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Developing Request-Response Adjacency Pairs through a Concept-Based Pragmatic Approach

Desarrollando pares de adyacencia de petición-respuesta a través de un enfoque pragmático basado en conceptos

Iván José Gil-Ejarque
Esther Usó-Juan
Universitat Jaume I

This article, grounded in Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory of Mind (1978) as applied to second/foreign language (L2) acquisition (Lantolf, & Poehner, 2014), proposes a concept-based instructional approach for teaching request-response adjacency pairs to learners of English as an L2. The framework, divided into orientation, execution, and control stages, uses scenes from the series *Young Sheldon* (Lorre, & Molaro, 2017) to create an authentic learning context. In the orientation stage, learners explore the concepts of requests and responses and their contextual applications. The execution stage involves controlled and communicative tasks to internalise these concepts, while the control stage focuses on reflecting and consolidating communicative performance, fostering learner agency in language use. This approach addresses the limitations of English textbooks, which often oversimplify teaching these speech acts. It offers a pedagogical method that goes beyond rules and rote memorisation, promoting deeper understanding, practical application, and enhanced learner agency in real-life contexts.

Keywords: *pragmatic competence; instructional pragmatics; sociocultural theory; concept-based instruction; request-response adjacency pairs.*

Este artículo, basado en la Teoría Sociocultural de Vygotsky (1978) aplicada a la adquisición de segundas lenguas (Lantolf y Poehner, 2014), propone un enfoque de instrucción basado en conceptos para la enseñanza de pares adyacentes petición-respuesta a aprendientes de inglés. La instrucción, organizada en fases de orientación, ejecución y control, emplea escenas de Young Sheldon (Lorre y Molaro, 2017) para crear un contexto auténtico. En la orientación, el alumnado explora los conceptos de petición y respuesta y sus usos contextuales; en la ejecución, realiza tareas controladas y comunicativas para interiorizarlos; y en la fase de control reflexiona sobre su actuación y la consolida, reforzando su agencia. Este enfoque aborda las limitaciones de muchos manuales de inglés, que suelen simplificar estos actos de habla, y ofrece una propuesta que va más allá de reglas y memorización mecánica, promoviendo comprensión, aplicación práctica y mayor agencia en contextos reales.

Palabras clave: *competencia pragmática; pragmática instruccional; teoría sociocultural; instrucción basada en conceptos; pares adyacentes petición-respuesta.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Pragmatics is a branch of linguistics that examines the interplay between language and context. It investigates how language is used in communication and how meaning is interpreted based on situational factors (Trosborg, 1995). Pragmatics extends beyond grammatical rules, as the same linguistic expression can convey different meanings depending on the context. Therefore, it is essential to recognise that context, social factors, and shared knowledge significantly contribute to the comprehension of language. In recent years, the definition of pragmatics has broadened, and it is now regarded as a *multi-layered* construct encompassing three primary dimensions as elucidated by Taguchi (2019) and subsequently referenced in recent work (Ren, 2022; Usó-Juan & Martínez-Flor, 2022). The first dimension involves the linguistic and sociocultural understanding of appropriate forms employed in specific contexts, which encompasses two interrelated elements: *pragmalinguistics* and *sociopragmatics* (Leech, 1983; Thomas, 1983). Pragmalinguistics focuses on the grammatical aspect of pragmatics and the linguistic resources used in specific communicative acts, including interpersonal meaning. These resources encompass pragmatic strategies (such as directness and indirectness), routines and a variety of modifiers that can soften or intensify communicative acts. Sociopragmatics examines the interplay between social structures and linguistic actions, including participants' social perceptions of interactions and the performance of communicative acts.

The second dimension, *interaction skills*, entails proficiency in constructing communicative acts during interaction, which includes the sequential organisation of speech acts, turn-taking, repair and boundaries (Young, 2011) which are shared exclusively among participants. The third dimension, *agency*, concerns learners' autonomy in maintaining their first language (L1) identity, assimilating into the foreign language culture or integrating both perspectives based on their personal volition, values and beliefs (LoCastro, 2003). Therefore, it is crucial to approach the teaching of pragmatic competence by considering these three dimensions, as this enhances learners' engagement and extends their pragmatic skills beyond the classroom environment.

Within the field of second/foreign language (L2) pragmatic instruction, there is a need to develop adequate metapragmatic instruction to maximise learning outcomes. Although relatively unknown in L2 teaching contexts, concept-based instruction (CBI) has recently begun to gain recognition given its rigorous theoretical foundations (Nicholas, 2015). Being a comprehensive framework, CBI prioritises the internalisation of scientific concepts as the foundational basis of learning and focuses on fostering learners' deep conceptual understanding of a skill or knowledge domain, enabling them to apply this knowledge across diverse contexts. This pedagogy aligns well with the goals of teaching interlanguage pragmatics, which studies L2 learners' use of language in social contexts (Taguchi, 2019), emphasising meaningful communication and contextual language use. Therefore, this article proposes a research-based instructional design, using a CBI approach, specifically tailored to help learners of English as an L2 develop their pragmatic abilities. The focus is particularly on request-response adjacency pairs, which are critical due to their potential to disrupt communication if not appropriately mastered.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. *Concept-based instruction*

The CBI approach, stemming from Galperin's work (1992), suggests that meaning is constructed through conceptual categories, a principle rooted in Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory of Mind (SCT) (1978). SCT posits that cognitive development arises from the interaction

of social and personal biological realms (Lantolf & Poehner, 2014), which emphasises the role of social interactions in shaping cognitive growth. This developmental process begins in childhood, with formal learning as the initial stage of scientific knowledge acquisition (Galperin, 1992: 69), highlighting the pivotal role of the educational setting in transitioning from social learning to theoretical knowledge (Negueruela, 2003). Central SCT ideas on cognitive development are *spontaneous* and *scientific concepts*, the *zone of proximal development* (ZPD) and *agency*, which have greatly influenced L2 learning and teaching.

