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its Applications**

**Pragmatic competence in Spanish students
of EFL: making requests and apologies**

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Le langage est source de malentendus.
[Words are the source of misunderstandings]
Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *Le Petit Prince*

*I know you think you understand what you thought I said but I'm not sure you realize that
what you heard is not what I meant.*
Alan Greenspan

A unified account of what language is has, I believe, been lost.
Geoffrey Leech

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Abstract

This dissertation examines the pragmatic competence of Spanish advanced learners of English through the performance of requests and apologies. Data has been drawn from production questionnaires by means of the elicitation of the speech acts expected. As we were interested in the communicative effect of the utterances, a group of British informants was required to evaluate their acceptability and/or offensiveness in order to ensure natural native speaker reactions to the utterances produced, and therefore provide academically valid data. Due to the input provided by these external evaluators, we have been able to reach some interesting conclusions about pragmatic failure, that is to say, unsuccessful communication caused by deficiencies in the students' pragmatic competence, which are not only related to cultural differences but also to personal traits. Hence, at the end of this dissertation we offer strategies and techniques than can help to compensate this insufficiency by raising the pragmatic awareness of both foreign language learners and teachers in the classroom.

INTRODUCTION

Miscommunication or failure to communicate adequately can occur for different reasons, but it is especially frequent in cross-cultural encounters where two people speak either different languages or varieties of the same language. One of the reasons for this to happen is that speakers lack what is known as pragmatic competence, the skill that allows us to express and understand what is said beyond the words. Cross-cultural pragmatics is one of the areas of research concerned with how people belonging to different cultural communities use language to communicate. Interrelated (sub)branches (e.g. interlanguage pragmatics) of this field also deal with how speakers of foreign languages convey their intended messages. This dissertation should be considered within the recently described framework of research since our purpose is to evaluate the communicative effect (particularly the (in)appropriateness) of a series of requests and apologies provided by Spanish advanced learners of English on native speakers of British English, paying special attention to pragmatic failure and its causes.

In order to achieve our goal, first, we designed a questionnaire intended to obtain utterances from the Spanish participants through the controlled elicitation of speech acts, namely requests and apologies. Then, from the extensive data collected, a selection of useful items was made in order to create an online opinion poll for British informants to complete. They had to assess, in terms of their acceptability, the utterances selected by marking a score from one to five in a scale of values. They were also asked to give their opinion regarding their offensiveness and to offer their own responses to the same situations. Finally, following predominantly a qualitative approach, we carried out an analysis of the results of the online survey from which we draw some overall and tentative conclusions.

This project is divided in four main parts. Part 1 contains the theoretical framework of our study. It deals with pragmatics in general terms and with more specific concepts such as pragmatology, sociopragmatics, pragmatic competence and pragmatic failure (Section 1).

It is also concerned with the cross-cultural perspective of this area of study and the different approaches and methodologies used and available to carry out studies within this field (Section 2). In addition, as our focus is on the communicative effect of requests and apologies, information about the principles that govern conversation and about those particular speech acts is also included together with the presentation of a research project that combines cross-cultural communication and the realisation patterns of requests and apologies across different languages (i.e. the cross-cultural speech act realisation project) (Section 3). In Part 2 we present our research. Through a clear explanation of the methodology followed (Section 1) and a reflective discussion of the results (Section 2), we set forth the conclusions obtained (Section 3). To complement our research on the pragmatic competence of the Spanish participants, we have included Part 3, which is about helpful and necessary teaching techniques that foreign language teachers can use to raise the students' awareness of pragmatic competence and improve their communicative skills. Lastly, we finish this dissertation with recapitulatory conclusions that sum up the contents and ideas reflected on throughout the whole discussion.

PART 1: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1. Pragmatics

Pragmatics is one of the three major branches of semiotics together with syntax and semantics. It arose in the late 1960s out of unexplainable linguistic observations that were beyond the scope of its two nearby fields of study, since these were extralinguistic factors and neither syntax nor semantics covered them (Mey, 2001, p. 4). Its emergence brought “a shift from the paradigm of theoretical grammar (in particular, syntax) to the paradigm of the language user” (Mey, 2001, 4). In other words, whereas previous linguistic approaches (i.e. generative grammar) focused specifically on the structure of language, pragmatics is concerned with the involvement of users and their environment in the production of language.

As both semantics and pragmatics deal with meaning, their boundaries are not always clear-cut. Broadly speaking, semantic meaning is understood as the “literal” meaning of a word, expression or sentence and it is identified as context-independent and truth conditional, whereas pragmatic meaning is the sense conveyed by a particular word, expression or sentence in a certain situation and it is considered as context-dependent and non-truth-conditional because it “does not affect the truth conditions of the utterance” (Birner, 2013, p. 28). Similarly, Leech (1983) claims that “meaning in pragmatics is defined relative to a speaker or user of the language, whereas meaning in semantics is defined purely as a property of expressions in a given language, in abstraction from particular situations, speakers, or hearers” (p. 6). Thus, as Mey (2001) points out and as opposed to semantics, “restricting pragmatics to purely linguistic matters is not an acceptable point of view for those who want to include the whole of human language use” (p. 6).

Regarding the relationship between semantics and pragmatics, Leech (1983) distinguishes three possible positions towards it: semanticism, which is the assimilation of semantics to pragmatics; pragmaticism, the assimilation of pragmatics to semantics; and

complementarism, the viewpoint supported by the author and that implies that semantics and pragmatics are “distinct, though complementary and interrelated fields of study” within linguistics (p. 6). The reason for Leech (1983) to support this third position is based on his consideration that “any account of meaning in language must (a) be faithful to the facts as we observe them, and (b) must be as simple and generalizable as possible”, requirements that are not met following the other two points of view (p. 7).

More or less accurate definitions of pragmatics can be found in any current dictionary (specialised or not) and, certainly, in any work dealing with the topic. For instance, Leech (1983) briefly defines pragmatics as “the study of meaning in relation to speech situations” (p. 6). Yule (1996) interprets the discipline as “the study of the relationships between linguistic forms and the users of those forms” (p. 4). In addition, the author presents a list with the four areas that he considers pragmatics is concerned with: the study of speaker meaning (what do people mean by their utterances?), the study of contextual meaning (how does context affect the performance and interpretation of a given utterance?), the study of how more gets communicated than is said (what is the invisible meaning of an utterance?) and the study of the expression of relative distance (what makes explicit and implicit meaning be successfully conveyed?) (p. 3).

Mey (2001) understands pragmatics as the field that “*studies the use of language in human communication as determined by the conditions of society*” (6; italics in original), and Birner (2013), as “the study of language use in context” (p. 2). A more condensed and complete definition of the term is given by Crystal (1992), who explains pragmatics as

The study of language from the point of view of the users, especially of the choices they make, the constraints they encounter in using language in social interaction, and the effects their use of language has on the other participants in an act of communication.
(p. 57)

From these definitions we extract that language use, linguistic forms, choices, users, effects, context and society are relevant elements implied in pragmatics that make it a complex and far-reaching discipline. As a consequence of the vast scope of the subject, “it is notoriously difficult to limit the field in such a way that we can say where pragmatics stops, and the ‘beyond’ begins” (Mey, 2001, p. 3). To shed some light on this conflict and putting together the perspectives of different linguists (e.g. Chomsky, Verschueren), Mey (2001) talks about pragmatics as a component and as perspective (pp. 8-10). In the first case, pragmatics is considered as an independent module of linguistics that works within its own set of linguistic features (e.g. interest in presuppositions, deixis, implicature), and in the second, as an integrative approach concerned with “the various components and areas of linguistics” (e.g. interest in concepts such as negotiability, motivations, effects). These two interpretations can be combined “by considering the communicative function of language against the background of the available linguistic techniques, while conversely placing these techniques in a functional-communicative perspective” (Mey, 2001, p. 10). To put it another way, we can understand pragmatics as a component of linguistics whose unit of analysis is the functioning of language and address all aspects involved in language from a pragmatic perspective.

In sum, pragmatics provides us with “a fuller, deeper and generally more reasonable account of human language behaviour” and it is not preposterous to say that understanding would be impossible in some cases without a pragmatic account (Mey, 2001, p. 12). In the following subsections, we deal with more specific aspects of pragmatics that are relevant to understand the goal of this project.

1.1. Pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics

Regarding the concern of pragmatics with the understanding of language in context, Fromkin, Rodman and Hyams (2011) make a distinction between the linguistic context, which is “the discourse that precedes the phrase or sentence to be interpreted”, and the situational

context, “virtually everything nonlinguistic in the environment of the speaker” (e.g. speaker, hearer, beliefs, physical environment)¹ (p. 167). This division of context is, somehow, related to the one presented by Mey (2001), who talks about a static context, understood as what has been said and done before a given utterance, and a dynamic context, “an environment that is in steady development, prompted by the continuous interaction of the people engaged in language use” (p. 14).

The notions of linguistic and social context are respectively reflected in Thomas’s distinction between pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics as the two components of pragmatics (as cited in Leech, 1983, p. 18n13). Pragmalinguistics is applied to “the study of the more linguistic end of pragmatics”, to “the particular resources which a given language provides for conveying particular illocutions” (Leech, 1983, p. 11). On the other hand, sociopragmatics refers to “specific ‘local’ conditions on language use” and it is understood as “the sociological interface of pragmatics” (Leech, 1983, p. 10). To put it differently, the former is related to grammar and the latter, to sociology (Leech, 1983, p. 11).

Examples of what can be considered as belonging to sociopragmatics or pragmalinguistics may be useful to better understand these concepts. Therefore, knowing the acceptability and appropriateness of a request to ask about someone’s income in a specific culture and language is part of the sociopragmatic dimension, whereas using the proper grammatical (and lexical) resources of that language to make the request is related to the pragmalinguistic dimension. We go back to these terms when dealing with pragmatic failure (Section 1.3.).

1.2. Pragmatic competence

The term ‘competence’ is opposed to ‘performance’ and has its origin in the change of the grammatical perspective initiated by Chomsky and his generativist counterparts in the later

¹ As Fromkin, Rodman and Hyams (2011) point out, “almost any imaginable extralinguistic factor may, under appropriate circumstances, influence the way language is interpreted” (p. 167).

1950s. Competence is an idealized conception of language that refers to the “speakers’ knowledge of their language, the system of rules which they have mastered so that they are able to produce and understand a number of sentences, and to recognize grammatical mistakes and ambiguities” (Crystal, 2008, p. 92). Performance refers to the real use of that knowledge, to the utterances that are derived from the producers’ competence (Crystal, 2008, p. 357).

Thus, putting together the concepts of ‘pragmatics’ and ‘competence’ we can say that ‘pragmatic competence’ refers to the ability of the users of a language to understand and use language accurately and appropriately in context. Crystal (2008) considers that ‘pragmatic competence’ is an analogous notion of ‘communicative competence’, which he defines as “the native-speakers’ ability to produce and understand sentences which are appropriate to the context in which they occur - what speakers need to know in order to communicate effectively in socially distinct settings” (p. 92). Crystal refers to “native-speakers’ ability”, but pragmatic competence also has a salient role in the context of foreign language learning, where we cannot talk about native speakers of the foreign language. Although it is true that proficient foreign language learners, who are close to the linguistic performance of a native speaker, tend to show higher mastery in pragmatic issues than beginners, we cannot restrict pragmatic competence exclusively to an ability of native speakers.

Another definition of pragmatic competence is offered by Fraser (2010), who describes it as “the ability to communicate your intended message with all its nuances in any socio-cultural context and to interpret the message of your interlocutor as it was intended” (p. 15) and, as Birner (2013) explains,

In order to know what someone meant by what they said, it’s not enough to know the meanings of the words (semantics) and how they have been strung together into a sentence (syntax); we also need to know who uttered the sentence and in what context,

and to be able to make inferences regarding why they said it and what they intended us to understand. (p. 1)

Therefore, what determines pragmatic competence, or the ability to communicate accurately and appropriately in every situation, is the knowledge of a series of systematic factors (e.g. contextual, social and sociocultural norms) that exist within a community and that go beyond the linguistic structure of utterances (Crystal, 2008, p. 92). These include environmental matters such as “the relationship between speaker and hearer, and the pressures which stem from the time and place of speaking” (Crystal, 2008, p. 92).

Brock and Nagasaka (2005) distinguish three specific speakers’ abilities within pragmatic competence: “ability to use language for different purposes” (e.g. greeting, requesting, demanding), “ability to adapt or change language according to the needs or expectations of the listener or situation”, and “ability to follow accepted rules; the maxims, if you will, for conversation and narrative” (p. 19). In the following subsection, we deal with what happens if a speaker does not possess or use these abilities.

1.3. Pragmatic failure

When a speaker or hearer is unable to convey or appreciate the meaning of a given utterance, then pragmatic failure occurs. Pragmatic failure is the “inability to recognize the force of the speaker's utterance when the speaker intended that this particular hearer should recognize it”, but it can also refer to the “inability on the part of H[earer] to understand the intended sense/reference of the speaker's words in the context in which they are uttered” (Thomas, 1983, p. 94). Jenny Thomas (1983) focuses on the former sense of pragmatic failure and differentiates two types: pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic failure, two terms with which we are already familiarised.

Pragmalinguistic failure is “basically a linguistic problem, caused by differences in the linguistic encoding of pragmatic force”, whereas sociopragmatic failure “stems from cross-

culturally different perceptions of what constitutes appropriate linguistic behaviour” (Thomas, 1983, p. 99). The first one “occurs when the pragmatic force mapped on to a linguistic token or structure is systematically different from that normally assigned to it by native speakers” and it may arise either from teaching-induced errors or from pragmalinguistic transfer (i.e. inappropriate transfer of speech strategies and utterances from the L1 to the L2) (Thomas, 1983, p. 101). As for the second typology, it refers to the speaker’s inability to adapt the language to certain judgments concerning the social conditions of the context (e.g. size of imposition, cost/benefit, social distance, relative rights and obligations) (Thomas, 1983, p. 104). Whereas pragmalinguistic failure is “fairly easy to overcome”, sociopragmatic failure is “much more difficult to deal with” (Thomas, 1983, p. 91).

Thomas (1983) argues that pragmatic failure is “an area of cross-cultural communication breakdown”, understanding cross-cultural communication as “any communication between two people who, in any particular domain, do not share a common linguistic or cultural background” (p. 91). However, it is a fact that pragmatic failure also occurs in everyday communication between people belonging to the same linguistic and cultural community, as can be proved by our own experience. Bearing this in mind, it is obvious that speakers of a foreign language will more easily fall into pragmatic failure in non-familiar cultural contexts, and to avoid such situations, they not only need linguistic knowledge, but also to be aware of the sociocultural norms to which they have to adapt their linguistic behaviour. In Section 3, we go back to this concept while paying attention to a number of elements and principles implied in conversations. These elements and principles will serve to present some of the causes and consequences of pragmatic failure.

