5.88%) and *shall* (1.96%). In Book 2 and 3, fewer modals have been used, but their presentation is more balanced as no modal is noticeably overused. From a pragmatic standpoint, modals in English ought to be handled with care, because they have a pragmatic value; they are indicators of politeness and register. Some of them are more polite and formal than others; the past forms of the modals are more polite than their present counterparts (Palmer, 1979).

The above core requests have been modified by internal mitigators and SMs as presented in Table 6. *Openers*, *understatements*, *downtoners* and *attention-getters* are the internal modifications used in Book 1. The relatively frequent use of *openers* and *attention-getters* is a feature which really reflects the actual use of these mitigators in native requests as they are considered a common speech routines. *Attention-getters*, for instance, were the commonest modification in requests drawn from a sample of films in a study conducted by Martinez-Flor (2007). The absence of *hedges*, *intensifiers*, *hesitators*, *cajolers* and *promises* in Book 1and some other mitigators in Book 2 and 3 reveal that they may not be the salient features to be included in an input directed to FL learners (Salazar Campillo 2007: 219), despite the fact that such categories, namely *cajolers* and *appealers,* are quite common in authentic data drawn, for instance, from films (Martinez-Flor, 2007). As for the SMs i.e. external modifications, apart from the over-presentation of *please* and the absence of the *promise of reward*, they seem to be balanced. The use of *grounders* is relatively higher and this is intuitively concordant with the fact that this mitigator is one of the typical sub-types of SMs (e.g. Trosborg, 1995 and Martinez-Flor, 2007).

Table 6: *Internal and External Modification in the Three Textbooks*

Type	Sub-Type No. (%)	Book 1	Book 2	Book 3
	Openers	2 (4.08%)	2 (5.41%)	0 (0.00%)

	Softeners	Understatement	3 (6.12%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
		Downtoner	1 (2.04%)	1 (2.70%)	1 (16.67%)
		Hedge	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
	Intensifiers		0 (0.00%)	2 (5.41%)	0 (0.00%)
	Fillers	Hesitators	0 (0.00%)	2 (5.41%)	0 (0.00%)
		Cajolers	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
		Appealers	1 (2.04%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
		Attention-getters	4 (8.16%)	0 (0.00%)	1 (16.67%)
	Total		11 (22.45%)	7 (18.92%)	2 (33.33%)
External Modifica-tion	Preparators		2 (4.08%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
	Grounders		4 (8.16%)	6 (16.22%)	0 (0.00%)
	Disarmers		2 (4.08%)	1 (2.70%)	3 (50.00%)
	Expanders		1 (2.04%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
	Promise of a reward		0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
	Please		29 (59.18%)	23 (62.60%)	1 (16.67%)
	Total		38 (77.55%)	30 (81.08%)	4 (66.67%)
	General Total		49 (100%)	37 (100%)	6 (100%)

As for *preparators* and *disarmers*, they are equally employed (4.08%), whereas *expanders* and *appealers* are relatively fewer (2.04%). Pragmalinguistically speaking, exposing learners to the main external modifications at this level is considered an advantage. Yet, the more we proceed in the analysis the more we feel a lack in sociopragmatic and metapragmatic knowledge that guide learners to the appropriate use of such features and only suffice to knowing them. A very outstanding feature in Book 1, as well as Book 2, is the overuse of *please* (59.18% and 62.60% respectively). Using this category in such a high frequency may have counter-effects i.e. overlearning and overuse. The placement of this politeness marker within the core requests is, to a certain extent, concordant with its presentation in natural speech. It means, *please* has been found in initial (6.90%), middle (10.34%) and final (82.76%) positions. According to Sifianou (1999), its occurrence at initial position may best be considered as an *attention-getter* or *apology* for interruption. *Please* can fulfil other functions and can also substitute the core request itself in real interactions (Martinez-Flor 2007: 271). In our analysis, it has only been considered as a politeness marker due to the lack of the contextual clues that would guide us to other interpretations.

In Book 2, we notice the appearance of *intensifiers* and *hesitators* which are of the form *I wonder if you could*. Furthermore, we notice a relative increase in using *grounders* while *please* is still overused. In Book 3, there are only few modifications, and it is no surprise, as their occurrence is concordant with that of the core requests themselves. The reason behind that is once again, most probably, linked to the pre-set objectives by the textbook writers that prioritise the written language at the expense of the spoken one.