From a Vygotskian perspective, concepts are viewed as tools that aid in understanding the world. Two types of knowledge are distinguished: spontaneous and scientific concepts. Spontaneous concepts are acquired through real-life experiences, without conscious effort, following an inductive approach (Negueruela, 2003; Vygotsky, 2012; van Compernolle, 2014). Children often learn the real-world application of terms before their broader meanings. However, spontaneous concepts have limitations, for they may not be easily applied beyond their specific contexts (Vygotsky, 2012). In contrast, scientific concepts are systematic, hierarchical and abstract (Vygotsky, 2012; Karpov, 2018). They are developed from spontaneous concepts under formal instruction and are highly transferable, enabling learners to generalise and enhance their critical thinking (Zuckerman, 2004). Consequently, a CBI approach uses scientific concepts as mediational tools for understanding and creating meaning in the L2 learning and teaching process. The internalisation of the scientific concepts establishes the ZPD for the development of everyday concepts.

The ZPD is defined as the gap between what a learner can do independently and what they can achieve with guidance from more knowledgeable individuals (Vygotsky, 1978). Although Vygotsky's work originally examined children's development in L1 contexts, the concept has been extensively applied to L2 learning, where it helps explain how social interaction supports learners' linguistic and pragmatic development (Myrset, 2021). It illustrates the SCT principle that development is socially mediated, showing how learners' growth is influenced by interactions with adults and peers. Development within the ZPD begins with schooling and is linked to *periods of crisis*, which are developmental phases characterised by moving from dependence to independence (Vygotsky, 1987). Development relies on external mediators, often more knowledgeable individuals, who facilitate growth, particularly during these periods. In language development, the pivotal role of mediators is underscored in helping learners communicate effectively (Myrset, 2021). Moreover, formal instruction should prioritise activities that cultivate self-regulation, notably agency, with a central emphasis on reflective practices (Kozulin, 2018).

Agency is defined in SCT as the "socioculturally mediated capacity to act and to assign meaning to one's actions" (van Compernolle, 2014: 21), allowing learners to make independent, informed choices. Although agency originates in Vygotsky's work on child development, it has since been widely applied to L2 learning, where it helps explain how learners construct and expand meaning through sociocultural and interpersonal interaction (Mercer, 2011; Levi & Poehner, 2018). When teaching pragmatics, fostering agency involves encouraging learners' autonomy rather than imposing rigid *rules of thumb* (van Compernolle, 2014; Nicholas, 2015). Such rules often oversimplify linguistic norms and inhibit learners' ability to navigate real-life situations effectively (Negueruela, 2003). Van Compernolle (2014, 2018) identifies three issues with teaching prescriptive norms: (1) their inconsistency in practice, (2) the suppression of agency through the assigning of specific forms to contexts, and (3) the establishment of rigid communication rules being futile. Moreover, these norms often overemphasise native speakers' performance as the benchmark (Félix-Brasdefer, 2006; Hosseini & Safari, 2018), despite the fluidity of native norms (Davies, 2004). McConachy (2018) argues that learners struggle to develop true agency if their language view is

constrained. Instead, learners should reflect and become aware of pragmatic variations to form a dynamic understanding of language (McConachy, 2018). Teaching agency means providing learners the freedom to make informed decisions and understand all possibilities and their consequences (Ishihara & Cohen, 2010).

Drawing upon the SCT principles, Galperin (1979) introduced Systematic Theoretical Instruction. This methodology was subsequently expanded by Negueruela (2003) into concept-based language instruction (CBLI) within the field of L2 learning and teaching, laying emphasis on three central stages. The first one, *conceptualisation*, highlights concepts as the fundamental units of instruction. Concepts are systematic representations of study objects, guiding cognitive processes in problem-solving tasks (van Compernolle, 2012: 43). Newman and Holzman's (1993) distinction between *tools-for-results* and *tools-and-results* is essential here. The *tools-for-results* perspective views tools as instruments to achieve goals. It aligns with traditional learning approaches where tools facilitate language proficiency. However, this may overlook tools' transformative impact on cognitive processes. Conversely, the *tools-and-results* perspective sees tools as dynamically interacting with goals and social contexts, mediating social interactions and contributing to the co-construction of knowledge. CBLI embraces this view: it uses diverse instructional resources to deepen comprehension and establish meaningful connections between language and content (Newman & Holzman, 1993). Learners are thus empowered to progress independently within the ZPD (Vygotsky, 1987), requiring an extensive orientation phase for concept development and internalisation (Arievitch & Stetsenko, 2000; Negueruela, 2008).

The second stage involves the *materialisation* of the concept, during which it is represented through didactic models such as charts, diagrams, or images. These models function as tools for materialisation, facilitating a comprehensive and accessible learning experience through practical, hands-on engagement. Finally, the last stage is *verbalisation*, where learners engage in conceptualisation tasks that require them to explain the concept in their own words, fostering deeper comprehension and retention. Verbal activities may include discussions, debates, presentations or writing tasks. Thus, CBLI aims to enhance learners' conceptual understanding, potentially influencing their communicative choices and fostering greater agency in language use (Myrset, 2022). To fulfil the purpose of the present research, the next section provides a review of studies examining the effect of CBI on L2 pragmatic development.