2. Cross-Cultural Pragmatics

We have just dealt with what happens when a person is not able to communicate his/her intended message and this has been regarded as “an area of cross-cultural communication

breakdown” (Thomas, 1983, p. 91). As Pütz and Neff- Aertselaer (2008) indicate, cross-cultural communication is the future:

Thus in the era of globalization, communication is destined to become increasingly cross-cultural because it involves interactants who have different cultures, different conceptualisations, and different first languages, and who use a grammatically common language or lingua franca, but a pragmatically highly diversified instrument of communication representing, not only different cultures, but also different norms and values. (p. ix)

Hence, as communication becomes more cross-cultural there is, understandably, growing interest in the study of how people belonging to different cultures communicate. There are two major fields that focus on researching pragmatic aspects of communication between people that are part of distinct cultural and/or linguistic communities: cross-cultural pragmatics (CCP) and interlanguage pragmatics (ILP). CCP is defined by Yule (1996) as “the study of different expectations among different communities regarding how meaning is constructed” (p. 128), and ILP as “the study of how non-native speakers communicate in a second language” (p. 131). The author considers the latter as a subtype of cross-cultural pragmatics studies together with contrastive pragmatics (CoP), “the study of these different cultural ways of speaking” (p. 88). As Kraft and Geluykens (2007) point out, one of the reasons why these two fields, namely CCP and ILP, “have experienced a staggering, exponential growth over the last couple of decades” is “the interest generated by the cross-cultural speech act realization project (CCSARP)” (p. 3), which is described in Section 3.2.1.

Although the distinction and boundaries of CCP and ILP seem well established according to the definitions presented above, this is far from being the case. They have been used inconsistently in the literature and that is why Kraft and Geluykens (2007) try to present a thoughtful clarification and classification of these and other related terms. They first draw a

distinction between the labels ‘cross-cultural’ (CC) and ‘intercultural’ (IC)², which may be seen as interchangeable, and explain that whereas CC research implies doing contrastive or comparative analysis of data obtained separately from different cultural groups, IC research analyses data obtained from the interaction of people belonging to different cultural groups (p. 5). According to this interpretation and in words of Gudykunst, it may be argued that “understanding cross-cultural difference in behaviour is a prerequisite for understanding intercultural behaviour” (as cited in Kraft & Geluykens, 2007, p. 7), so CCP would be a preliminary step for approaching IC pragmatics.

Kraft and Geluykens (2007) identify three possible logical options regarding the communication between speakers when dealing with IC pragmatics: each speaker uses different varieties of the same language (e.g. BrE and AmE), both speakers are non-native speakers of the lingua franca that they use for communication, or one is a native speaker and the other a non-native speaker (p. 6). As the last two instances imply interlanguage, “doing intercultural pragmatics would imply, in two of three cases, doing interlanguage pragmatics” (Kraft & Geluykens, 2007, p. 6). ‘Interlanguage’ (IL) “represents a stage inbetween a learner’s mother tongue, or L1, and the target language (TL), sharing to some extent characteristics with both” (Kraft & Geluykens, 2007, p. 12). For pragmatic success, a high level of IL should be complemented by a high level of what Kramsch calls ‘intercultural competence’, “where speakers of other languages can become aware of [...] ‘the third place’” (as cited in Grossi, 2009, p. 53). Then, IL and intercultural are not mutually exclusive but independent and sometimes interrelated concepts.

In short, Kraft and Geluykens (2007) understand CCP as an umbrella term that alludes to “the study of pragmatic phenomena relating to cultural differences [...] either within a

² Kraft and Geluykens (2007) also contrast ‘intercultural’ and ‘intracultural’ communication, the first one involving more than one culture and/or language and the second one referring to a unique language and culture (pp. 6-7).

specific speech community or across speech communities” (p. 9). These authors consider CoP, ILP and ICP as possible approaches to CCP research and they can be used either independently or combined, but these options have certain limitations to their validity (p. 10). For instance, if ILP is not combined with CoP or ICP, the research cannot be regarded as CC, in such case, it is essentially intracultural; a combination of CoP and ICP cannot be regarded as CC either, because comparing data obtained within one culture does not allow us to study intercultural interactions; lastly, “an investigation which is neither contrastive nor intercultural, and which does not concern itself with interlanguage [...], can never be called cross-cultural” (Kraft & Geluykens, 2007, pp. 10-11). In addition, CoP and ILP do not need to follow a CC perspective; they can also be carried out from an intracultural point of view (Kraft & Geluykens, 2007, p. 9).

2.1. Interlanguage Pragmatics

As our research is mainly concerned with ILP, “the study of non-native speakers’ use and acquisition of L2 pragmatic knowledge” (Brock & Nagasaka, 2005, p. 18), we find it necessary to go into some detail about its characteristics. A good starting point is the interpretation of ILP by Kasper and Blum-Kulka (1993), who define the concept in the following terms:

Interlanguage pragmatics (ILP) is a second-generation hybrid. As its name betrays, ILP belongs to two different disciplines, both of which are interdisciplinary. As a branch of Second Language Acquisition research, ILP is one of several specializations in interlanguage studies, contrasting with interlanguage phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics. As a subset of pragmatics, ILP figures as a sociolinguistic, psycholinguistic, or simply linguistic enterprise, depending on how one defines the scope of “pragmatics.” [...] The perspective on pragmatics we adopt is an action-theoretical one, viewing pragmatics as the study of people’s comprehension and

production of linguistic action in context. Interlanguage pragmatics has consequently been defined as the study of nonnative speakers' use and acquisition of linguistic action patterns in a second language (L2). (p. 3)

Although ILP can be considered part of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) research or a subset of pragmatics, a significant number of ILP studies “have focused on second language use rather than learning and acquisition due to the close alignment of ILP studies with cross-cultural pragmatics research rather than research in second language acquisition” (Woodfield, 2008, p. 231). ILP studies on second language acquisition and learning can follow cross-sectional or longitudinal designs. Cook maintains that a cross-sectional study “looks at different learners at different moments in time and establishes development by comparing these successive states in different people” (as cited in Woodfield, 2008, p. 231), whereas, as Kasper and Rose note, longitudinal research “involves the observation of the same participant(s) over an extended period” (as cited in Woodfield, 2008, p. 231). On the other hand, regarding ILP research on second language use, a third type of studies needs to be mentioned: ‘single moment studies’. These studies are understood by Cook as approaches that “do not compare groups of learners at different cross-sectional levels to establish a series of developmental language states, but either lump all the learners together in one group, or separate them by first language or criteria other than chronological development” (as cited in Woodfield, 2008, p. 232).

Kasper and Blum-Kulka (1993) mention five domains investigated within ILP: pragmatic comprehension, production of linguistic action, development of pragmatic competence, pragmatic transfer and communicative effect (pp. 4-13). Research on pragmatic comprehension has focused either on the attribution of illocutionary force (e.g. comprehension of indirect speech acts, role of linguistic form and context) or on the perception of politeness (e.g. distinguishing different degrees of politeness). When investigating production of linguistic action, special attention has been paid to the differences in the production of messages between

native and non-native speakers (e.g. degree of directness, adjustment of speech to contextual factors). Cross-sectional and longitudinal studies intended to account for the development of pragmatic competence have dealt with the effects of proficiency in the selection of strategies or with developmental patterns in the realisation of requests. Regarding studies on pragmatic transfer, negative transfer, which is “the influence of L1 pragmatic competence on IL pragmatic knowledge that differs from the L2 target”, has been analysed more than positive transfer, “pragmatic behaviors or other knowledge displays consistent across L1, IL, and L2” (Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993, p. 10). Finally, when the interest of ILP studies has been in the communicative effect of the learners’ utterances, three main goals have been pursued: “identifying pragmatic failure; [...] identifying cross-cultural and cross-linguistic pragmatic differences and similarities; and [...] identifying learner-specific pragmatic behaviors and their relationship to learners’ L1 and L2” (Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993, p. 13).

On the whole, in ILP research “attention has been focused on learners’ inappropriate speech act realizations in order to uncover their pragmatic knowledge at a given time in their learning process” and some studies “demonstrated that even fairly advanced language learners’ communicative acts regularly contain pragmatic errors, or deficits, in that they fail to convey or comprehend the intended illocutionary force or politeness value” (Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper, 1989b, p. 10). Some of the variables found to affect comprehension on the part of the learner are cultural background, sex, age and the degree of familiarity with the context (Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993, pp. 5-6). On the other hand, restricted L2 linguistic knowledge, lack of L2 pragmalinguistic sophistication, negative transfer of sociopragmatic norms and purposeful loyalty to L1 cultural patterns are some of the reasons why learners may fail to convey the intended message (Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993, p. 7).

2.2. Methodology and data collection techniques in CCP and ILP research

According to Geluykens (2007), there are a number of observable limitations and weaknesses in the fields of CCP and ILP research that are consequences of the narrow interpretation of the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realisation Project (CCSARP) (see Section 3.2.1.) in succeeding works (p. 21). One of them is the unclear delimitation of the domain of research, or in other words, the terminological inconsistency, confusion and vagueness reflected in the literature (Geluykens, 2007, p. 21), but we have already presented a clear delineation of the terminology throughout this section. The narrow definition of the objects of inquiry is also regarded by Geluykens (2007) as one of the constraints of CCP investigation. This is due to the fact that, as has already been mentioned above, developmental ILP has been disregarded and too much attention has been paid to a limited set of speech acts (e.g. requests, apologies) from a very static perspective (i.e. politeness framework) (Geluykens, 2007, p. 26). Apart from that, a tendency towards investigating proficient speakers in a narrow age range has been followed (Geluykens, 2007, p. 26).

The recurrent use of the same data collection methods and data elicitation techniques as well as the lack of exploitation of varied research methodologies in traditional CCP studies are also criticised by Geluykens (2007). With regard to data collection techniques, it is acknowledged that discourse completion tasks or discourse completion tests (DCTs) have been the main instrument used by researchers to collect data to develop CCP studies on speech acts, which implies that “the emphasis has been on the production rather than the interpretation of speech acts” (Geluykens, 2007, p. 25). DCTs were originally developed by Blum-Kulka, following Levinson, “for comparing the speech act realization of native and nonnative Hebrew speakers” (Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper, 1989b, p. 13):

The test consists of scripted dialogues that represent socially different situations. Each dialogue is preceded by a short description of the situation, specifying the setting, and

the social distance between the participants and their status relative to each other, followed by an incomplete dialogue. (Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper, 1989b, pp. 13-14)

Item (a) is an example of DCT eliciting a request taken from Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper (1989b, p. 14):

(a) *At the University*

Ann missed a lecture yesterday and would like to borrow Judith's notes.

Ann: _____

Judith: Sure, but let me have them back before the lecture next week.

Although researchers have abused of DCTs as a method for collecting data, they should not be completely dismissed, but the findings cannot be interpreted as instantiations of real language use (Geluykens, 2007, p. 61). However, DCTs are only one type of production questionnaires among a great variety of options and to offer an overview of data collection methods, in Table 1 we summarise Geluykens's (2007) classification. In the end, the author proposes that CCP should incorporate data triangulation, "gathering data through different sampling strategies" (p. 56) (i.e. experimental and ethnographic approaches), "to bypass the pitfalls created by relying on just one method" (p. 23).

Table 1. Data collection methods (Geluykens, 2007, pp. 33-43)

Data collection methods	Production types	Instruments	Features
Controlled (non-interactive) elicitation data	Experimental data	E.g. Recordings in a laboratory setting	Quantitative method; useful for investigating speech production and perception, systematic variation of phonological, lexical and syntactic features; etc.
	Quasi-experimental data	Production questionnaires (e.g. DCTs, dialogue construction questionnaires, open verbal response questionnaires)	Written approximations to authentic speech; subjects write what think they would do in specific situations; reveal tendencies for certain formulations and routine behaviours; researcher controls variables; quantitative research and CoP research; data is comparable
		Multiple choice questionnaires	Testing sociopragmatic variables (e.g. power, distance, degree of imposition) and pragmalinguistic factors (e.g. politeness, appropriateness)

	Non-production data	Diaries, interviews, think-aloud protocols, field notes	Inaccuracies and subjectivity; useful for gathering additional insights, monitoring learning progress, investigating motivations and objectives of speech behaviours, capturing occurrences when audio- or video-recording is impossible
(Authentic) interactional data	From controlled interaction	Role plays (e.g. closed, open, spontaneous, mimetic, idiographic)	Researcher controls context and variables to a high degree; allow elicitation of aspects of discourse; learners' speech behaviour affected by being recorded; little emotional involvement; time consuming transcriptions; artificial interaction
	From participant observation	Elicited conversations	Researcher in control of the interaction but not of context variables; subjects' behaviour and choices conditioned by the presence and role of the researcher; data need to be recorded and transcribed
	From authentic discourse	Spoken and written communication initiated for communicative purposes rather than for linguistic analysis	Difficult to obtain; data need to be recorded and transcribed; people's permission to be recorded is needed; insights into people's actual speech behaviour; too much effort involved
Existing corpora	Small-scale or larger-scale corpora	Anything recorded from audio-visual media (e.g. documentary material)	Limited information on speakers; awkward transcription systems; original recordings rarely available; difficulties finding similar comparable corpora

As for the lack of exploitation of varied research methodologies, Geluykens (2007) argues that methodology and data collection are interrelated but conceptually independent terms (p. 23). Quantitative analysis has been usually equated with controlled elicitation data and qualitative analysis with naturally occurring ethnographic data, and this is a mistake (Geluykens, 2007, p. 26). Actually, “if anything, choice of methodology should shape data collection procedures, and not the other way around”, as has normally been the case (Geluykens, 2007, p. 23). After discussing the specific needs of quantitative and qualitative research methods (i.e. sufficient number of tokens for a particular variable and sufficient contextual information, respectively), as well as their strengths and weaknesses, Geluykens (2007) suggests methodological triangulation, “the use of multiple methods to measure a single construct” (p. 54), as “the way forward for CCP and ILP research” (p. 48) because it gives a more complete and reliable picture of the object of study (p. 54). Notwithstanding, the eventual methodological objective should not be simply to combine data triangulation and

methodological triangulation, but “to *integrate* these two methodologies within a single research program” (Geluykens, 2007, p. 61; emphasis in original).

3. Conversation, speech acts and pragmatics

So far, we have presented an overview of pragmatics, delimited the terminology regarding the study of pragmatic issues in culturally or linguistically different communities and offered a general background of the methodological procedures that have and could be used to study them. In this section, we pay attention to some of the pragmatic principles that are present in conversation and to speech acts as interesting objects of research from a CC perspective.

3.1. Conversational principles

The foundation of linguistic behaviour is that when people engage in communicative activities, their intention is to communicate something to somebody, what Mey (2001) has called the ‘Communicative Principle’ (p. 68). In addition, there is “a set of rules that interlocutors generally follow, and expect each other to follow, in conversation, and without which conversation would be impossible” (Birner, 2013, p. 41); these rules are part of what Grice (1991) termed the ‘Cooperative Principle’ (CP):

Our talk exchanges do not normally consist of a succession of disconnected remarks, and would not be rational if they did. They are characteristically, to some degree at least, cooperative efforts; and each participant recognizes in them, to some extent, a common purpose or set of purposes, or at least a mutually accepted direction. This purpose or direction may be fixed from the start (e.g., by an initial proposal of a question for discussion), or it may evolve during the exchange; it may be fairly definite, or it may be so indefinite as to leave very considerable latitude to the participants (as in casual conversation). But at each stage, *some* possible conversational moves would be excluded as conversationally unsuitable. We might then formulate a rough general principle which participants will be expected (*ceteris paribus*) to observe, namely: Make

your contribution as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged. One might label this the Cooperative Principle. (p. 26)

As can be seen in Table 2, the CP comprises four categories that in themselves contain a series of maxims:

Table 2. Categories and maxims of the CP (Grice, 1991, pp. 26-27)

Categories	Maxims
<i>Quantity</i>	1. Make your contribution as informative as is required (for the current purposes of the exchange). 2. Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.
<i>Quality</i>	1. Do not say what you believe to be false. 2. Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.
<i>Relation</i>	Be relevant.
<i>Manner</i>	1. Avoid obscurity of expression. 2. Avoid ambiguity. 3. Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity). 4. Be orderly.