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

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

In Book 2, the following combinations have been identified:

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

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

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

Table 7: *Use of Request Structures in the Three Textbooks*

Structures No. (%)	Book 1	Book 2	Book 3
HA Only	28 (43.08%)	9 (39.13%)	13 (81.25%)
HA + SM	28 (43.08%)	9 (39.13%)	2 (12.50%)
SM + HA	9 (13.85%)	4 (17.39%)	1 (6.25%)
SM + HA + SM	0 (0.00%)	1 (4.35%)	0 (0.00%)
Total	65 (100%)	23 (100%)	15 (100%)

As can be seen in the above table, in all the three books, HA-Only category is widely used. This indicates the oversimplification that characterises the textbooks, something which is likely to hinder the learners' pragmatic development than to foster it. It is quite understandable that the textbook writers might have opted for that considering the learners' level which might not permit them to access natural or near natural data, but this should not be at the expense of their pragmatic progress. In terms of frequency, the table implies that all the categories are presented in the textbooks. In terms of content, these structures do not really reflect the requestive patterns in natural production since in most requests of the type HA + SM and SM+

HA, the SM stands for *please* and *attention-getter* respectively. In other words, learners are offered a limited range of pragmatic choices.

We still have some comments to make concerning the metapragmatic information that accompanies the requestive act. By metapragmatic information we mean "any information related to culture, context, illocutionary force, politeness, appropriacy and/or register" (Vellenga, 2004: 5). In this paper, we consider pragmatic information that is directly related to the requestive act as well as any piece of information that has a pragmatic consequence in its production. As for counting information, one instance of metapragmatic information is the bit of information which is mentioned at one go. In Book 1, as can be seen from table 8, there is a lack of metapragmatic information. This is concordant with the fact that the largest portion of requests is implicitly tackled. That is, they have not appeared in tasks specifically centred on requests.

Table 8: *Metapragmatic Cues in the Three Textbooks*

Metapragmatic Cues No. (%)		Book 1	Book 2	Book 3
Politeness: Appropriacy/Illocutionary Force		2 (7.69%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
Register: Formal/Informal		2 (769%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
Culture-specific		0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
Contextual	Situation	3 (11.54%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
	Participants	19 (73.08%)	6 (100%)	10 (100%)
	Relationship	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
Total		26 (100%)	6(100%)	10 (100%)

As for appropriacy, while dealing with *clarification-asking task*, learners have been explicitly offered strategies and shown how to use them in context. Furthermore, teachers have been asked to demonstrate how they are used in real spoken interactions. Though limited, such explicit metapragmatic cues may provoke pragmatic awareness of how linguistic forms fit the context. As for politeness, it has been explicitly dealt with the issue of the *voice tone* and its role in conveying pragmatic attitudes (e.g. *peremptory* or *polite*). This is pragmatically relevant request performance. Register is the pragmatic issue that has received most attention. That is to say, rich information has been included. It has been explicitly mentioned that requests are made formal and informal using *could* and *can* respectively. Somewhere else in the Teacher's Book, teachers are recommended to draw the learners' attention to formal and informal (colloquial) English and their most salient features. In addition, how the choice of the right register should be made to fit the situation has been tackled. In a *phone-conversation task*, learners are offered a description of situations and, thus, the contextual factors. This is pragmatically relevant because, in phone conversations, making requests is almost inevitable. On 19 occasions, the requester and the requestee have been specified. This helps in inferring their relationship, the context and the type of interaction (e.g. *customer-secretary*). However, no explicit discussions have been found as regards the relationship between participants and its impact on pragmatic choice. In, almost, all the cases these pragmalinguistic cues have been implied; it has not been explicitly stated that they are pragmatically relevant in the production of an utterance. All in all, these pragmatic cues are unlikely to motivate pragmatic awareness and development as the general presentation of input seems to link functions of requests to particular language forms and this would limit the range of pragmatic choices learners may opt for to make their requests (Vellenga, 2004), unless

the teacher intervenes to fill in this gap. By experience, teachers do not always indulge in such a problem as they are restricted with a tight deadline to finish the programme and faced with learners who keep asking about translating words into their mother language and thus making only grammatically-correct utterances.

Book 2 and 3 are rather limited in terms of metapragmatic information offered except from specifying the participants on certain occasions. Knowing the participants is never enough if learners are not aware that the relationship and the degree of familiarity between interlocutors have an impact on the requestive act. Actually, in the three textbooks little has been done to make learners aware of these factors.

Apologies:

In comparison with requests, the three textbooks contain very few apologies. The occurrence of apologies is far from reflecting the occurrence of the apologising act in real language use settings. Findings from interlanguage and cross-cultural pragmatic studies have suggested that this linguistic act is frequently realised in speech act data gathered through various data collection instruments (e.g. Blum-Kulka et al., 1986). Book 1 includes 34.50% of the apologies; Book 2 includes 30.67% while Book 3 includes 26.09 %. It is worth mentioning that we have coded as apology not only the ones uttered for social offences, but also those that precede refusals, asking for clarification and those for hearing offence. On the whole, the distribution of apologies seems to be random and non-patterned.