2.2. *Empirical studies on concept-based pragmatic instruction*

The pioneering application of CBLI was demonstrated by Negueruela (2003), which focused on fostering university learners' deeper understanding and internalisation of grammatical concepts in L2 Spanish. The author proposed the grammatical concepts of aspect, mood and tense as the minimal units of instruction. Each concept was then materialised in charts and diagrams (conceptual tools) and finally, learners were involved in verbalisation activities to internalise the concepts. The results indicated that the instruction helped learners develop a conceptual understanding of the targeted grammatical features and successfully apply this knowledge in written and oral tasks. Following this study, van Compernolle (2012, 2014) applied CBLI to instruct learners in L2 pragmatics, developing a model called concept-based pragmatics instruction (CBPI). This model represents an explicit approach to teaching sociopragmatics and pragmalinguistics as mediated actions. Van Compernolle (2012) explored how CBPI influences the development of sociopragmatic competence among university-level learners of French. The enrichment programme included concept explanations related to self-presentations, social distance and hierarchies in relation to second-person address systems in French (*tu*/*vous*) as well as diagrams depicting the concepts, verbalisation tasks,

appropriateness judgment questionnaires and spoken interactive scenarios. Semi-guided interviews were used to assess the learners' metapragmatic knowledge. The results demonstrated that the instruction facilitated the learners' internalisation of the concepts, enabling them to apply this knowledge when selecting appropriate language choices in different social contexts. Additionally, the author emphasised the importance of tutor-learner cooperative interaction in the learners' pragmatic development.

Van Compernolle's (2012, 2014) research laid the foundation for exploring the teaching of speech acts in English as an L2. Although limited in number, most studies have focused on requests (Nicholas, 2015; Al Jumah, 2021; Mahdavi, 2022; Myrset, 2022; Nicholas & Perkins, 2023), except for one that examined compliments and compliment responses (Mahdavi, 2022). Moreover, they primarily targeted university-level learners, apart from the study by Myrset (2022), which focused on younger learners. Nicholas (2015), for example, taught interactional competence and requests to Japanese learners of English. The instruction focused on the typical stages of making a request (pre-request, main request, post-request and response to request), and it encompassed orientation, execution, and control phases. In the orientation stage, learners were introduced to the basic concepts of pragmatics related to the construction of requests in interaction. In the execution stage, they were asked to undertake strategic interaction role-plays, but only those meaningful to learners–in other words, ones in which students do not have to play an illusory role that they may never encounter in real life. In the control stage, students were asked to reflect on the appropriateness of their requests and language choices. Following this methodology, all participants exhibited the capacity to discern request stages and evaluate the appropriateness of their language choices in relation to contextual factors.

Focusing on Iraqi learners of English, Al Jumah (2021) investigated the impact of CBPI on learners' sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic conceptual development in the context of making requests. The study also examined the effect of the teaching approach on learners with varying proficiency levels (i.e., upper-intermediate and elementary). The sociopragmatic concepts addressed included power, distance, and imposition, while the pragmalinguistic concepts focused on the request head act, internal modification, and external modification. Learners participated in video-based language analysis tasks, scenario enactments, and contextualised request analyses. The findings revealed an enhancement in learners' conceptual understanding of sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic resources, with no significant differences detected between the proficiency groups in the interview data.

In addition to examining the performance of a single group of English learners from the pre-instructional to the post-instructional phase, two studies incorporated a control group to assess improvements more effectively (Mahdavi, 2022; Nicholas & Perkins, 2023). On the one hand, Mahdavi (2022) employed a mixed-method approach to investigate the effectiveness of the CBPI in enhancing the performance of Iranian learners of English in using compliment and compliment-response speech acts. Moreover, the learners' perceptions of CBPI were also examined. Learners were divided into a control and an experimental group. The experimental group was exposed to CBPI tailored to teaching these speech acts, whereas the control group did not receive any CBPI. Instructional materials included custom-designed teaching resources based on CBI principles, examples from authentic language use, structured exercises, and contextual discussions. Findings suggested that the experimental group outperformed the control group in using the target speech acts, demonstrating more appropriate language use and cultural sensitivity. Furthermore, learners in the experimental group expressed positive attitudes towards CBPI, noting it helped them understand the *why* behind language use, not just the *how*.

Nicholas and Perkins (2023), on the other hand, used CBPI to teach English request strategies to Japanese learners. Their study employed a control group design with pre-, post-, and delayed post-tests (a two-week delay) to assess learners' self-evaluations, changes in request strategy use, and sensitivity to social context. The enrichment group (the term used in the original study for the experimental group) received instruction on request-in-interaction features, analysed video models, and engaged in dialogic interactions, whereas the control group received no instruction. The results revealed that the enrichment group obtained higher self-evaluation scores and outperformed the control group in the use of conversational features related to request-based talk, with these improvements sustained in the delayed post-test. However, there was no significant change in how participants in the enrichment group connected their language choices to social context. The authors suggested that this lack of improvement might be attributed to insufficient focus on sociopragmatic concepts, or the nature of the tasks employed during the research.

In contrast to the previously reviewed investigations, which concentrated on young (adult) learners in university settings, Myrset (2022) investigated the long-term effectiveness of CBPI with younger Norwegian learners of English, specifically those aged 12-13 in a primary school context. This research used a pre-, post-, and delayed post-test design (with a six-week delay) to evaluate the impact of CBPI on fostering agentive language use, with particular attention to the pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic aspects of requesting. The instructional approach included explicit teaching of pragmatic concepts, role-playing activities, and mediated learning with feedback and reflection. The findings indicated that CBPI significantly improved the learners' ability to produce polite and contextually appropriate requests in English. These enhancements were evident both immediately following the instruction and in the delayed post-test. Notably, the intervention effectively guided young learners towards greater agency by providing them with a comprehensive pragmalinguistic repertoire necessary for making informed decisions in social interactions.

Collectively, this review underscores that CBPI is an effective approach for teaching speech acts, including requests and compliments, across diverse populations of English language learners (i.e., Japanese, Iraqi, Iranian, and Norwegian) and contexts (i.e., university and primary school). CBPI not only enhanced learners' analytical skills in recognising the stages of requests within interactions but also improved their ability to produce contextually appropriate requests and compliments. Additionally, it fostered learners' agency in using the English language. Although research suggests that CBPI is a feasible tool for supporting learners' pragmatic development, there are limited publications detailing specific pedagogical designs for its implementation in English L2 classrooms. This paper contributes to the literature on CBPI by proposing a research-based methodological approach aimed at promoting the conceptual development of request-response adjacency pairs in instructional settings. The following section provides a concise description of the speech acts in focus for the current instructional framework.