Grice’s proposal of the CP and its categories and maxims has been under attack because the categories “have various weights in people’s minds” (Mey, 2001, p. 82). For instance, authors such as Green have considered that violating the maxims of quality “amounts to a moral offence, whereas violating the others is at worst inconsiderate or rude” (as cited in Mey, 2001, p. 82). In any case, these maxims explain how we often mean more than what we say; an explanation “made by means of pragmatic implications called CONVERSATIONAL IMPLICATURES” (Leech, 1983, p. 9; small capitals in original). A conversational implicature is “an additional unstated meaning that has to be assumed in order to maintain the cooperative principle, e.g. if someone says ‘The President is a mouse’, something that is literally false, the hearer must assume the speaker means to convey more than is being said” (Yule, 1996, p. 128). Conversational implicature is attained through the flouting and exploitation of a maxim, that is, through violating a maxim blatantly and expecting the hearer to be aware of it (Grice, 1991, p. 30).

Nevertheless, the CP is not enough in itself to account for pragmatic interpretations, on the contrary, it is required to interact with what Leech (1983) calls the Politeness Principle (PP) (p. 79), “the principle which (as it applies to language) means that people on the whole prefer to express polite rather than impolite beliefs” (p. 26). Politeness can be interpreted as ‘polite social behaviour’ within a culture and within each particular culture, there are a number of different principles that guide politeness in social interaction (e.g. being tactful, generous, modest) (Yule, 1996, p. 60). In interaction, politeness is “the means employed to show awareness of another person’s face” (Yule, 1996, p. 60) and to better understand this statement we need to clarify the concept of ‘face’. ‘Face’, according to Brown and Levinson (1987), is “the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself” (p. 61) and consists in two related aspects: negative face and positive face. The negative face is a person’s “need to be independent, to have freedom of action, and not to be imposed on by others”, whereas the positive face is “the need to be accepted, even liked, by others, to be treated as a member of the same group and to know that his or her wants³ are shared by others” (Yule, 1996, p. 61-62).

When we say something that makes another person feel embarrassed or humiliated, using the terms already described, it is said that that person ‘loses face’ (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 61). In such case, what we said has been taken as a threat by the hearer and this situation is known as a face threatening act (FTA), an “utterance or action which threatens a person’s public self-image” (Yule, 1996, p. 130). However, if we realise that someone may interpret our words as a FTA, we can use a face saving act, an “utterance or action which avoids a potential threat to a person’s public self-image” (Yule, 1996, p. 130). As maintained by Birner (2013), “the use of appropriate face-saving strategies to navigate the complexities of the relationship between speaker and hearer is at the heart of Politeness Theory” (p. 202), and face saving acts can be oriented to the person’s negative face or to the person’s positive face:

³ Yule (1996) defines ‘face wants’ as “a person’s expectations that their public self-image will be respected” (p. 130).

So, a face saving act which is oriented to the person's negative face will tend to show deference, emphasize the importance of the other's time or concerns, and even include an apology for the imposition or interruption. This is also called negative politeness. A face saving act which is concerned with the person's positive face will tend to show solidarity, emphasize that both speakers want the same thing, and that they have a common goal. This is also called positive politeness. (Yule, 1996, p. 62)

In other words, it can be claimed that "negative politeness therefore consists in minimizing the impoliteness of impolite illocutions, and positive politeness consists in maximizing the politeness of polite illocutions" (Leech, 1983, p. 84).

3.2. Speech acts: requests and apologies

A speech act is defined by Yule (1996) as "an action performed by the use of an utterance to communicate" (p. 134). It consists of three related acts: a locutionary act (i.e. producing a meaningful linguistic expression), an illocutionary act (i.e. the function or communicative force of an utterance) and a perlocutionary act (i.e. the effect of an utterance) (Yule, 1996, p. 48). It can be argued that "the theory of speech acts [...] is inherently a pragmatic theory, since it involves an intention on the part of the speaker and an inference on the part of the hearer" (Birner, 2013, p. 175). In English, examples of speech acts are requests, apologies, complaints, offers, invitations, promises, refusals, and so on.

As has already been mentioned, speech acts, and specially apologies and requests, have attracted considerable interest on the part of CC researchers, a fascination that perhaps "stems from the serious trouble to which pragmatic failure can lead" (Eslamirasekh, 1992, p. 86):

Grammatical errors may be irritating and impede communication, but at least, as a rule, they are apparent in the surface structure, so that H[earer] is aware that an error has occurred. Once alerted to the fact that S[peaker] is not fully grammatically competent, native speakers seem to have little difficulty in making allowances for it. Pragmatic

failure, on the other hand, is rarely recognized as such by non-linguists. If a non-native speaker appears to speak fluently (i.e. is grammatically competent), a native speaker is likely to attribute his/her apparent impoliteness or unfriendliness, not to any linguistic deficiency, but to boorishness or ill-will. While grammatical error may reveal a speaker to be a less than proficient language-user, pragmatic failure reflects badly on him/her as a person. Misunderstandings of this nature are almost certainly at the root of unhelpful and offensive national stereotyping: ‘the abrasive Russian/German’, ‘the obsequious Indian/Japanese’, ‘the insincere American’, and ‘the standoffish Briton’. (Thomas, 1983, pp. 96-97)

This quote helps us understand the cross-cultural communication breakdown we alluded to in Section 1.3. Although the performance of speech acts seems to be ruled by the CP and PP, which are universal, each culture has different interactional styles and shows preference for specific modes of speech act behaviour that condition the expectations and interpretative strategies (Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper, 1989b, p. 1). Regarding foreign language learners, it is widely known that they are “faced with countless socio-cultural conventions for managing conversations in the target language, and that these conventions may often be in contrast to or in conflict with comparable conventions of the learner’s native language culture” (Wildner-Bassett, 1989, p. 251). As we know that clashes between cultural styles are “usually interpreted in light of racial prejudices or attributed to personality traits” (Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper, 1989b, p. 6) and assuming that “speech communities share detectable patterns of speech” (Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper, 1989b, p. 5), it is useful to study the realisation of speech acts by native and non-native speakers to identify successful and unsuccessful linguistic structures that will serve foreign language teachers to work on the avoidance of pragmatic failure.

Speech acts have been studied from philosophical, linguistic, literary and anthropological perspectives, and studies of child language and second language acquisition

have shown their relevance to understand the development of human interaction (Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper, 1989b, p. 2). However, Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper (1989b) anchor the study of speech acts in the area of linguistic communication and within the scope of CCP because, through the analysis of situated speech, they want to “construe a theory interconnecting communicative functions with the context in which they are embedded” (p. 3). Following their criteria, these authors developed the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realisation Project (CCSARP), which has been referred to above and which is detailed in the following subsection.

3.2.1. The Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realisation Project (CCSARP)

The Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realisation Project (CCSARP) is an investigation initiated in 1982 by Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (Majeed & Janjua, 2014, p. 55), although in 1984 other researchers were also taking part in the project: Faerch, House, Kasper, Rintell, Thomas, Weizman, Wolfson, Ventola and Vollmer (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984, p. 210n1). It was aimed at studying the realisation patterns of two speech acts, namely requests and apologies, under different social constraints and across eight languages and varieties: Australian English, American English, British English, Canadian French, Danish, German, Hebrew and Russian⁴ (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984, p. 197). In addition, five interlanguages were also considered in the research: English spoken by Danish, German and North American students; German spoken by Danish students; and Hebrew spoken by Israeli students (Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper, 1989b, p. 16). The goals of the project are summarised in Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper (1989b, pp. 12-13):

⁴ We found Russian listed among the languages to be investigated by the researchers mentioned in Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1984); however, it does not appear in Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper (1989), where only the remaining seven languages are alluded to.

1. To investigate the similarities and differences in the realization patterns of given speech acts across different languages, relative to the same social constraints (cross-cultural variation).
2. To investigate the effect of social variables on the realization patterns of given speech acts within specific speech communities (sociopragmatic variation).
3. To investigate the similarities and differences in the realization patterns of given speech acts between native and nonnative speakers of a given language, relative to the same social constraints (interlanguage variation)

Requests and apologies were chosen for “being particularly interesting as they both constitute *face-threatening acts*” that affect “the participants’ face wants in markedly different ways” (Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper, 1989b, p. 11): requests threaten the hearer’s negative face and apologies, the positive face. In other words, as requests are pre-event acts (i.e. prospective action is expected from the hearer) and apologies are post-event acts (i.e. the speaker tries to make up for some previous action), “requests call for mitigation, compensating for their impositive effect on the hearer”, whereas apologies “tend to be aggravated, as they themselves count as remedial work [...] and thus are inherently hearer supportive” (Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper, 1989b, p. 12).

Data was collected through the use of 16 DCTs (half of them eliciting requests and the other half eliciting apologies) of the type described in Section 2.2. (item (a) is taken from one of the CCSARP questionnaires). The utterances supplied by the informants were analysed by native speakers in their respective countries following an analytical framework that provides a meta-paradigm that allows researchers to classify features into sub-classifications considering also “zero” realisations of those features (i.e. particular aspects of pragmatic performance) (see Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper, 1989a, pp. 273-294).

Studies conducted within the CCSARP allow researchers to investigate systematic ways of using linguistic items to convey illocutions, to validate the primary features of requests and apologies to make universalistic claims, to compare and contrast the realisations of given features to reveal specific cultural differences, to examine the influence of situational and social factors in the realisation of the two speech acts and to account for underlying processes and communicative effects of pragmatic failure, among other issues (Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper, 1989b, pp. 22-27). Moreover, the CCSARP also has practical applications for applied linguistics such as the elaboration of more accurate target culture-oriented teaching materials, the development of classroom-scale replications of the project or the application of its results and categories in Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) (Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper, 1989b, p. 27).

Kraft and Geluykens (2007) point out some of the limitations of the CCSARP. On the one hand, they attack the use of DCTs as the only data-collection technique because the data obtained does not represent naturally occurring language and because there are factors that cannot be analysed for their absence in written language (e.g. emotional involvement, turn taking) (Geluykens, 2007, p. 36). On the other hand, these authors find fault with the fact that Blum-Kulka and her colleagues focus on requests and apologies for constituting FTAs; they consider that most speech acts could be chosen following that criterion and that complaints and promises are equally potential candidates for such type of study (Kraft & Geluykens, 2007, p. 13). Finally, they criticise the assumption on the part of the designers of the CCSARP that the comparative method employed in CCP is transferable to ILP, what has implied a disregard of other potential research goals of ILP (e.g. the role of language acquisition) (Kraft & Geluykens, 2007, p. 14).

In Part 2, we present our own research, which, initially, was intended to be an application of the CCSARP on a small-scale, but which evolved differently due to certain reasons which are explained below.

PART 2: RESEARCH

As noted in the Introduction, the main goal of our study is identifying pragmatic failure in requests and apologies made by Spanish advanced learners of English as a foreign language (EFL) and this aim sets the research in the field of ILP. However, we not only pay attention to pragmatic failure, but also to successful utterances that may account for high levels of pragmatic competence on the part of the students. In addition, we also compare and contrast the utterances of native and non-native speakers in order to find reasons for the consideration of the non-native realisations as appropriate or inappropriate by native speakers, which can help English teachers to approach sociopragmatic aspects of the language in the classroom within the Spanish context. Thus, according to Kraft and Geluykens's (2007) classification of possible types of CCP, this research also enters the CCP framework.

1. Methodology

The study presented here may be characterised as a single moment study, focusing on the communicative effect of speech act use. Although it combines to a certain degree quantitative and qualitative techniques of analysing data, it is fundamentally a qualitative research. It has been developed in two stages: the first one was the collection of data from Spanish learners of EFL and the second one, the evaluation of part of that data by British informants. For the first stage, we created six DCTs different in form and content from those used by Blum-Kulka and her co-partners. In fact, for collecting data from the Spanish participants we used the same controlled elicitation procedure as Eslamirasekh (1993) in her comparative research about the realisation patterns of requests in Persian and American English: open questionnaires. They differ from the DCTs of the CCSARP in several aspects. For instance, we did not add the hearer response after the blank that the subjects were supposed to fill in with their utterance so that they were not conditioned by what would follow. In

addition, we did not specify the gender and social status of the speaker since we were interested in how the Spanish learners would respond in the given situations, not in what they would say if they were a different person.

The questionnaire given to the Spanish learners consists of six DCTs (see Table 3 for a summary) of the type we have just described (see Appendix A). The first three are intended to be completed with requests and the last three, with apologies.

Table 3. Summary of the situations in the questionnaire

No. situation	Setting	Social distance and context
S1	Café	Student-friend Ask friend for money
S2	Home	Student-relative Ask relative for bread while having dinner
S3	Heathrow airport	Student-police officer Ask police officer for directions
S4	Anywhere	Student-best friend Apologise for not attending a birthday
S5	Anywhere	Student-neighbour Apologise for damaging the bike
S6	Restaurant	Student-stranger Apologise for staining a garment

The words “request” and “apology” were never mentioned to the students, but given the context, the speech acts expected were obvious. Each DCT begins with the setting, which is followed by a brief description of the situation where the social distance between the participant and the hearer is implicit. The relationship between the speakers and the addressees is different in every case, as can be observed in Table 3. Item (b), below, is an example of one of the situations included in this questionnaire. Moreover, the DCTs are preceded by a few questions related to the students’ background (e.g. gender, age, level of education). Although we are not using all the information from these questions as research material, it may be useful for approaching ILP from different perspectives in future studies.

- (b) At a café. You order a drink and after that, you realise that you do not have any money. Fortunately, you are with a friend that can pay for it and you ask her/him:

We collected 53 questionnaires from Spanish undergraduate students of the English Degree in Language and Literary Studies at the Universidade da Coruña and postgraduate students that had already finished the same degree (i.e. advanced learners of the English language). Thus, as each of the participants responded to the six situations presented, we ended up with a total of 318 different utterances from which we selected 54 (9 from each situation) for the purpose that we explain below. The criterion followed to choose the 54 utterances out of the 318 was based on gathering different speech act realisation patterns for each situation and consequently, discarding similar structures that would provoke the same effect on the hearer. For example, for the requests in Situation 1, we took into account two structures with *do you mind...?* (one of them containing a preparator, grounder and promise and the other one neutral), one with *would you mind...?* (also with a preparator, a grounder and a promise), three with *can...?* (one realised from the viewpoint of the speaker and the other two from the hearer's, being one of them neutral), one with the imperative (i.e. mood derivable), and two with *could...?* (one neutral and the other one with a grounder and a promise). In the case of Situation 2, given the context, the selection was more complex because the responses were similar and the differences between the utterances chosen were minimal (e.g. alerters, markers of politeness, request strategies, lexical choices), but we still wanted to maintain the same number of utterances selected for each situation for organisational issues.⁵

The second stage was derived from Kasper and Blum-Kulka's (1993) assertion that "just as contrastive pragmatic study is unable to identify pragmatic transfer, learner-focused ILP, unless supplemented by other measures, such as ratings of learners' performance by native speakers [...], cannot make claims about communicative effect" (p. 13). Hence, we prepared an

⁵ For the terms 'preparator', 'grounder', 'mood derivable' and 'alerters' see Appendix in Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper (1989a).

online opinion poll through the survey software Google Forms for British informants to fill in (see Appendix B). A total of nine British people took the online survey. It is important to mention that none of them were related to the teaching of (foreign) languages, a characteristic purposely pursued so that their responses were based on their nativeness and not affected by their knowledge of the way in which foreign students learn a new language. Furthermore, it must also be noticed that the native speakers of English are part of one single community, in this case the British one, to avoid the mixture of different cultural perspectives.