Table 9: *Number of Apologies in the Three Textbooks*

Number of Apologies No. (%)	Book 1	Book 2	Book 3	Total
	9 (34.50%)	8 (30.67%)	6 (26.09%)	23(100%)

As can be seen from Table 10, *expression of apology* is the most used strategy in the three textbooks. This really reflects its high frequency in real interactions, but the overuse may always be a source of bias. This can also be counted as an oversimplification of the apologising act which is realised with a cluster of strategies no less complex than those of request.

Table 10: Use of Apology Strategies in the Three Textbooks

Apology Strategies No. (%)	Book 1	Book 2	Book 3	Total
Expression of Apology (IFID)	7 (70.00%)	8 (72.73%)	6 (100%)	21 (77.77%)
Explanation/Account	3 (30.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	3 (11.11%)
Acknowledgement of Responsibility	0 (0.00%)	3 (27.27%)	0 (0.00%)	3 (11.11%)
Offer of Repair	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
Promise of Nonrecurrence	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
Total	10 (100%)	11(100%)	6 (100%)	27(100%)

The table also indicates that the textbooks are rather limited when it comes to the other strategies. The *explanation/account* strategy appears just three times in Book 1 and the *acknowledgement of responsibility* strategy three times in Book 2 while *offer of repair* and *promise of nonrecurrence* strategies are not traceable in the three textbooks. Book 3 is always the most limited in terms of strategies since it contains only *IFIDs*. In terms of content, the textbooks

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

In accordance with the number of apologies, few combinations have been spotted. Two combinations are dominant: *IFID + explanation/account* and *IFID + acknowledgement of responsibility*. Here are some examples:

Book 1
a.   I am writing **to apologise** for the absence of my daughter Melinda from school yesterday *she had to take care of her little sister, because……* (**IFID** + *Explanation*).
 b.   I'm **sorry** I can't. *I have to go to the dentist.* (**IFID** + *Explanation*)

Book 2
c.   **Sorry**. *I should have asked for your permission first*. (**IFID** + *Acknowledgement*)
d.   **I'm really sorry**. *I shouldn't have said that.* (**IFID** + *Acknowledgement*)

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

Table 11: Use of Intensified Apologies in the Three Textbooks

Intensification No. (%)	Book 1	Book 2	Book 3	Total
Very	1 (100%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (20.00%)
Really	0 (0.0%)	1 (33.33%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (20.00%)
Sincere	0 (0.0%)	2 (66.67%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (40.00%)
Oh!	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	1 (100%)	1 (20.00%)
Total	1 (100%)	3 (100%)	1 (100%)	5 (100%)

Like in requests, the metapragmatic data relevant to the production of the apologising act is found to be limited in the textbooks examined. In Book 1, teachers are recommended to guide learners on how to *ask for clarification* using forms of apology. This might be helpful in raising awareness about the dynamics of the apologising act that is not only used for compensating social offences. Elsewhere, learners are supposed to transform a formal apology to a less formal

one through employing *sorry* instead of the verb *to apologise*. This is an attempt to make learners distinguish between registers. Unfortunately, this task has been dropped from the later editions of the textbook. As for intensification, learners are given cues how to intensify their apologies when expressing *sympathy*. They are explicitly guided to intensify their apologies using *very*, *really* and *extremely* (*sorry*). No explicit metapragmatic cues have been given in Book 2. In Book 3, there is an occasion where degrees of friendship in the English culture are discussed. The teacher could illustrate through apology, as well as request, how this aspect influences language as used in context. This pragmatic cue gives the teacher a chance to shed light on the sociopragmatic aspect of language. To sum up, the provided metapragmatic cues are very limited and, thus, unlikely to provoke pragmatic awareness and/or development.

Summary of the Results:

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

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

Conclusion:

Concordant with the findings, the following recommendations are in order. Textbooks should be enriched with empirically validated data. Here, the textbook writers can benefit from the already existing bulk of studies on interlanguage and cross-cultural pragmatics to identify areas of instruction. Data can also be sought out in authentic and spontaneous speech. As regards this point, Martinez-Flor (2007) points out that films can be a source of rich pragmatic input. Once the data is selected, it should be boosted with explicit metapragmatic information so as to show how the socio-cultural and the contextual factors influence the pragmatic choice. We agree with Cohen (2005) that the appropriacy of data is not the only issue to consider; the focus on this data should be explicit without neglecting learners' strategies in learning and performing speech acts. Cross-cultural awareness is also an inescapable factor for developing the communicative

potential of FL and SL learners. To put it in Celce-Murcia's (2007) words, "[i]f the role of language instruction is communicative competence, language instruction must be integrated with cultural and cross-cultural instruction (p. 51)."

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