2.3. *Requests and request responses*

The instructional focus on requests and responses to requests is justified due to their pivotal role in daily communication and their nature as adjacency pairs. These speech acts are essential in various contexts and are inherently connected, with a request anticipating a response. Teaching them together is pedagogically effective and enhances learners' communicative competence, aiding in social interactions. This approach, supported by Widiyastuti and Rustono (2018), highlights the importance of teaching speech acts in combination to reflect their natural occurrence in communication exchanges.

Requests are a type of directive speech act wherein the speaker solicits the hearer to perform an action beneficial to the speaker. Such speech acts can threaten the listener's desire for autonomy and freedom from imposition (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Requests comprise two principal components: the head act, representing the core request, and peripheral modifiers that attenuate or intensify the request's impact (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989). Request head acts are categorised into three levels of directness: direct (e.g., *Pass me the salt!*), conventionally indirect (e.g., *Can you pass me the salt?*), and hints (e.g., *This food is a bit bland*.). Modifiers can be classified as internal or external (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989). Internal modifiers include lexical elements (e.g., *please*, *just*, *possibly* to mitigate imposition; *really*, *absolutely* to enhance force) and syntactic structures (e.g., conditional forms such as *could* vs. *can*). External modifiers, which may also moderate or intensify the request's impact, include, among others, explanations, preparatory statements or apologies. Effective requesting necessitates not only pragmalinguistic knowledge—employing appropriate linguistic resources—but also sociopragmatic knowledge—which contextual/social variables determine the appropriateness of the pragmalinguistic choice.

While requests have been extensively studied, responses to requests, typically analysed as adjacency pairs, have received less focus. In these pairs, the response strategies (second-pair parts) are contingent on the same factors influencing the requests (first-pair parts) (Flöck, 2016). Despite various complex taxonomies proposed for request responses, a simplified taxonomy by Martínez-Flor y Usó-Juan (2006) offers clarity, especially for younger learners. The author identifies four main response types. The first type is *granting*, indicating willingness to comply, and includes: verbal affirmations (e.g., *Sure*), non-verbal cues (e.g., nods), and a combination of both (e.g., *Okay* with a thumbs-up). The second type is *refusing*, showing reluctance or inability to fulfil the request, with three subcategories: verbal refusals (e.g., *I can't* or *It's too late*), non-verbal cues (e.g., crossing arms), and a combination (e.g., *No* with a headshake). The third type is *clarifying*, which neither accepts nor rejects but seeks further information (e.g. asking *Why?*) or offers a different speech act (e.g., making a suggestion). The final type is *ignoring*, where the request is disregarded, either verbally (e.g., changing the subject), physically (e.g., walking away), or both (e.g., walking away while saying something).

3. TEACHING REQUEST-RESPONSE ADJACENCY PAIRS THROUGH CONCEPT-BASED INSTRUCTION

Grounded in SCT principles and informed by insights from the aforementioned interventional studies employing a CBPI, this section proposes and outlines a pedagogical method for teaching request-response adjacency pairs through CBI. Additionally, it leverages material from a TV series to create an authentic context for teaching these adjacency pairs, as recognised by Abrams (2016) and Usó-Juan and Martínez-Flor (2022). This method specifically targets adolescents aged 13-18 learning English as an L2 at the secondary school level, corresponding to CEFR levels B1 and B2. This cohort has been largely neglected in CBPI studies (see section 2.2). Nevertheless, the method is adaptable to various proficiency levels since the complexity of the activities can be adjusted based on the language used in the selected video excerpts (see Roever, 2022).

The pedagogical approach encompasses three stages: (1) orientation,(2) execution, and (3) control. Originally designed for six fifty-five-minute sessions to achieve learning gains, this framework can be adapted to accommodate specific class constraints, such as varying session durations and student needs. Table 1 shows the teaching procedure structure and the goals of each stage.

Table 1: ***Schematic representation of the instructional method***

Stages and Steps	**Stage Goals**
Orientation Step 1. Introducing concepts of request and responses. Step 2. Contextualising concepts in real-life situations.	Understanding concepts and applying them to real-life scenarios.
Execution Step 3. Transitioning to communicative oral tasks. Step 4. Transitioning to communicative written tasks.	Internalising concepts through speaking and writing tasks.
Control Step 5. Reflecting on performance in oral tasks. Step 6. Reflecting on performance in written tasks.	Consolidating concepts through mediation on communicative tasks and fostering agency.

3.1. *Orientation stage*

The orientation stage introduces learners to essential pragmatic concepts, specifically requests and responses (Nicholas, 2015). Initially, learners use visual aids to understand these concepts (Step 1), facilitating the materialisation of abstract ideas and making them more accessible (Negueruela, 2003). Subsequently, they analyse dialogue transcripts from the sitcom *Young Sheldon* (Lorre & Molaro, 2017) to identify and discuss these concepts in context (Step 2). This series provides realistic scenarios featuring the teenage protagonist, Sheldon Cooper, whose experiences may resonate with those of the learners, thereby enhancing developmental outcomes (Vygotsky, 1987).