The survey was divided in two parts. In the first part, the respondents had to rate each of the nine utterances selected for every situation (total of 54) in an evaluation scale from one to five points, one meaning that the utterance was not acceptable and five, totally acceptable. In addition, after each situation they were asked to give their opinion about the possible offensive effect of any of the utterances. In the second part, they were asked to give their own responses to the DCTs given to the Spanish students. Through the first part, the British evaluate the appropriateness of the requests and apologies selected and the second one allows us to compare the responses considered inappropriate by the British to their own, so that we can have an idea of what they consider inappropriate, information that will be useful for teachers of EFL to Spanish students.

The type of data obtained through the questionnaires completed by the Spanish learners could be used to analyse the pragmalinguistic competence of the participants in English, but in our research we are mainly concerned with their sociopragmatic competence. In other words, our interest is in what is socially understood beyond their utterances, not in the correctness of the grammatical and lexical resources used to realise the speech act, although these are somehow related to the social interpretation, and in that sense, they are considered. In any case, as we did not want to assess strictly their linguistic accuracy, nor distract our British informants from the task in hand, we corrected some orthographic, typographic and sometimes

grammatical mistakes (e.g. use of *tought* instead of *thought*, *you* instead of *yours*) as well as wrong uses of words which tend to be confused by Spanish students (e.g. *lend/borrow*).

In the next section, we present and discuss the results of the online survey, that is, the information obtained in the second stage of the research, since the first stage should be in this case considered a preliminary step for the main study.

2. Results and discussion⁶

2.1. Requests

The results of the online survey about the appropriateness of the requests made by the Spanish learners of English show both clear and striking considerations about the acceptability of the utterances. On the one hand, we find that four out of the nine utterances (see below *b*, *c*, *h* and *i*) chosen for S1 were given a value of three points or higher (up to five), except for *b*, which was given a score of two by one of the respondents.

- b) Hey, pay for this one man. I forgot my wallet. Next one's on me.*
- c) I forgot my money! Could you pay my coffee? I'll give you the money back as soon as possible.*
- h) Susan, you're going to hate me, but do you mind paying this round? I thought I'd taken my wallet with me when I left home but I can't find it. Next one is on me, I promise.*
- i) Sorry Susan, I've just realized I don't have any money. Can you pay for my drink and I'll give it to you later?*

We see that the main difference between *c*, *h*, *i* and *b* is that the first contain preparatory request strategies (i.e. *could you/do you mind/can you*), which imply a low level of directness, whereas the last one (i.e. *b*) uses the imperative (i.e. *pay for this one*), which despite being the prototypical grammatical mood of requests is the most direct manner of performing a request (Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper, 1989a, p. 278). The level of directness may be the reason why

⁶ See Appendix C for a summary of the responses.

one of the informants considered *b* as less acceptable than the rest, but, in any case, most of them did not seem to interpret this as inappropriate behaviour. In addition, *h* and *i* received the highest scores: *h* was given a value of four by two respondents and a value of five by seven respondents; *i* was given a value of four by five respondents and a value of five by four respondents. The reason for this may be the fact that they include tactful explanations/justifications for their requests (i.e. grounders), and although in *b* and *c* we read *I forgot my money*, it seems to be expressed just as a fact instead of as the reason why they are making the request.

On the other hand, only one of the utterances in S1 is considered unacceptable by the majority of the informants (see *f* below), that is, it received an average score of three or lower (except for two respondents who give it a value of four).

f) Damn it! I don't have any money. Can I borrow some money from you?

According to the opinions of the British respondents and what we have just said, the unacceptability of *f* may be due to the use of *damn it!*, about which one of the respondents pointed out that a religious person could find it offensive, and to the fact that *I don't have any money* is more a statement than an explanation/justification. In addition, the person does not guarantee the hearer that s/he will give him/her the money back.

The rest of the utterances (*a*, *d*, *e* and *g*, below) are the ones that show striking results since they have been considered as unacceptable by some British respondents and totally acceptable by others, which accounts for the role of subjectivity in pragmatics.

a) I haven't got money. Do you mind paying for my drink?

d) Cheers Pablo, would you mind inviting me to this coffee? I've got no money on me but I'll pay for yours next time, I promise.

e) Could you lend me some money, man?

g) Can you lend me £5 please?

However, whereas *a*, *d* and *g* received average values of four, three and three, respectively, the average score of *e* is one. It is important to notice that what makes a difference between *e* and *g* is the use of the politeness marker *please*. Besides, one of the respondents found these two utterances offensive because they do not contain any explanations and another one noticed that *a* and *e* (together with *f* above) were rude since, apparently, it is implicitly assumed that the hearer would pay for them. Moreover, *d* was also mentioned as offensive but no reasons were given for such consideration. It may be argued that *d* does not fit in this group since there is an expression of gratitude (i.e. *cheers*), the request is made through a preparatory request strategy (i.e. *would you mind*) and a promise of reward is offered (i.e. *I'll pay for yours next time, I promise*). Although the preparatory request strategies appear in all of them, none of the requests give an assurance that the hearer will have his/her money back. However, again, *I've got no money on me* does not serve as an explanation and this is the common element missing in this group of requests. Hence, whereas some people may find necessary a politeness marker, an explanation for the request or a promise that they will have their money back, some others may not.

From the nine responses of the British informants to the DCT of S1, eight of them include offers of reward (e.g. *I'll get the next ones/I'll pay you back or buy them next time/I'll sort you out later*), seven include explanations/justifications (e.g. *I thought I have my wallet but I obviously don't*) and six show apologies with intensifiers for being obliged to make such requests (e.g. *I'm so sorry/I'm really sorry/I'm terribly sorry*). In addition, they all use either preparatory request strategies or conditional clauses, which mitigate the impositive force of the requests (Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper, 1989a, p. 281). Most of these features are the ones found in the “acceptable” utterances of the Spanish learners.

Regarding S2, we encounter a similar scenario. First of all, we must bear in mind that in this case the answers given were alike and that their selection was more complicated. Their

differences are based on the alerters, on the presence or absence of politeness markers, on the request strategies and on lexical choices (e.g. *give/pass*). Strictly speaking, only three out of the nine utterances received a value of three or higher:

- g) *Can you pass me some bread, please?*
- h) *Pass me a piece of bread, please.*
- i) *Would you pass me the basket, please?*

Nevertheless, there are other four requests that, despite having been given a value of two by one or two respondents, cannot be considered as unacceptable for two main reasons: they show an average score of three or higher and they follow the same linguistic pattern to a certain degree:

- a) *Pass me the basket, please.*
- b) *Could you pass me a piece of bread?*
- e) *Mom, can you pass me a piece of bread?*
- f) *Hey dad, give me a piece of bread, please.*

It is important to notice that there are not structural differences between *h* and *a*. They both use the imperative and include the politeness marker at the end. The only distinctive aspect is lexical (i.e. *a piece of bread* vs *the basket*), so there is no reason to consider one of them as pragmatically acceptable and the other one as unacceptable. The same happens with *f*, which instead of *pass* uses *give* and besides, includes a combination of alerters (i.e. *Hey dad*). On the other hand, there is a more noticeable contrast between *g*, *i* and *b,e*. In spite of using preparatory request strategies through the interrogative form (i.e. *can you/would you/could you*), the last two lack the politeness marker *please*, which has already been judged as having an important role in the previous situation. Thus, whereas the low degree of acceptability of *b* and *e* can be explained in terms of politeness, we do not find any reasons to regard *a* and *f* as sociopragmatically different from *g*, *h* and *i*.

There are two utterances (i.e. *c* and *d*, below) with an average score of two, but there were some respondents (two and one, respectively) who considered them as ‘totally acceptable’.

c) Alejandra, could you give me a piece of bread?

d) Can you give me a piece of bread?

Once again, although preparatory request strategies are used (i.e. *could you/ can you*) there are not politeness markers and this is one reason for not seeing them as absolutely acceptable. Furthermore, we notice a slight difference between these two utterances and the rest: the use of *give* as the main verb instead of *pass*. We overlooked this lexical distinction when discussing *f* in comparison with *a*, *b*, *e*, *g*, *h* and *i*, but it may be argued that semantics plays an important role in this case. Although the *Cambridge Dictionaries* present some definitions of ‘pass’ as a synonym for ‘give’, in the *Oxford Dictionaries* ‘pass’ is defined as “transfer (something) to someone, especially by handing or bequeathing it to the next person in a series” (def. 4) and ‘give’ as “freely transfer the possession of (something) to (someone)” (def. 1). Hence, even though it is unlikely to happen, it is possible to understand *c* and *d* as requests asking for one of the hearer’s pieces of bread instead of for any other piece of bread on the table. In addition, *give* can be seen as more direct than *pass*, which may also be regarded as more polite. However, these are only subjective impressions that cannot be taken for granted and as *pass* is the verb that appears in the description of the situation, some participants may have opted for this option just because of that. It is important to mention that the L1 is not, at least logically, involved in the lexical choice between *give* and *pass*, since in Spanish there exists the same semantic distinction. In any case, none of the nine utterances were considered offensive by the British although one informant mentioned a preference for structures like *please, could you...* rather than *pass me...*, that is, preparatory request strategies seem to be more acceptable and appropriate than using the imperative.

In the responses of the British participants to the DCT of S2 we find some general patterns. All of them use the verb *pass*, although we must remember that it is the presentation of the situation, so their choice could be conditioned by this fact. Eight out of the nine utterances use preparatory request strategies (e.g. *could someone/could you/anyone fancy*) and the one that is left uses the imperative (i.e. *pass me*). Except for one of the requests, the politeness marker *please* is always present. Thus, these utterances have the same characteristics of the requests made by the Spanish learners that were considered acceptable.

As for S3, we find that eight out of the nine utterances received an average score of three or higher:

- a) *Sorry, I need help, can you help me? Can you explain to me how I could get to the city centre?*
- b) *Sorry officer, how can I get to Victoria Station?*
- c) *Excuse me, do you know what the fastest way to get to the city centre is?*
- d) *Sorry, which is the fastest way to go to the centre?*
- f) *Excuse me, can I ask you a question? What's the fastest way to get to the city centre?*
- g) *Excuse me. I have just arrived from Spain and I would like to know the fastest way to get to the city centre. Would you mind helping me, please?*
- h) *Excuse me, sir, could you tell me which is the fastest way to get to the city centre, please?*
- i) *Excuse me, officer. I've just arrived in London and I'm a bit lost right now. Could you please tell me the fastest way to get to the city centre?*

To be strictly accurate, only *a*, *h* and *i* were given values equal to or higher than three, but *b*, *c*, *d*, *f* and *g* did not receive a lower value by more than two respondents. It is surprising, again, that a single utterance (i.e. *c*) is considered both as unacceptable and as totally acceptable, although in this case the fact that seven out of the nine British respondents gave it a value of five tilts the balance clearly towards its appropriateness. In fact, without further explanation from the informant that finds it inappropriate, we cannot offer reasons for such an opinion.

We observe that all the utterances present either one or two alerters: attention getters such as *sorry* or *excuse me* and forms of address like *officer* or *sir*. Preparatory request strategies appear in *a*, *g*, *h* and *i* (i.e. *can you/would you/could you*), whereas in *b*, *c*, *d* and *f* use locution derivable strategies, that is, “the illocutionary intent is directly derivable from the semantic meaning of the illocution” (Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper, 1989a, p. 279) (e.g. *how can I get to.../do you know...*). In other words, the degree of directness is higher in *b*, *c*, *d* and *f* than in *a*, *g*, *h* and *i*, but here it does not affect their appropriateness. The presence of want statements (i.e. *I would like to know* in *g*) and the intention to get a precommitment from the hearer (i.e. *can you help me* in *a*; *can I ask you a question* in *f*) also seem to favour the acceptability of these requests (Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper, 1989a, p. 279, 287).

The only utterance that got an average score of three or lower (except for a score of four given by one of the British informants) was *e* (below). According to the comments of the respondents and as a matter common sense, the reason for the unacceptability of this request is the form of address, the fact of referring to a police officer or to “anybody in the street” as ‘man’.

e) Sorry man, I'd like to go to the city centre, could you tell me the fastest way?

Attention getters (e.g. *excuse me/sorry to bother you/good morning*) and forms of address like *sir* or *officer* are also observable in all the responses of the British to S3. Their requests are made through preparatory strategies (e.g. *do you mind/could you*), locution derivable structures (e.g. *do you know/which*), strong hints (e.g. *I am trying to get to the city centre but I am not sure on which way to go and I don't want to get lost*) and hedge performatives (e.g. *could I ask you*) (Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper, 1989a, p. 279-280). Moreover, two of them add linguistic forms oriented towards getting a precommitment from the hearer (e.g. *can you help me/could you help me*), which contribute to mitigating the requests.

Although we find that the utterances offered by the British are more varied in terms of linguistic structures, the “acceptable” requests of the Spanish participants are similar to some of them.

2.2. Apologies

Concerning the assessment of the appropriateness of the apologies of the Spanish learners, the results are assorted in the same way as those of the requests. In S4, seven utterances were given a value of three or higher, although five of them received a score of one or two by no more than two British respondents (i.e. *a*, *d*, *e*, *h* and *i*):

- a) Hey, I'm so sorry, I couldn't go to your birthday but here I have a present for you and I hope you forgive me.*
- b) Rachel, I'm very sorry I couldn't go to your birthday party and I do know how important it was for you. And I'm so sorry I didn't go, but the two of us can celebrate your birthday whenever you want, today, tomorrow...*
- d) I'm so sorry about it, could you forgive me?*
- e) Hey man, about that party, I just couldn't make it. My parents went out and I had to stay with my little sister. Sorry one more time.*
- f) Sorry for missing your birthday party buddy, but it was absolutely impossible to get there in time. Hope you can forgive me*
- h) I'm sorry that I couldn't go but it was impossible for me, I swear. Let's meet up and do something special together.*
- i) Hey, don't be mad. We can have a special party for your birthday, I pay for the beers!*

We find that, except for *i*, all utterances include the word *sorry*, which Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper (1989a) include within the category of “illocutionary force indicating devices” (IFID): “formulaic, routinized expressions in which the speaker’s apology is made explicit” (p. 290). Some of these IFIDs are preceded by intensifying adverbials (e.g. *so*, *very*) that reinforce the speaker feeling of regret and in *b* the structure intensifying adverbial-IFID is repeated twice, which even shows more remorse. Appeasers⁷ are found in *a*, *b*, *h* and *i* (e.g.

⁷ An appeaser is a compensatory offer that is not directly connected with the speaker’s offence because it is not reparable (Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper, 1989a, p. 294).

here I have a present for you/let's meet up and do something special together) and those that do not incorporate them contain either explanations/accounts (i.e. *e* and *f*) or show concern for the hearer's forgiveness (i.e. *d*). We must comment on the fact that in *i*, apart from appeaser, there are not elements that support the illocutionary force of the apology. The speaker does not take on responsibility and the expression *don't be mad*, which plays down the offence, can be considered a phrasal downgrader that the speaker uses to divert the hearer's attention from his/her own guilt (Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper, 1989a, p. 293-294). These features of utterance *i* may be the reasons why two of the British informants considered it unacceptable.

The only two apologies that should be considered strictly unacceptable according to the results are *c* and *g* (below), because five of the British respondents gave them a value of one (although one informant marked five for *c* and another one, four for *g*).

c) Excuse me for not having gone to your birthday party.

g) I beg your pardon, I couldn't go.

We observe that *c* is formed by the IFID *excuse me* followed by the cause of the apology and that *d* is composed of the IFID *I beg your pardon* and the statement *I couldn't go*. None of them contains an explanation or account, an appeaser, a structure that shows concern for the hearer or something that indicates that the speaker takes on responsibility. In addition, one of the British participants pointed out that these two utterances are "too formal to say to a friend" and another one added that *c* "sounds rude, it does not acknowledge the other person or their feelings or even apologise properly".

In the responses given by the British informants to S4, we observe that all of them contain the structure intensifying adverbial-IFID (one of them even includes a double intensifier; i.e. *I'm really very sorry*) and present appeasers (e.g. *Let me buy you a drink*). Except in one case, the reason for the apology is always stated by the speaker, which shows that s/he acknowledges her/his fault. Almost half of them include an explanation or account that justifies

the offence (e.g. *I was working*), concern for the hearer's feelings appears in three of them (e.g. *I know it was a big deal to you*) and there is also an expression of embarrassment (i.e. *I feel awful*). Again, there is a higher and more complex variety of linguistic structures in the answers of the British than in those of the Spanish but, except for the two examples in which the level of formality and the lack of apology lead the British to find them inappropriate (i.e. *c* and *g*), the utterances of both groups can be perceived as equally acceptable.

In respect of S5, there are four utterances considered acceptable or totally acceptable by most British respondents (scores from three to five with no more than two respondents giving values of either one or two):

- b) The chain broke accidentally, I'm sorry. Tell me the cost of it and I'll give it to you.*
- c) Look, I'm sorry but I broke the chain. It wasn't on purpose. If you let me, I'll pay for the fix.*
- f) Hey man, thanks for lending me the bike. The chain broke. I don't know if it was me or it was old... I bought you a new one. Thanks!*
- i) I'm very sorry. The chain broke while I was riding and I couldn't fix it. Do you want me to pay for the repair?*

We must bear in mind that in the description of the situation we use the phrase *the chain broke*, which appears in three of the four utterances above, so the respondents may have been influenced by our own words. However, we see in *c* that the speaker says *I broke the chain*, which needs further explanation. On the one hand, the use of the first person pronoun demonstrates that person recognises his/her responsibility in the action (i.e. the bike was being used by him/her when the accident occurred). On the other hand, unless the person broke the chain on purpose, the expression *the chain broke* is perfectly valid, as evidenced by the British informants in their own utterances, who used *the chain broke*, *your chain broke* and *something happened with the chain and I think it's totally broken*. Apologies *b*, *c* and *i* present IFIDs (*i* with an intensifying adverbial) and offers of repair. Besides, in *c* there is an attempt to allude responsibility (i.e. *it wasn't on purpose*) which does not seem to affect its appropriateness. We

do not find IFIDs or offers of repair in *f*, but if we take into consideration that the speaker has already fixed the problem, it can be argued that they are unnecessary. Instead, *f* contains an expression of gratitude (i.e. *thanks*), an element missing in the rest.

Only utterances *d* and *g* (below) were found inappropriate without a doubt, leaving aside a single British person that perceived *g* as totally acceptable. A cursory glance at these two apologies may be enough to understand their unsuitability since the denial of responsibility, the lack of an offer of repair and the absence of an expression of gratitude are sufficient motives for seeing them as rude, despite the IFID in *g*. Actually, *d* and *g* together with *h* and *a* (below) are the four answers that the British regard as potentially offensive. Among the justifications for this opinion they mention the lack of apology and explanation of what happened, the lack of remorse and the lack of an offer of repair. Apart from that, some of them also mention that in the event of someone else's bike chain breaking while they were in charge of it, the proper reaction is to fix it without having to ask.

d) What a pity! The chain broke.

g) I'm so sorry but the chain broke... It wasn't my fault.

The three utterances that are left seem to be more controversial:

a) I broke the chain but I can buy you a new one if you want.

e) Hey Pete, here's your bike. Thank you so much for lending it to me but as you can see the chain broke. I'll pay for it if you want me to.

h) I'm afraid that the chain is broken. I'm so sorry. What can I do?

In *a*, the person recognises his/her responsibility through *I broke the chain* and makes an offer of repair. Nevertheless, the use of *if you want* after the offer reduces its value. In other words, it can be understood that the speaker does not think that his/her participation in the reparation is needed. Among the lack of other strategies for apologising, this may be one of the reasons why three informants considered it as unacceptable (value of one). However, there were three others that assumed that it was totally acceptable (value of five), two that gave it a score

of three and one, of four. In *e*, there is an expression of gratitude and the fact that the chain broke is just stated as something that happened. Here, we also find *if you want* after an intention of offering repair that does not sound convincing for the reasons that we have just given. In this case value three was marked by four of the participants, five by two and each of the rest values by one, so its degree of acceptability is more neutral. Lastly, *h* is the single utterance, within these three, that includes IFIDs (i.e. *I'm afraid/I'm so sorry*). Here, the presence of *what can I do?* may reduce the effect of the apology because it is evident that the options are either paying for the repair, or repairing the chain himself/herself. Using *what can I do?* may be a speaker's strategy to avoid responsibility for fixing the problem. Three British respondents find *h* as totally acceptable, one finds it unacceptable and values from two to four were not marked by more than two respondents, so overall, we can say that it is appropriate.

Regarding the answers of the British informants to S5, we have already mentioned that responsibility is not shown through sentences like *I broke the chain* because, as it is assumed that it was an accident, it is unnecessary. Moreover, three strategies are predominantly used throughout all these apologies in different combinations: IFIDs with or without intensifying adverbials (e.g. *I'm sorry/I'm so sorry*), expressions of gratitude (e.g. *thank you/I really appreciate you lending me your bike*) and either offers of repair (e.g. *I'll pay to repair it/Let me know the cost and I'll give you the money*) or statements informing about the successful repair (e.g. *[I] fixed it for you/I bought you a new one*). The appearance of at least two of these strategies in all the utterances of the natives accounts for their necessary presence in appropriate apologies. Thus, the value that each British informant give to each strategy will determine his/her assessment of the apologies made by the Spanish learners. For instance, if a person considers that an expression of gratitude is more important than an IFID like *sorry*, s/he may see utterance *e* as totally acceptable and *c* as unacceptable.

With reference to S6, most of the apologies received an overall punctuation of three or higher (seven out of nine):

- b) *Excuse me, I didn't mean to do this. Are you OK?*
- c) *I'm sorry, I didn't mean to do that, sir, is there anything I can do to help?*
- d) *I'm very sorry, it was an accident.*
- e) *Oh my god! I'm so sorry! I'm really sorry! Can I do something for you?*
- f) *Excuse me! I'm really sorry! It was not my intention.*
- g) *Sorry, sir! I stumbled! I'm sorry! Please, let me pay you for the mess. Here you have my number; I'll pay for the cleaning!*
- h) *Oh, damn it! I'm so sorry! Please, let me help you cleaning this mess.*

We observe that IFIDs with or without intensifying adverbials introduce all the utterances (there are two in *e* and *f*; e.g. *Excuse me! I'm really sorry!*) and that these are preceded in *e* and *h* by emotional exclamations such as *Oh, my god!* or *Oh, damn it!*, which also reinforce the speech act. Lack of intent is expressed by the speaker in *b*, *c* and *f* (e.g. *I didn't mean to do this/it was not my intention*) and this strategy is combined with denial of responsibility in *d* (i.e. *it was an accident*). In the utterances where the speakers show willingness to compensate the stranger for their offence (i.e. *c*, *e*, *g* and *h*), we find two different tactics: an offer of repair in *g* (i.e. *Please, let me pay you for the mess. Here you have my number; I'll pay for the cleaning!*), which is the only compensation directly related to the offence perpetrated (Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper, 1989a, p. 293), and requests to make amends in the rest (i.e. *c*, *e* and *h*; e.g. *Can I do something for you?/ Please, let me help you cleaning this mess*). Two specific features only appear once in two different utterances: concern for the hearer in *b* (i.e. *are you OK?*) and an explanation of what happened in *f* (i.e. *I stumbled!*). We must say that British informants found that *d* and *h* could be offensive: the former for not showing enough apology and the latter for the use of *damn it*, which was already noticed above as potentially offensive for religious people.

Only one of the utterances was given an overall score of three or lower:

- i) *Oh! I'm so sorry, sir! I'm truly sorry. What can I do for you? Can I invite you at least?*

There is an emotional exclamation (i.e. *Oh!*), two IFIDs with intensifying adverbials (i.e. *I'm so sorry, sir! I'm truly sorry.*), a request to make amends (i.e. *What can I do for you?*) and one appeaser also in request form (i.e. *Can I invite you at least?*). Given the fact that this apology shows various apology strategies and that the illocutionary force is clearly intensified by the three first constituents (i.e. the emotional exclamation and the two IFIDs), if there is any difference between *i* and the utterances presented above it is the appeaser, which may be used by the speaker to distract the hearer from the offence.

Controversy among the responses of the British is specially found with regard to apology *a*:

- a) *Sorry! Let me help you clean the wine off your clothes.*

Each one of the five values in the scale of acceptability were marked by two respondents, except for value four (marked only by one). The utterance is simply composed of an IFID and a request to amend the offence; elements that seem to be enough for some and that do not fulfil the expectations of others. As we commented above, the lack of agreement can be explained in terms of personal considerations about the importance of the different apology strategies.

In the answers of the British to S6 all the characteristics mentioned above are present. All of them show IFIDs with one or two intensifying adverbials (e.g. *I'm really very sorry/I'm so, so sorry*), some of which are preceded by emotional exclamations (e.g. *OMG/Oh no!*). All nine also contain either offers of repair, some of which appear in request form, (e.g. *I'll pay for any cleaning/ you are welcome to come over and wash it/Please send me the bill for any dry cleaning*), requests to amend the offence (e.g. *Please let me help you get cleaned up/How can I fix this?*) or appeasers in request form (e.g. *Let me pay for your dinner*). The apology that

includes the appeaser serves as a proof that *i* (above) should not be considered inappropriate for using the same strategy. Lack of intent and denial of responsibility are also strategies combined in one of the utterances through *it was an accident*, an expression that some Spanish learners also used. In addition, two speakers acknowledge explicitly their blame (i.e. *I'm such a klutz/this is just typical [of me]*) and one of them tries to give an explanation for the incident (i.e. *I don't know what happened just then. I just tripped.*). In sum, there are evident similarities between the speech acts of the British and the Spanish participants, which accounts for a high sociopragmatic level on the part of the latter.

3. Conclusions

We are aware that the fact that only a few British people responded to our questionnaire does not allow us to make generalisations of any type. The validity of our findings is conditioned by the honesty with which our Spanish and British informants answered, but this is a concern in any research that involves the participation of humans. In addition, as the British contributors assessed first the responses that the Spanish learners gave to the situations, these may have influenced their own answers in the second part of the online opinion poll. However, bearing in mind these considerations, the results obtained allow us to claim that there are some widespread opinions about what is offensive in certain situations (i.e. pragmatic failure) and that there may be individual beliefs about what is appropriate to say in specific contexts.

On the one hand, in requests, we have seen that a high level of directness, the absence of explanations or justifications, the lack of promises of reward or the wrong form of address can cause pragmatic failure. The appropriateness of the request depends on the strategies used, which should be adapted to the social distance and relationship between the speaker and the hearer and to the ultimate end of the speech act. Thus, it is appropriate to use the imperative to ask for a piece of bread while having dinner with the family (without dismissing a politeness marker), but it is inappropriate to use the same structure when you need money from a friend

because you have forgotten your wallet. In the latter case, you would provoke a FTA affecting your friend's negative face, or in other words, you would be just rude. Given this reflection, it can be argued that sociopragmatic knowledge lies to some extent in intuition because if we put ourselves in the hearer's shoes, we will be able to make the request tactfully and as appropriately as possible.

On the other hand, in apologies, lack of explanations, absence of IFIDs, denying responsibility, not offering repair or not showing intention of making amends, not expressing lack of intent and trying to distract the hearer from the offence were found to be some of the strategies that account for their inappropriateness. As occurs with requests, common sense should guide us to find the right words for any offence that we may cause. If we offend someone in any way for any reason, the logical procedure may be assuming our responsibility, giving explanations, if any, for what occurred and trying to compensate the offended party for our action or conduct.

Nevertheless, what may be logically necessary to say for some, may be insignificant for others. Hence, we found that some utterances received, at the same time, scores of one (unacceptable) and of five (totally acceptable) by the British informants. The fact that this happens on several occasions (i.e. *a, d, e* and *g* in S1; *d* in S2; *c* in S3; *c, h* and *i* in S4; *a, c, e, g* and *h* in S5; *a, b, e* and *i* in S6) is the reason why we conclude that the personality of the hearers and/or the social conventions that are considered acceptable in their immediate environment affect the assessment of what is and what is not appropriate speech.

Consequently, in the same way that personal issues affect the evaluation of someone else's speech, our Spanish participants may show in their requests and apologies their own individual socio-psychological circumstances. Thus, the instances where pragmatic failure is detected should not necessarily be seen as a result of lack of awareness of pragmatic competence in the foreign language but as a lack of sociopragmatic competence in general.

Actually, some of the responses offered by the Spanish learners to the questionnaire were frankly unacceptable in this sense. For instance, some of the answers that surprised us and that we did not include in the online survey were “Nothing really, I wouldn’t feel the need to justify myself”, “I’m sorry but you shouldn’t be that childish” and “I’m sorry, but I could not” to S4 and “Sorry so much” to S6. One of these answers given to S4 and the one given to S6 were offered by the same participant that said “What a pity! The chain broke” to S5, the only apology considered unacceptable by all the British respondents. Therefore, our hypothesis about the decisive role of personal traits in (mis)communication is validated in this example.

Further analysis of the requests and apologies of the Spanish informants using the self as a variable would shed some light on this aspect. However, we were interested in studying the pragmatic competence (through performance) of advanced learners of English in general, not as individuals. To put it another way, our intention was to investigate whether the teaching of EFL in the Spanish context was successful in terms of the acquisition of pragmatic competence. As we have seen, although it is acknowledged that there are certain socio-cultural differences between the British and the Spanish people, it turned out to be the case that personal issues are determinant to achieve successful communication, so teachers of EFL cannot be blamed for every FTA that their students provoke. Still, pragmatics is known to be somehow put aside in foreign language classrooms and most of the attention is centred in lexical and grammatical aspects. For this reason, in Part 3 we pay attention to the integration of pragmatic competence in language teaching giving reasons for the need for instruction on pragmatic competence, presenting the benefits of bringing it into focus, and providing some examples of teaching-techniques and tasks that contribute to its acquisition.

PART 3: TEACHING PRAGMATICS

The achievement of proper pragmatic competence is more difficult in situations of foreign language learning, as opposed to second language learning, due to the greater linguistic difficulties implied in the former context, where speakers have fewer opportunities to use the language for communication. Pragmatics needs specific attention in both contexts and the most noticeable evidence is that learners with an advanced proficiency in the L2 do not show the same skilfulness in their pragmatic performance, although theirs is better than that of learners at lower levels of grammatical competence (Kasper, 1997; Bardovi-Harlig and Mahan-Taylor, 2003; Brock and Nagasaka, 2005). As Kasper (1997) asserts, “without a pragmatic focus, foreign language teaching raises students' *metalinguistic* awareness, but it does not contribute much to develop their *metapragmatic* consciousness in L2” (emphasis in original). Thus, in order to achieve effective communication and avoid pragmatic failure, foreign and second language learners need to be conscious of the typical speech act strategies of the language as well as of the socio-cultural norms that characterise its speakers. The teacher must guide the students in the process of raising their pragmatic awareness to achieve successful communication in the foreign language.