3.1.1. *Step 1: Introducing scientific concepts of requests and responses*

Learners are introduced to six key scientific concepts for appropriation with the aid of visual representations: pragmatics, speech acts, the pragmalinguistic dimensions of requests and request responses and the sociopragmatic dimensions of social distance and imposition. The concept of pragmatics encompasses three domains (1) pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics, which involve using linguistic strategies and understanding social norms in communication, (2) interaction skills with a focus on turn-taking, and (3) agency, which is the ability to use language purposefully and make independent communicative choices. Freedom in this context is defined as making informed decisions rather than choosing among options, and awareness of self-expression possibilities is crucial for achieving communicative freedom, underscoring the importance of pragmatics. The conceptual map illustrated in Figure 1 depicts the concept

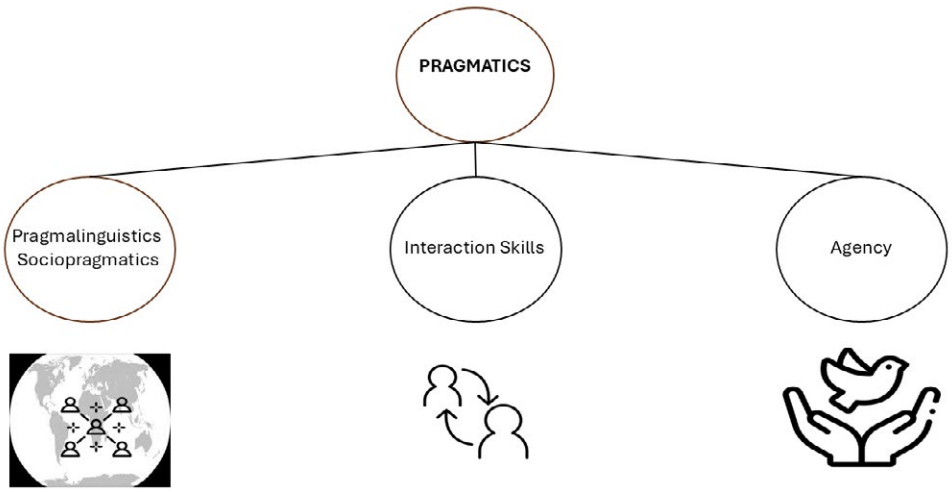

Figure 1: ***The conceptual map of pragmatics (based on Taguchi, 2019). All figures were created by the authors***

of pragmatics through three visuals: global interaction reflecting context in communication, turn-taking in conversation management, and the symbolism of freedom and flexibility, as shown by two hands releasing a dove. Together, these visuals illustrate how pragmatics facilitates effective and adaptable communication.

After defining pragmatics, learners would be introduced to the concept of speech acts, which are explained following the conceptual map presented in Figure 2. This conceptual map shows how communication goes beyond literal words. For instance, *It's hot here* could be a request to open a window, and the listener's response, *I'll open the window*, fulfils that request. Speech acts serve specific purposes like requesting, suggesting, or complaining, illustrating how language is used to achieve actions.

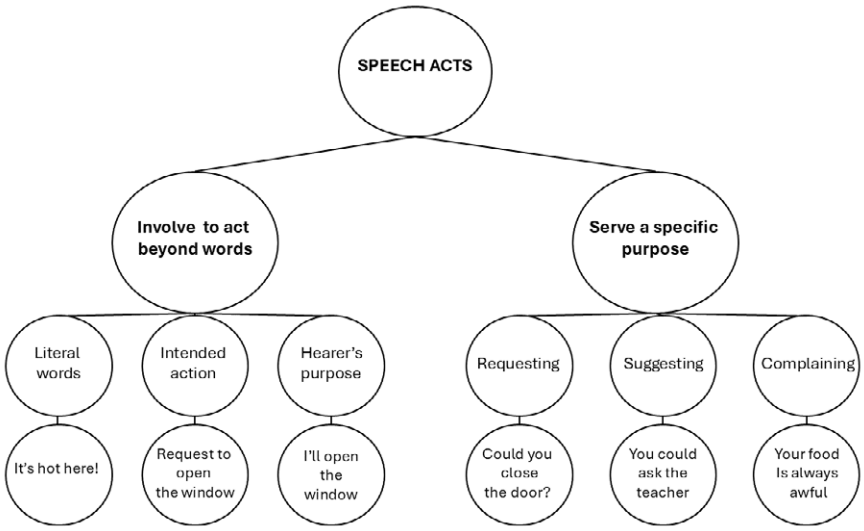

Figure 2: ***The conceptual map of speech acts***

The following scientific concepts pertain to the pragmalinguistic dimension of requests and their responses. According to the conceptual framework illustrated in Figure 3, and following Myrset's (2022) terminology, requests are categorised by their level of directness: direct, in-between, and hints. In the conceptual map, direct requests are represented by a straight arrow, in-between requests by a curved arrow, and hints by a circled arrow.

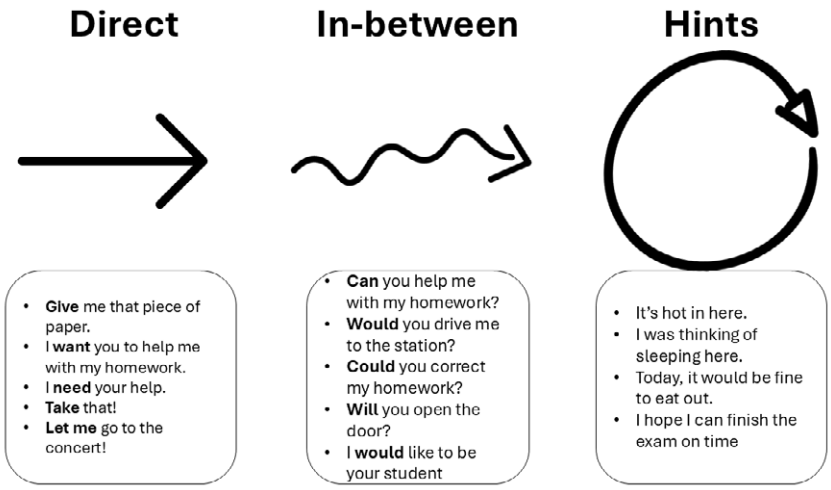

Figure 3: ***The conceptual map of requests (based on Myrset, 2022)***

Similarly, responses to requests are introduced as crucial counterparts, highlighting their equal importance in any conventional interaction. Figure 4 illustrates four possible types of responses according to Usó-Juan's (2026) taxonomy: granting, refusing, clarifying, and ignoring. In the conceptual map, the granting response is represented by a check mark, the refusing response by a cross, the clarifying response by an icon of a teacher explaining, and the ignoring response by the face of a boy with eyes covered by a blindfold.

Figure 4: ***The conceptual map of request responses (based on Usó-Juan, 2026)***

After teaching the pragmalinguistic dimension, the focus shifts to the sociopragmatic dimension, specifically on the social distance and imposition variables. Power, while important, is complex for students to grasp, and is less relevant in teenage interactions except in teacher-student dynamics, which can be understood through social distance. The concept of social distance is illustrated in Figure 5. The black stickman represents the requester, the white stickman the requestee, and the space between them denotes their level of closeness (i.e., stranger, acquaintance, or intimate).

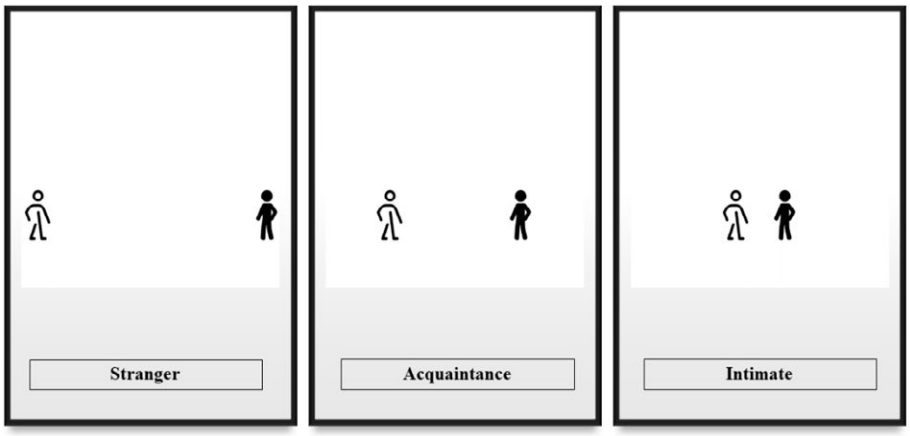

Figure 5: ***The conceptual representation of social distance***

Figure 6 illustrates the concept of imposition with a person holding a rock representing the requestee (black stickman). The size of the rock indicates the level of imposition on them: larger rocks signify greater imposition, with levels ranging from low to moderate to high.

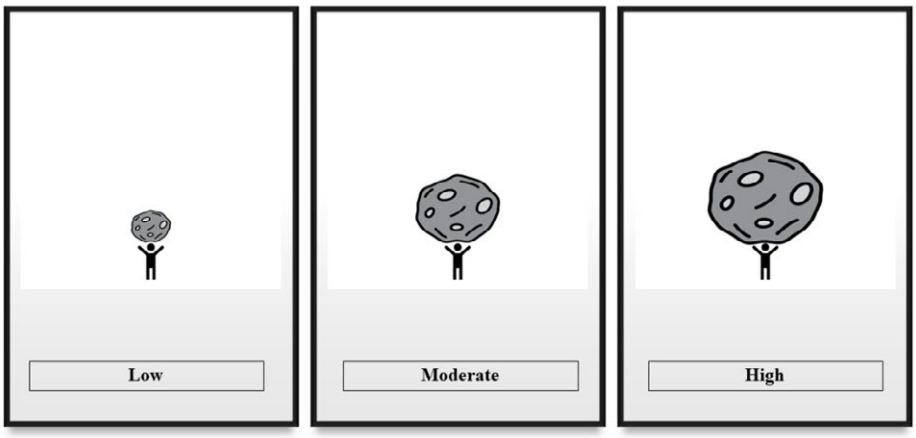

Figure 6: ***The conceptual representation of level of imposition***

3.1.2. *Step 2: Contextualising concepts in real-life situations*

After introducing the relevant scientific concepts, learners are organised into heterogeneous groups based on their ZPD to facilitate scaffolded learning focused on request-response adjacency pairs (García, 2017). The ZPD is identified by examining what learners can accomplish with mediation, typically through brief diagnostic or scaffolded tasks that reveal how much support they require. In these groups, learners first watch six scenes from *Young Sheldon*, each illustrating contrasting examples of three request types (i.e., two scenes per request type): direct, in-between, and hint. They collaboratively analyse the transcripts of these scenes using a colour-coded system designed to highlight different pragmalinguistic features—direct requests in red, in-between requests in blue, hints in brown, with responses in green for granting, purple for refusals, orange for clarifications and dark blue for ignoring. The primary request(s) in each scene is underlined for emphasis. This analysis is supplemented by a sociopragmatic exploration, in which learners identify the social distance and imposition of the central requests using the conceptual representations shown in Figures 5 and 6, respectively.

Additionally, groups examine turn-taking mechanisms within the dialogues, with the instructor actively mediating the process. The instructor provides explanations, clarifies complex interactions and encourages critical reflections, such as recognising when a request is followed by a refusal and the requester persists. Politeness strategies and other conversational subtleties are also highlighted. To deepen understanding, learners are encouraged to express their opinions on the pragmalinguistic forms in the analysed contexts, fostering critical thinking and agency. During the orienting stage, verbalisation is systematically employed, allowing learners time to reflect on newly introduced concepts and engage in dialogue with peers or the instructor to solidify their understanding (Negueruela, 2003). Table 2 presents suitable scenes from the series *Young Sheldon* to illustrate all different types of requests and responses as well as how turn-taking is managed. These scenes were selected to demonstrate a range of pragmalinguistic request and response forms, and to show how these forms may vary depending on sociopragmatic dimensions such as imposition and the social distance between the speaker and listener.