1. Explicit vs implicit instruction

Schmidt (1993) defines ‘implicit learning’ as the “nonconscious generalization from examples” (p. 26) and ‘explicit learning’ as “conscious problem solving” (p. 27). These terms are connected to their counterparts ‘implicit instruction’ and ‘explicit instruction’, which are named according to the approach used by the teacher and most of their success depends on the students’ ability to notice and understand. It is possible that a foreign language learner notices “that a native speaker used a particular form of address on a particular occasion” without realising that such a choice was determined by the “status differences between speaker and

hearer” (Schmidt, 1993, p. 26). We have already said that the teacher is partly responsible for raising the students’ awareness of general principles of pragmatics, so s/he should bear in mind that both noticing and understanding must be accomplished by the learners.

Pragmatic instruction in the foreign language classroom raises some important questions: Should pragmatic aspects of a language be presented explicitly or implicitly? If there is need for explicit instruction, should learners have a specific amount of grammatical foundation before introducing pragmatic issues? If pragmatic principles are developed implicitly, how does the process occur? All these questions have been addressed and answered in different works dealing with pragmatic competence in the foreign language classroom. For instance, research shows that “explicit instruction of the target language pragmatic rules is effective in acquiring pragmatic competence” (Grossi, 2009, p. 53). It has also been demonstrated that “pragmatic routines are teachable to beginning foreign language learners”, which implies that a solid foundation of grammar is not needed to start developing pragmatic competence (Kasper, 1997). In addition, implicit learning is favoured by the fact that “some pragmatic knowledge is universal, and other aspects may be successfully transferred from the learners’ L1” (Kasper, 1997).

Research comparing explicit and implicit approaches was carried out by House and Kasper (1981), House (1996) and Tateyama, Kasper, Mui, Tay and Thananart (1997)⁸, where “explicit teaching involved description, explanation, and discussion of the pragmatic feature in addition to input and practice, whereas implicit teaching included input and practice without the metapragmatic component” (Kasper, 1997). These studies “found that students’ pragmatic abilities improved regardless of the adopted approach, but the explicitly taught students did better than the implicit groups” (Kasper, 1997).

⁸ These authors do not appear in the ‘References’ because we did not have access to their research. However, we mention them following Kasper’s (1997) article.

1.1. Pragmatic knowledge and implicit learning

Lenchuk and Ahmed (2013) present an example of implicit instruction of pragmatics in a classroom of ESL business students, where they learned to make and respond to offers without getting information about “why negotiators might prefer one way of making, accepting, or refusing an offer over another” (p. 85). Through this approach, students assimilate useful linguistic forms to perform specific speech acts but they do not know how to adapt them to specific situations.

We have mentioned that pragmatic universals and shared aspects between the L1 and the L2 favour implicit learning. Kasper (1997) develops these questions further. Regarding pragmatic universals, the author alludes to the organizational principles of conversation (e.g. turn-taking, specific internal structures), the use of contextual information to convey meaning, conversational routines or the adaptation of language to different registers. As for the “corresponding form-function mapping between L1 and L2”, she exemplifies it through the equivalents of *could* and *would* in Danish and German, which are successfully transferred into English without the need of instruction, and on the benefits of sharing social norms with the foreign community, which facilitates the adaptation of the language to the new social context. However, as Kasper (1997) points out, learners do not always use these strategies and some linguistic knowledge is required in order to make use of and transfer pragmatic knowledge from the native to the foreign language. Therefore, pedagogic intervention is needed to make learners “aware of what they know already and encourage them to use their universal or transferable L1 pragmatic knowledge in L2 contexts” (Kasper, 1997).

Schmidt (1993), following other authors, believes that “some pragmatic and discoursal principles are better represented as associative networks rather than as propositional rules” and that connectionist models can account for the unconscious attainment of a certain amount of pragmatic competence (p. 32). The functioning of associative networks consists in

unconsciously making connections between a range of linguistic forms and several features of social context. Schmidt (1993) considers the applicability of associative networks to the distribution of address forms and the performance of speech acts (pp. 32-33); however, he resolves that “it would certainly be extremely helpful to be consciously aware” of the connections (p. 34) and that “a consciousness-raising approach to the teaching of pragmatics” should involve both implicit and explicit learning mechanisms (p. 36).

1.2. Teaching techniques for implicit-explicit learning of pragmatics

We have said that the teaching of pragmatic aspects of a foreign language is a task for teachers and, as Eslami-Rasekh (2005) notices, they have to face some challenges such as the “lack of adequate materials and training, which are the result of a lack of emphasis on pragmatic issues in ESL teaching methodology courses” (p. 199). Nevertheless, there is a wide range of strategies and activities that teachers can use to develop and improve their students’ pragmatic awareness. The most obvious and easy to be fulfilled is the use of the L2 for classroom management in teacher-fronted teaching (Kasper, 1997; Brock and Nagasaka, 2005). Students can learn “to complete common communicative functions in the classroom, such as requests, commands, openings, closing, refusals, apologies, and explanations” (Brock and Nagasaka, 2005, p. 23), although classroom discourse, among other disadvantages, encloses a narrow range of speech acts (Kasper, 1997).

The limitations of classroom discourse should lead teachers to search for more language samples outside the instructional setting. One way of overcoming this necessity is by using authentic materials, which can be collected in many ways, “from tape recording, to messages on answering machines, making use of internationally broadcast English language talk shows, educational films, using the world wide web, and saving letters and correspondence, to name just a few” (Bardovi-Harlig and Mahan-Taylor, 2003, p. 7). However, authentic input material “does not secure successful pragmatic development” (Kasper, 1997) so, apart from exposing

the learners to real input of the second language, we need to “provide them with the analytical tools they need to arrive at their own generalizations concerning contextually appropriate language use” (Eslami-Rasekh, 2005, p. 200). This can be done through numerous and varied activities aimed at emphasising to the learner that “language is composed of not just linguistic and lexical elements; rather, language reflects also the social context, taking into account situational and social factors in the act of communication”, as Harlow states (as cited in Deda, 2013, p. 69).

Eslami-Rasekh (2005) classifies useful activities for pragmatic development into two types, “activities aimed at raising students’ pragmatic awareness” and “activities offering opportunities for communicative practice”, but she focuses on the former, which are tasks specifically “designed to develop recognition of how language forms are used appropriately in context” and, more specifically, “to make learners consciously aware of differences between the native and target language speech acts” (p. 200). Some examples are translations of speech acts from the L1 to the L2 based on the students’ previous answers to DCTs or presentations and discussions of cross-cultural (mis)communications in potentially problematic interactions (Eslami-Rasekh, 2005, pp. 201-205).

Lenchuk and Ahmed (2013) present an interesting lesson plan to teach the speech act of complimenting. This example offers limitless adaptations to other speech acts. The authors are concerned with avoiding a homogeneous and oversimplified view of culture by students, in other words, with keeping students away from relying on stereotypes (characteristics of the mainstream culture) that do “not take into account the cultures and languages of numerous minorities” (p. 86). Among the activities suggested we find elicitation questions about sociolinguistic and sociocultural aspects involved in the act of complimenting in their native language, a reading that deals with general rules of complimenting, categorisation of compliment responses according to specific conversational strategies, a listening exercise that

shows that appropriate complimenting is tied to cultural values, speaking practice on giving and responding to compliments, DCTs, and so on.

Other authors such as Brock and Nagasaka or Kasper also present some ideas for teaching pragmatics in the L2 classroom. Brock and Nagasaka (2005), regarding how the teacher in EFL settings can introduce pragmatics, recommend the use of the acronym S.U.R.E., which stands for 'see', 'use', 'review' and 'experience': the teacher can help students 'see' language in context so that they are able to explain the role of pragmatics in specific communicative acts; s/he can also develop speaking activities for students to 'use' English in context according to situational needs; s/he should 'review' the pragmatic aspects previously taught; and s/he can make her/his students 'experience' and observe the role of pragmatics in communication (e.g. through videos, inviting native speakers) (pp. 20-24). On the other hand, Kasper (1997) highlights the importance of student-centred interaction to practice L2 pragmatic skills and suggests, apart from using a task-based approach, referential communication tasks, interpersonal communication tasks, roleplays, simulations and drama as helpful activities to improve our students' pragmatic competence.

CONCLUSIONS

We have seen that pragmatics is a complex and complete discipline aimed at studying language use based on the linguistic forms chosen by speakers in a given situation and social context and with a specific purpose. If a speaker is able to transmit successfully her/his message causing in the hearer the effects intended, it is because of her/his pragmatic competence, and the same is applied to the reception of the message by the hearer. On the contrary, if miscommunication occurs and it is not due to the lack of lexical and grammatical competence, then we are facing pragmatic failure, which involves unsuitable use of linguistic forms as a result of erroneous analogies between the L1 and the L2 (i.e. pragmalinguistic failure) and/or inappropriate adaptation of the language (forms and strategies) to the social conditions of the context (sociopragmatic failure).

Pragmatic failure has been regarded as an area of cross-cultural communication breakdown that has attracted the attention of a number of researchers and that has experienced a growing interest given the fact that, in today's globalised world, cross-cultural communication has become almost a daily habit for many people. Hence, investigation has been carried out to find pragmatic universals, similarities and differences between the ways native speakers use language strategies, analysing how non-native speakers of a language make use of their learned language in communication (i.e. interlanguage pragmatics), examining the acquisition of pragmatic competence at different stages of the process of learning a foreign language and so forth. This has been done through different research methodologies and several data collection instruments but DCTs seem to have been the most productive. However, it is been proposed by Geluykens (2007) that, for more accurate and real results, more than one methodology and data collection technique should be used in further research.

In addition, most of the attention of researchers in CCP has been centred on speech acts, particularly on requests and apologies, which has been criticised by some scholars. This may

be due to the fact that pragmatic failure is a serious issue that may lead to significant trouble. Nevertheless, given that there is general agreement over the need to find solutions, the more we know about it, the better we can prepare materials to work on its solution. In fact, we decided to analyse requests and apologies, in spite of these being the most studied speech acts, for certain additional reasons. On the one hand, they have already been noticed as two potential acts of communication that might provoke FTA situations. On the other hand, they are at least two of the most frequent speech acts since for multiple reasons we are constantly making requests and apologies in our day to day. In addition, they seem to differ more between the English and the Spanish culture, especially in terms of politeness and gratitude markers (i.e. *please* and *thank you*).

Based on these considerations, we developed a research tool aimed at studying the (socio)pragmatic competence of Spanish learners of EFL through the performance of requests and apologies. Those speech acts were evaluated in terms of appropriateness by British informants and we found out that whereas some utterances were considered clearly either ‘unacceptable’ or ‘totally acceptable’, some others seemed controversial. This led us to the conclusion that personal traits may influence the way we understand what we are told and consequently, the way we speak. Hence, pragmatic competence in the foreign language is not the only reason for pragmatic failure to occur. Getting answers from our Spanish respondents to the same situations in their L1, would help us to check if the inappropriate utterances were also so in their native language and verify whether their non-acceptability is due to low levels of pragmatic competence or to personal issues. In any case, most of the utterances did not show clear evidence of pragmatic failure, which indicates that, overall, our Spanish learners have a reasonable level of pragmatic competence.

We are aware that a large part of the data collected through the DCTs was not considered in our research, but it would have been unreasonable and unviable to have the British informants

to go through all the 318 utterances. Notwithstanding, with the volume of data obtained it is still possible to develop several research objectives from different perspectives and attending to a number of possible variables (e.g. gender, developmental stage, year of degree, foreign-language-related background). Different designs and contents of the online survey for native speakers would also contribute to providing different insights into interlanguage pragmatics. Furthermore, if we were able to gather a higher number of British informants to take our online survey the results would be more accurate and we could verify whether the controversies found in the assessment of the utterances were likely to be a common occurrence, or if they were simply fortuitous.

Returning once more to pragmatic competence, it is self-evident that in the L1 it is acquired naturally, along with the language. However, as a second language is learned through instruction, it seems logical that pragmatic competence in the L2 will need special attention in the foreign language classroom. Therefore, we have dealt with how foreign language teachers can approach pragmatic competence in their lessons to raise students' awareness of linguistic and cultural pragmatic issues, which are necessary for them to understand that different communities are governed by different social norms and to avoid pragmatic failure. For instance, we mentioned some useful activities based on the inclusion of authentic language in the classroom, which needs to be explored by students so that they can reflect on the social aspects that determine the linguistic choices. Drama, roleplays and simulations have also been alluded to as convenient alternatives to practice pragmatic competence in different "artificial" contexts within the classroom environment. In any case, as little or zero attention is paid to pragmatic competence in textbooks and other teaching materials, the teacher has to create her/his own activities and even lesson plans to work on this valuable skill that will help the students accomplish successful communication.

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Discourse Completion Tasks (DCTs)

1. At a café. You order a drink and after that, you realise that you do not have any money. Fortunately, you are with a friend that can pay for it and you ask her/him:
2. At home. You are having dinner with your family and you want a piece of bread but you cannot reach the basket. One of your relatives has to pass it to you, so you say:
3. At the airport. You have just arrived in London. You are at Heathrow Airport and want to find out the fastest way to get to the city centre. You see a police officer that can help you, so you ask:
4. Anywhere. You could not go to one of your best friend's birthday party and s/he took it as an offence. You know it was really important for her/him that you were there so as soon as you see him/her you say:
5. Anywhere. Your neighbour lent you his/her bicycle for a few days and the chain broke. When you return the bike to its owner you tell him/her:
6. In a restaurant. You are having dinner in a restaurant. You went to the toilet and on your way back to your seat you stumble and spill a glass of wine all over a stranger. You say:

APPENDIX B

Evaluating the appropriateness of requests and apologies

First of all, thank you for agreeing to complete this survey. It is part of a research project which I will develop in my Master's dissertation for the Inter-university Master in Advanced English Studies and its Applications (iMAES) at the Universidade da Coruña in Galicia, Spain. The survey will take you around 15 minutes. Please, read the instructions carefully and answer honestly.

You will find below a number of utterances corresponding to six different situations that are previously described. You have to give each utterance a value from 1 to 5 (from unacceptable to totally acceptable) according to its appropriateness in the context. You do not need any specialised knowledge in order to do so, just trust your language abilities as a native speaker of English. After completing the evaluation of the utterances included in each situation, you will have to answer one question about whether you, as interlocutor, would consider any of them offensive. Finally, you will be asked to give your own responses to each situation.

Thank you again for your contribution.