Table 2: ***Key scenes from Young Sheldon for analysing request and response types in the orientation stage***

Context of Scenes [***SDs = sociopragmatic dimensions***]	**Pragmalinguistic Request forms**	**Pragmalinguistic Response forms**
1. Sheldon requests his lecturer extra minutes to finish an exam [SDs*: low imposition / acquaintances] *Season 5 Episode 9 (6:17-7:07)*	Direct request	Ignoring
2. Helados and his sister ask their granny about the family secret [SDs: high imposition / intimates] *Season 5 Episode 20 (4:30-6:27)*	Direct request	Ignoring
3. Sheldon asks university students to sign a petition [SDs: low imposition / strangers] *Season 5 Episode 8 (8:29-9:13)*	In-between	Granting
4. Sheldon requests his mother a later pickup stay with friends [SDs: moderate imposition / intimates] *Season 5 Episode 13 (5:29-6:28)*	In-between	Refusing
5. Sheldon asks his lecturer to consider his contributions [SDs: high imposition / acquaintances] *Season 5 Episode 4 (11:24-12:21)*	Hint	Clarifying
6. Sheldon requests his lecturer to correct his assignment [SDs: moderate imposition / acquaintances] *Season 5 Episode 7 (5:36-7:01*)	Hint	Refusing

3.2. *Execution stage*

The execution stage emphasises the practical application of the scientific concepts introduced during the orientation stage (Nicholas, 2015). Learners engage in both controlled and communicative oral tasks (step 3) as well as written tasks (step 4) to facilitate their conceptual development related to requests and responses (García, 2017).

3.2.1. *Step 3: Transitioning to communicative oral tasks*

As a controlled oral task, learners watch various scenes from the series *Young Sheldon* that depict contrasting situations involving different social distances and varying levels of request imposition. Before watching, learners engage in preparatory activities to enhance their self-awareness and understanding of social dynamics through questions about similar real-life scenarios. After watching each scene, they perform analytical tasks to materialise their observations on how social distance and request imposition affect interactions. Specifically, they draw the sociopragmatic variables depicted (as introduced earlier in the orientation stage), create conceptual maps visualising their understanding of the sequencing of request talk, and compare the requests and responses in the scenes with those in their native language(s)[1]. Another controlled activity involves learners watching a scene where the teacher pauses the video just before a request and the response are performed. At this point, learners predict the possible outcomes based on the contextual clues provided in the scene. They discuss in groups what they think the characters could say, considering factors like social distance and request imposition. After sharing their predictions, they watch the remainder of the scene to compare their guesses with the actual interaction. This exercise encourages learners to actively engage with the material, enhancing their analytical and predictive skills regarding request talk.

[1] See Appendix 1 for a detailed example of these activities.

For communicative oral tasks, learners participate in strategic interaction role-plays (Nicholas, 2015), which are designed to simulate meaningful and contextually relevant scenarios that they are likely to encounter in their daily lives. These role-plays are crafted to provide authentic and practical communicative experiences, facilitating the application of pragmatic skills in situations that mirror real-life interactions. Examples of such scenarios could include requesting a favour from a peer, negotiating roles within a group project, soliciting feedback on a presentation, among others. In the role-plays, learners are organised into groups of three, designated as Learners A, B, and C. The activity is structured as follows: Learner A initially takes on the role of the observer, tasked with taking notes and verbalising the observed interaction. Learner B assumes the role of the requester, while Learner C acts as the requestee. The role-play is performed three times to ensure that each student has the opportunity to experience all three roles: observer, requester and requestee. After completing each round, students exchange their opinions based on their observations during their roles as observer, facilitating a deeper understanding of the communicative dynamics at play. Once all students have cycled through each role, they can move on to the second role-play activity, applying the insights and improvements from the previous rounds. Performances could be audio-recorded and transcribed by the learners to facilitate teacher feedback.

3.2.2. *Step 4: Transitioning to communicative written tasks*

As a controlled written task, learners are presented with a variety of authentic-like WhatsApp interactions and emails involving requests and responses. For WhatsApp messages, topics may include asking friends for notes, inviting them to a party, requesting their help with a school project or borrowing a book. For emails, topics might include requesting a letter of recommendation from a teacher, inquiring about internship opportunities from a company, requesting permission for an excused absence from a teacher, seeking clarification on an assignment from a professor or applying for a school club membership from a club advisor. After reading the messages, learners are asked to draw the sociopragmatic variables (imposition and social distance) and identify the pragmalinguistic forms (request and response types), as previously noted in the orientation stage. At this point, verbalisation tasks are prompted for students to reflect (inner talk) and discuss among themselves whether the request type and the form used to respond are the best options regarding each situation (Negueruela, 2003). Optionally, learners can analyse authentic-like WhatsApp interactions and emails in which requests and responses have been removed. They then provide suitable pragmalinguistic forms based on context and verbalise their choices to peers or the teacher. This task aims to help learners adjust their language based on the medium and the recipient, ensuring appropriate requests, serving as an additional controlled activity.

For communicative written tasks, learners work in pairs (Learner A and B) to practise requestive interactions. In the first activity, students exchange WhatsApp messages, either using their own devices or working with prepared templates to simulate authentic interactions, depending on classroom policies. Learner A makes an informal request, such as asking to borrow class notes, while learner B responds appropriately. After this, students swap roles. In the second activity, they draft and respond to a formal email, with learner A asking for clarification about a missed project submission and learner B providing a professional reply. By completing these tasks, learners develop their ability to adapt their communication style across both informal and formal scenarios.

3.3. *Control stage*

The control stage aims to consolidate the acquisition of scientific concepts related to requests and responses by encouraging learners to reflect on their performances in both oral (step 5) and written communicative tasks (step 6) (Nicholas, 2015). This reflective practice promotes learners' ownership of their learning process, enabling them to make informed choices when requesting and responding, thereby becoming agentive users of English as an L2 (Kozulin, 2018; Myrset, 2022).

3.3.1. *Step 5: Reflecting on performance on oral tasks*

Feedback for communicative oral tasks involves both immediate and reflective components. During role-plays, the observer (Learner A) initially takes notes on the interactions, focusing on the pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic aspects of the requests and responses, as well as the sequence of turns taken. After each role-play, the observer provides immediate peer mediation to the requester (Learner B) and the requestee (Learner C), offering feedback on the effectiveness of their requests and responses in terms of politeness, clarity, and appropriateness for the social context. This immediate peer mediation facilitates real-time adjustments in communication strategies and deepens learners' understanding of pragmatic concepts. In addition to immediate feedback, learners review their own transcriptions of the role-plays for reflective analysis. They consider both the observer's feedback and their own observations. The teacher further supports this process by providing detailed feedback on linguistic accuracy and pragmatic appropriateness, along with targeted recommendations. By highlighting exemplary interactions, the teacher reinforces positive communication behaviours not as rigid rules of thumb but as models to inspire and guide learners.

3.3.2. *Step 6: Reflecting on performance on written tasks*

Feedback for written production tasks also incorporates both immediate and reflective components. Initially, during written task exchanges, learners draft their WhatsApp messages (either on their own devices or using prepared templates) and formal emails on a computer or tablet. They then participate in peer review and collaborative editing. In this phase, they exchange drafts with a partner who provides feedback on the effectiveness of request strategies, clarity, appropriateness and formality. Following this, learners engage in a real-time editing session, where they collaboratively discuss and apply the suggested improvements, with the teacher offering guidance and additional feedback as needed. This immediate feedback supports real-time refinement of their drafts. For the reflective component, after submitting their final drafts, learners receive written feedback from the teacher, which covers aspects such as pragmalinguistic appropriateness, adherence to formal or informal conventions, and overall communication effectiveness. Learners then reflect on this feedback by reviewing their teacher's comments, critically analysing their original submissions, and revising their drafts accordingly. This iterative process, including resubmission of revised drafts for final review, helps reinforce learning objectives by allowing learners to independently apply pragmatic concepts, improve their writing skills, and integrate the feedback effectively into their written communication.

4. CONCLUSION

Request-response adjacency pairs are essential for effective communication, and a CBPI approach offers a promising way to help learners navigate the pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatics demands involved. Grounded in evidence-based practices from interventional research, this paper has outlined an instructional method designed to support learners in developing

more appropriate request-response strategies. The method includes orientation, execution, and control stages, enabling learners to grasp foundational concepts of requesting and responding, apply them in real scenarios, and internalise them through speaking and writing tasks (Nicholas, 2015). Reflective practice, supported by peer and teacher feedback, consolidates learning and fosters learner agency (Kozulin, 2018; Myrset, 2022).

This approach is scalable, allowing learners to progress in their pragmatic development by incorporating, for example, request modifiers, which are critical for context-sensitive requests. Moreover, it can be adapted to teach other adjacency pairs, such as offers and acceptances/refusals or apologies and responses, among others. For effective implementation, the framework should be adjusted based on students' proficiency and age, class size, cultural context, and the amount of guidance or support students require. While comprehensive, this proposal remains theoretical and has yet to undergo empirical validation. Systematic testing of the instructional sequence and its accompanying conceptual maps is needed to determine their effectiveness across primary, secondary and tertiary educational settings. In addition, comparing this CBPI approach with other pragmatics-focused instructional methods could help identify the most effective instructional strategies for English language classrooms. Such comparative, evidence-based research aligns with current recommendations in instructional pragmatics (Taguchi, 2019).

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APPENDIX 1

SAMPLE PRE-, WHILE- AND POST-WATCHING ACTIVITIES FOR CONTROLLED ORAL TASKS

PRE-WATCHING ACTIVITIES

1. Have you ever asked an acquaintance to stay some days at their place due to an unexpected situation? Has anyone asked this to you? Do you think asking this can be highly impositive for the requestee? Then, which type of request would you use and in which way would you respond to a request of this kind?
2. Reflect on how using different types of requests or responses might affect the other person in the interaction. Keep in mind that there are no inherently good or bad options; it all depends on how you choose to express yourself and the impact you wish to have on others or the way you want to be perceived in society.

WATCHING THE SCENE FROM *Young Sheldon*. *Season 5 Episode 17 (13:30-14:34)*
Situation: Paige, Sheldon's friend, has visited the university for a couple of days. Sheldon finds her in his dorm, and she asks him if she could stay there for a couple of days because she wants to drop out of university and needs time to think about what to tell her parents.

1. **Sheldon**: You again?
2. **Paige**: Well…, hello to you, too.
3. **Sheldon**: I thought you were going back to Austin?
4. **Paige**: Uh, I'm not going back. I'm gonna drop out.
5. **Sheldon**: What? Where will you go?
6. **Paige**: **I was thinking here, in your dorm.**
7. **Sheldon**: **Here?**
8. **Paige**: Well, I mean, just for a couple days until I can figure out how to tell my mom.
9. **Sheldon**: **I don't know.**
10. **Paige**: **Please***. I don't have anywhere else to go, and... as embarrassing as this is to admit... you're the only person who can help me right now.
11. **Sheldon**: **Okay.**
12. **Paige**: Thanks.
13. **Sheldon**: It's the least I can do. My life is going so much better than yours.

**Please* here has the function of substituting the request move in line 6; that is why it is coloured in the same colour (see Martínez-Flor, 2009, for functions of *please*).

Request-response key

Requests	Responses
Direct	Granting
In-between	Refusing
Hint	Clarifying
Main request(s)	Ignoring

POST-WATCHING ACTIVITIES

3. Using the sociopragmatic concepts from the orientation stage, create two drawings: one to represent the level of imposition involved in a request, and another to depict the degree of social distance between the individuals.
4. Create a conceptual map that classifies all the request and response types appearing in this video excerpt (write first the types of requests and then the examples).
5. Compare the request(s) and response(s) watched in the video excerpt with the ones you would use in your mother tongue. Are they similar, or do they differ a lot?