***Required**

1. Gender *

- Male
 Female
 Other:

2. Age *

Situation 1: At a café. You order a drink and after that, you realise that you do not have any money. Fortunately, you are with a friend that can pay for it and you ask her/him:

3. a) I haven't got money. Do you mind paying for my drink? *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Unacceptable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Totally acceptable

4. b) Hey, pay for this one man. I forgot my wallet. Next one's on me. *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Unacceptable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Totally acceptable

5. c) I forgot my money! Could you pay my coffee? I'll give you the money back as soon as possible. *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Unacceptable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Totally acceptable

6. d) Cheers Pablo, would you mind inviting me to this coffee? I've got no money on me but I'll pay for yours next time, I promise. *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Unacceptable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Totally acceptable

7. e) Could you lend me some money, man? *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Unacceptable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Totally acceptable

8. f) Damn it! I don't have any money. Can I borrow some money from you? *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Unacceptable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Totally acceptable

9. g) Can you lend me £5 please? *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Unacceptable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Totally acceptable

10. h) Susan, you're going to hate me, but do you mind paying this round? I thought I'd taken my wallet with me when I left home but I can't find it. Next one is on me, I promise. *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Unacceptable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Totally acceptable

11. i) Sorry Susan, I've just realized I don't have any money. Can you pay for my drink and I'll give it to you later? *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Unacceptable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Totally acceptable

12. Do you think that any of these answers could be considered offensive? If so, which (indicate the letter) and why?

Situation 2: At home. You are having dinner with your family and you want a piece of bread but you cannot reach the basket. One of your relatives has to pass it to you, so you say:

13. a) Pass me the basket, please. *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Unacceptable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Totally acceptable

14. b) Could you pass me a piece of bread? *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Unacceptable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Totally acceptable

15. c) Alejandra, could you give me a piece of bread? *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Unacceptable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Totally acceptable

16. d) Can you give me a piece of bread? *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Unacceptable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Totally acceptable

17. e) Mom, can you pass me a piece of bread? *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Unacceptable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Totally acceptable

18. f) Hey dad, give me a piece of bread, please. *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Unacceptable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Totally acceptable

19. g) Can you pass me some bread, please? *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Unacceptable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Totally acceptable

20. h) Pass me a piece of bread, please. *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Unacceptable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Totally acceptable

21. i) Would you pass me the basket, please? *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Unacceptable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Totally acceptable

22. Do you think that any of these answers could be considered offensive? If so, which (indicate the letter) and why?

Situation 3: At the airport. You have just arrived in London. You are at Heathrow Airport and want to find out the fastest way to get to the city centre. You see a police officer that can help you, so you ask:

23. a) Sorry, I need help, can you help me? Can you explain to me how I could get to the city centre? *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Unacceptable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Totally acceptable

24. b) Sorry officer, how can I get to Victoria Station? *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Unacceptable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Totally acceptable

25. c) Excuse me, do you know what the fastest way to get to the city centre is? *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Unacceptable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Totally acceptable

26. d) Sorry, which is the fastest way to go to the centre? *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Unacceptable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Totally acceptable

27. e) Sorry man, I'd like to go to the city centre, could you tell me the fastest way? *

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Unacceptable Totally acceptable

28. f) Excuse me, can I ask you a question? What is the fastest way to get to the city centre? *

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Unacceptable Totally acceptable

29. g) Excuse me. I have just arrived from Spain and I would like to know the fastest way to get to the city centre. Would you mind helping me, please? *

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Unacceptable Totally acceptable

30. h) Excuse me, sir, could you tell me which is the fastest way to get to the city centre, please? *

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Unacceptable Totally acceptable

31. i) Excuse me, officer. I've just arrived in London and I'm a bit lost right now. Could you please tell me the fastest way to get to the city centre? *

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Unacceptable Totally acceptable

32. Do you think that any of these answers could be considered offensive? If so, which (indicate the letter) and why?

Situation 4: Anywhere. You could not go to one of your best friend's birthday party and s/he took it as an offence. You know it was really important for her/him that you were there so as soon as you see him/her you say:

33. a) Hey, I'm so sorry, I couldn't go to your birthday but here I have a present for you and I hope you forgive me. *

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Unacceptable Totally acceptable

34. b) Rachel, I'm very sorry I couldn't go to your birthday party and I do know how important it was for you. And I'm so sorry I didn't go, but the two of us can celebrate your birthday whenever you want, today, tomorrow... *

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5
Unacceptable Totally acceptable

35. c) Excuse me for not having gone to your birthday party. *

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5
Unacceptable Totally acceptable

36. d) I'm so sorry about it, could you forgive me? *

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5
Unacceptable Totally acceptable

37. e) Hey man, about that party, I just couldn't make it. My parents went out and I had to stay with my little sister. Sorry one more time. *

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5
Unacceptable Totally acceptable

38. f) Sorry for missing your birthday party buddy, but it was absolutely impossible to get there in time. Hope you can forgive me. *

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5
Unacceptable Totally acceptable

39. g) I beg your pardon, I couldn't go. *

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5
Unacceptable Totally acceptable

40. h) I'm sorry that I couldn't go but it was impossible for me, I swear. Let's meet up and do something special together. *

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5
Unacceptable Totally acceptable

41. i) Hey, don't be mad. We can have a special party for your birthday, I pay for the beers! *

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Unacceptable Totally acceptable

42. Do you think that any of these answers could be considered offensive? If so, which (indicate the letter) and why?

Situation 5: Anywhere. Your neighbour lent you his/her bicycle for a few days and the chain broke. When you return the bike to its owner you tell him/her:

43. a) I broke the chain but I can buy you a new one if you want. *

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Unacceptable Totally acceptable

44. b) The chain broke accidentally, I'm sorry. Tell me the cost of it and I'll give it to you. *

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Unacceptable Totally acceptable

45. c) Look, I'm sorry but I broke the chain. It wasn't on purpose. If you let me, I'll pay for the repair. *

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Unacceptable Totally acceptable

46. d) What a pity! The chain broke. *

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Unacceptable Totally acceptable

47. e) Hey Pete, here's your bike. Thank you so much for lending it to me but as you can see the chain broke. I'll pay for it if you want me to. *

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Unacceptable Totally acceptable

48. f) Hey man, thanks for lending me the bike. The chain broke. I don't know if it was me or it was old... I bought you a new one. Thanks! *

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Unacceptable Totally acceptable

49. g) I'm so sorry but the chain broke... It wasn't my fault. *

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Unacceptable Totally acceptable

50. h) I'm afraid that the chain is broken. I'm so sorry. What can I do? *

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Unacceptable Totally acceptable

51. i) I'm very sorry. The chain broke while I was riding and I couldn't fix it. Do you want me to pay for the repair? *

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Unacceptable Totally acceptable

52. Do you think that any of these answers could be considered offensive? If so, which (indicate the letter) and why?

Situation 6: In a restaurant. You are having dinner in a restaurant. You went to the toilet and on your way back to your seat you stumble and spill a glass of wine all over a stranger. You say:

53. a) Sorry! Let me help you clean the wine off your clothes. *

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Unacceptable Totally acceptable

54. b) Excuse me, I didn't mean to do this. Are you OK? *

Mark only one oval.

1 2 3 4 5

Unacceptable Totally acceptable

55. c) I'm sorry, I didn't mean to do that, sir, is there anything I can do to help? *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Unacceptable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Totally acceptable

56. d) I'm very sorry, it was an accident. *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Unacceptable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Totally acceptable

57. e) Oh my god! I'm so sorry! I'm really sorry! Can I do something for you? *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Unacceptable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Totally acceptable

58. f) Excuse me! I'm really sorry! It was not my intention. *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Unacceptable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Totally acceptable

59. g) Sorry, sir! I stumbled! I'm sorry! Please, let me pay you for the mess. Here you have my number; I'll pay for the cleaning! *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Unacceptable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Totally acceptable

60. h) Oh, damn it! I'm so sorry! Please, let me help you cleaning this mess. *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Unacceptable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Totally acceptable

61. i) Oh! I'm so sorry, sir! I'm truly sorry. What can I do for you? Can I invite you at least? *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Unacceptable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Totally acceptable

62. Do you think that any of these answers could be considered offensive? If so, which (indicate the letter) and why? *

If you found yourself in these situations, what would YOU most naturally say? Please disregard the options above, and try to write what your instinctive reaction would be.

63. 1. At a café. You order a drink and after that, you realise that you do not have any money. Fortunately, you are with a friend that can pay for it and you ask her/him: *

64. 2. At home. You are having dinner with your family and you want a piece of bread but you cannot reach the basket. One of your relatives has to pass it to you, so you say: *

65. 3. At the airport. You have just arrived in London. You are at Heathrow Airport and want to find out the fastest way to get to the city centre. You see a police officer that can help you, so you ask: *

66. 4. Anywhere. You could not go to one of your best friend's birthday party and s/he took it as an offence. You know it was really important for her/him that you were there so as soon as you see him/her you say: *

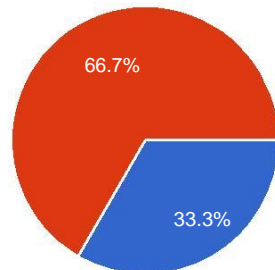
67. 5. Anywhere. Your neighbour lent you his/her bicycle for a few days and the chain broke. When you return the bike to its owner you tell him/her: *

68. 6. In a restaurant. You are having dinner in a restaurant. You went to the toilet and on your way back to your seat you stumble and spill a glass of wine all over a stranger. You say: *

APPENDIX C

Summary of responses

Gender

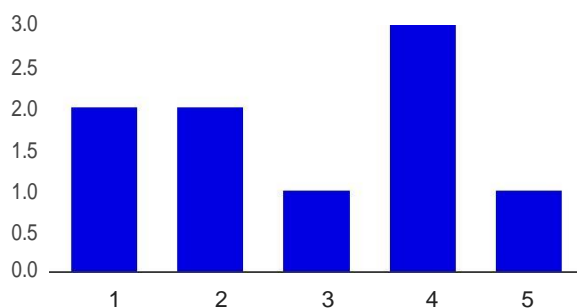


Male	3	33.3%
Female	6	66.7%

Age 23 23 23 24 24 27 22 41 38

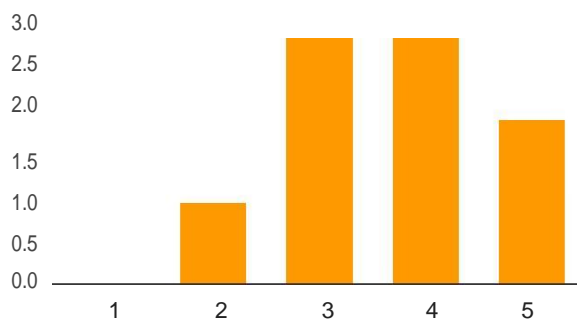
Situation 1: At a café. You order a drink and after that, you realise that you do not have any money. Fortunately, you are with a friend that can pay for it and you ask her/him:

a) I haven't got money. Do you mind paying for my drink?



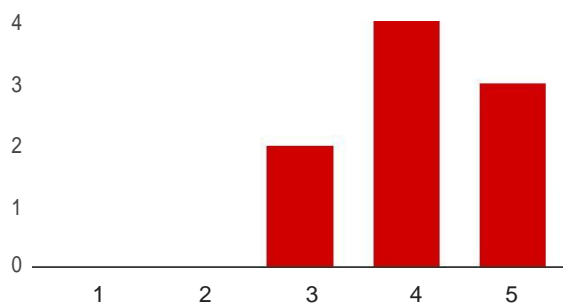
Unacceptable:	1	2	22.2%
	2	2	22.2%
	3	1	11.1%
	4	3	33.3%
Totally acceptable:	5	1	11.1%

b) Hey, pay for this one man. I forgot my wallet. Next one's on me.



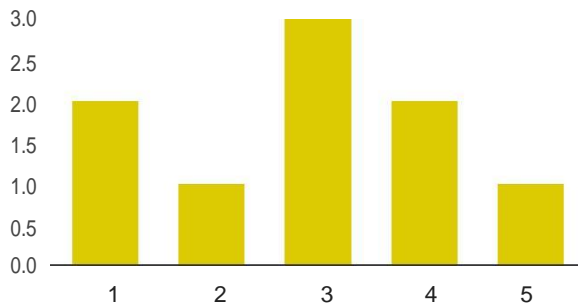
Unacceptable:	1	0	0%
	2	1	11.1%
	3	3	33.3%
	4	3	33.3%
Totally acceptable:	5	2	22.2%

c) I forgot my money! Could you pay my coffee? I'll give you the money back as soon as possible.



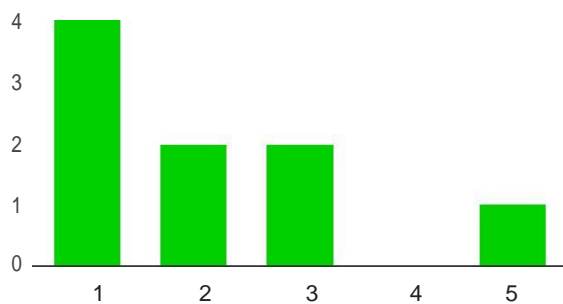
Unacceptable:1	0	0%
2	0	0%
3	2	22.2%
4	4	44.4%
Totally acceptable: 5	3	33.3%

d) Cheers Pablo, would you mind inviting me to this coffee? I've got no money on me but I'll pay for yours next time, I promise.



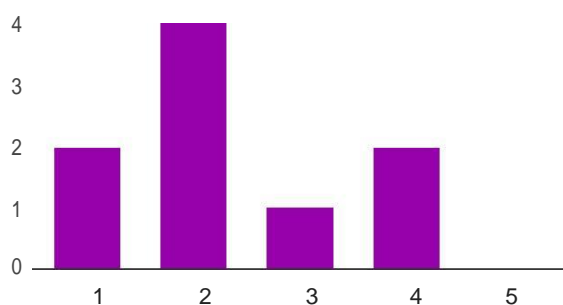
Unacceptable:1	2	22.2%
2	1	11.1%
3	3	33.3%
4	2	22.2%
Totally acceptable: 5	1	11.1%

e) Could you lend me some money, man?



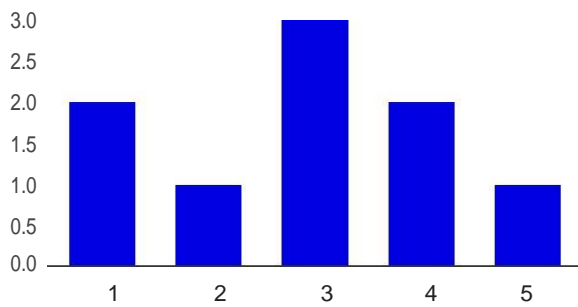
Unacceptable:1	4	44.4%
2	2	22.2%
3	2	22.2%
4	0	0%
Totally acceptable: 5	1	11.1%

f) Damn it! I don't have any money. Can I borrow some money from you?



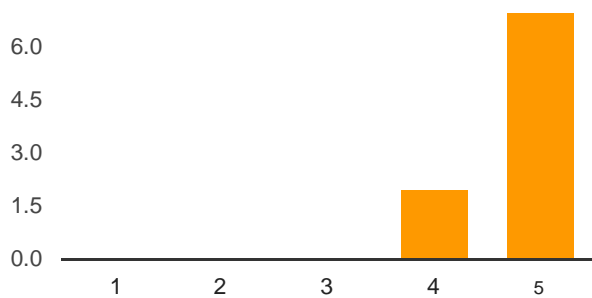
Unacceptable:1	2	22.2%
2	4	44.4%
3	1	11.1%
4	2	22.2%
Totally acceptable: 5	0	0%

g) Can you lend me £5 please?



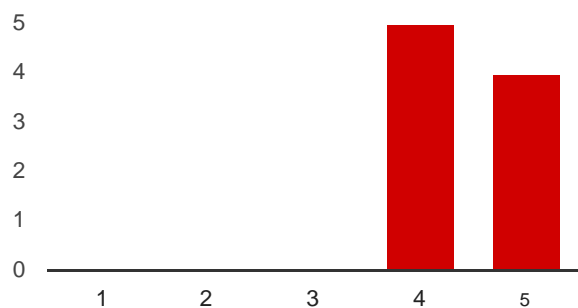
Unacceptable:	1	2	22.2%
	2	1	11.1%
	3	3	33.3%
	4	2	22.2%
Totally acceptable:	5	1	11.1%

h) Susan, you're going to hate me, but do you mind paying this round? I thought I'd taken my wallet with me when I left home but I can't find it. Next one is on me, I promise.



Unacceptable:	1	0	0%
	2	0	0%
	3	0	0%
	4	2	22.2%
Totally acceptable:	5	7	77.8%

i) Sorry Susan, I've just realized I don't have any money. Can you pay for my drink and I'll give it to you later?



Unacceptable:	1	0	0%
	2	0	0%
	3	0	0%
	4	5	55.6%
Totally acceptable:	5	4	44.4%

Do you think that any of these answers could be considered offensive? If so, which (indicate the letter) and why?

A, e,f - I would find it rude if someone assumed that I would pay for them, and would be embarrassed if I had forgotten my wallet!

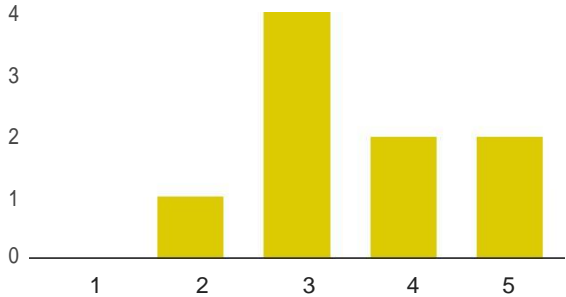
E and g offers no explanation

D

The answer with Damn it. Religious folk would find it offensive.

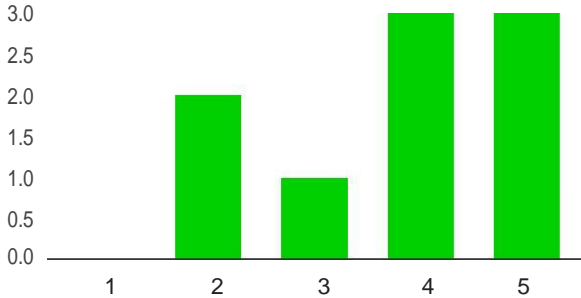
Situation 2: At home. You are having dinner with your family and you want a piece of bread but you cannot reach the basket. One of your relatives has to pass it to you, so you say:

a) Pass me the basket, please.



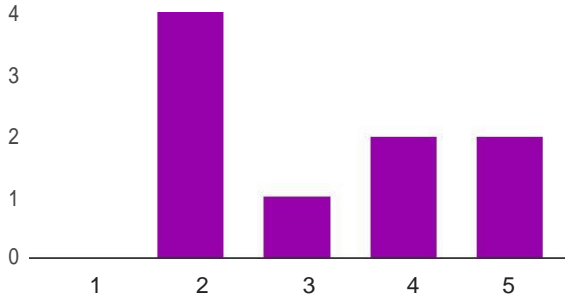
Unacceptable:	1	0	0%
	2	1	11.1%
	3	4	44.4%
	4	2	22.2%
Totally acceptable:	5	2	22.2%

b) Could you pass me a piece of bread?



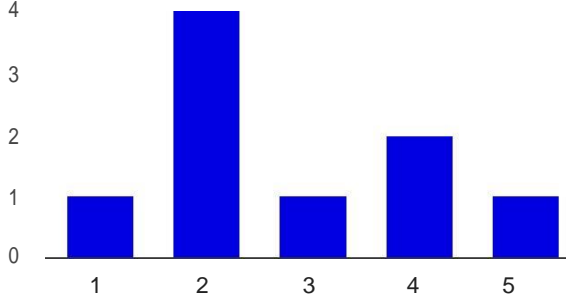
Unacceptable:	1	0	0%
	2	2	22.2%
	3	1	11.1%
	4	3	33.3%
Totally acceptable:	5	3	33.3%

c) Alejandra, could you give me a piece of bread?



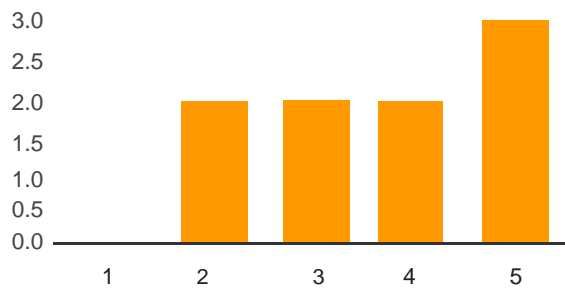
Unacceptable:	1	0	0%
	2	4	44.4%
	3	1	11.1%
	4	2	22.2%
Totally acceptable:	5	2	22.2%

d) Can you give me a piece of bread?



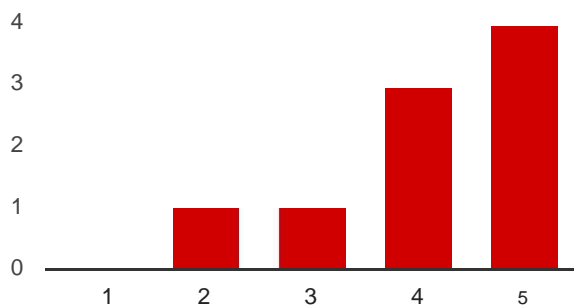
Unacceptable:	1	1	11.1%
	2	4	44.4%
	3	1	11.1%
	4	2	22.2%
Totally acceptable:	5	1	11.1%

e) Mom, can you pass me a piece of bread?



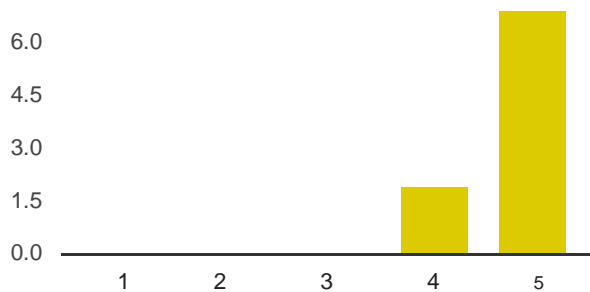
Unacceptable:	1	0	0%
	2	2	22.2%
	3	2	22.2%
	4	2	22.2%
Totally acceptable:	5	3	33.3%

f) Hey dad, give me a piece of bread, please.



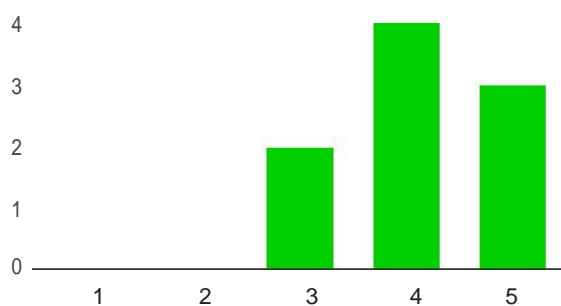
Unacceptable:	1	0	0%
	2	1	11.1%
	3	1	11.1%
	4	3	33.3%
Totally acceptable:	5	4	44.4%

g) Can you pass me some bread, please?



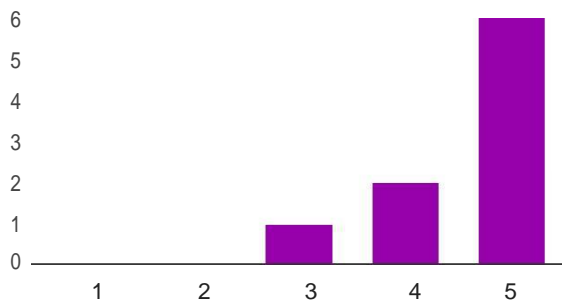
Unacceptable:	1	0	0%
	2	0	0%
	3	0	0%
	4	2	22.2%
Totally acceptable:	5	7	77.8%

h) Pass me a piece of bread, please.



Unacceptable:	1	0	0%
	2	0	0%
	3	2	22.2%
	4	4	44.4%
Totally acceptable:	5	3	33.3%

i) Would you pass me the basket, please?



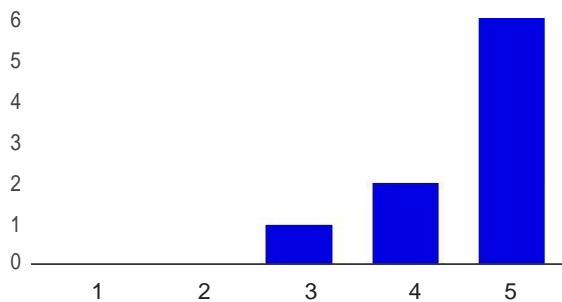
Unacceptable:	1	0	0%
	2	0	0%
	3	1	11.1%
	4	2	22.2%
Totally acceptable:	5	6	66.7%

Do you think that any of these answers could be considered offensive? If so, which (indicate the letter) and why?

None are really offensive, but I would always say please could you... Rather than pass me this etc
No

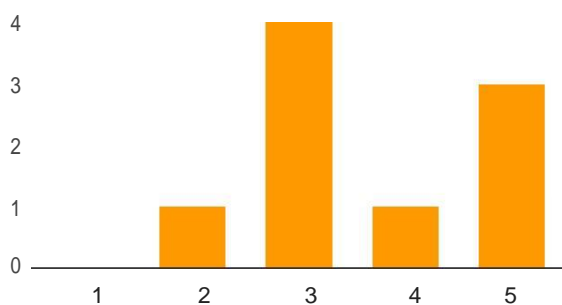
Situation 3: At the airport. You have just arrived in London. You are at Heathrow Airport and want to find out the fastest way to get to the city centre. You see a police officer that can help you, so you ask:

a) Sorry, I need help, can you help me? Can you explain to me how I could get to the city centre?



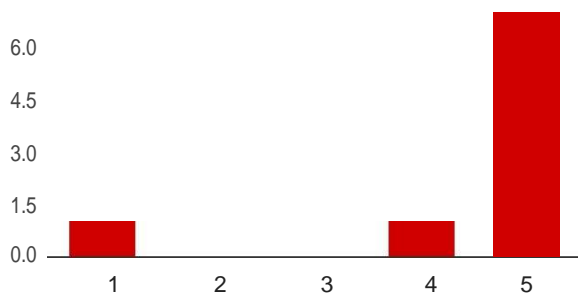
Unacceptable:	1	0	0%
	2	0	0%
	3	1	11.1%
	4	2	22.2%
Totally acceptable:	5	6	66.7%

b) Sorry officer, how can I get to Victoria Station?



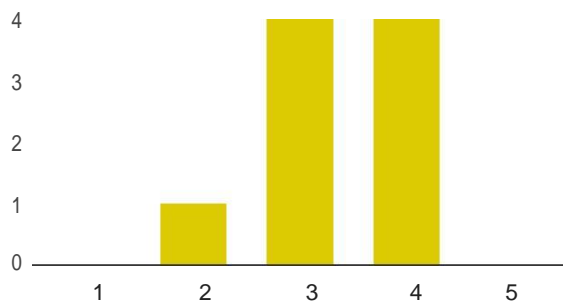
Unacceptable:	1	0	0%
	2	1	11.1%
	3	4	44.4%
	4	1	11.1%
Totally acceptable:	5	3	33.3%

c) Excuse me, do you know what the fastest way to get to the city centre is?



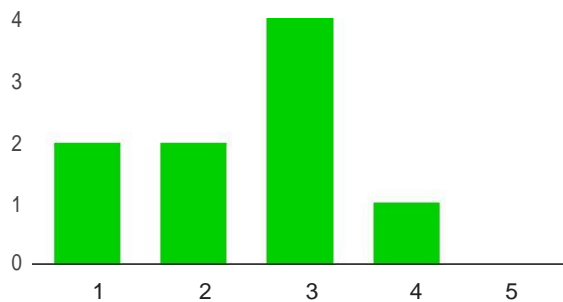
Unacceptable:	1	11.1%
	2	0%
	3	0%
	4	11.1%
Totally acceptable:	5	77.8%

d) Sorry, which is the fastest way to go to the centre?



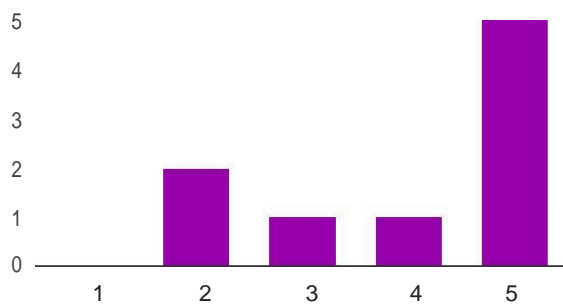
Unacceptable:	1	0%
	2	11.1%
	3	22.2%
	4	44.4%
Totally acceptable:	5	0%

e) Sorry man, I'd like to go to the city centre, could you tell me the fastest way?



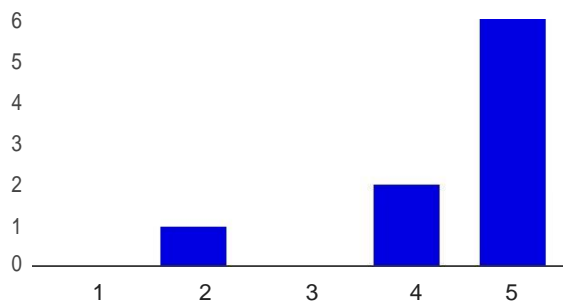
Unacceptable:	1	22.2%
	2	22.2%
	3	44.4%
	4	11.1%
Totally acceptable:	5	0%

f) Excuse me, can I ask you a question? What's the fastest way to get to the city centre?



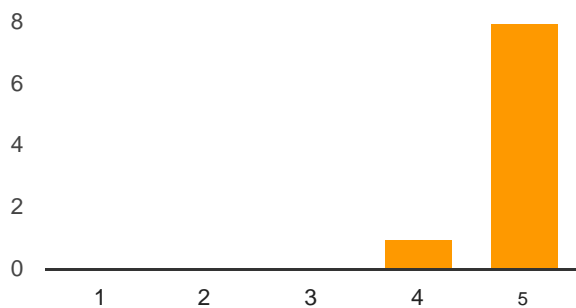
Unacceptable:	1	0%
	2	22.2%
	3	11.1%
	4	11.1%
Totally acceptable:	5	55.6%

g) Excuse me. I have just arrived from Spain and I would like to know the fastest way to get to the city centre. Would you mind helping me, please?



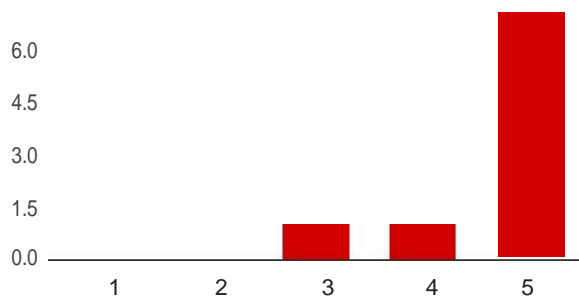
Unacceptable:	1	0	0%
	2	1	11.1%
	3	0	0%
	4	2	22.2%
Totally acceptable:	5	6	66.7%

h) Excuse me, sir, could you tell me which is the fastest way to get to the city centre, please?



Unacceptable:	1	0	0%
	2	0	0%
	3	0	0%
	4	1	11.1%
Totally acceptable:	5	8	88.9%

i) Excuse me, officer. I've just arrived in London and I'm a bit lost right now. Could you please tell me the fastest way to get to the city centre?



Unacceptable:	1	0	0%
	2	0	0%
	3	1	11.1%
	4	1	11.1%
Totally acceptable:	5	7	77.8%

Do you think that any of these answers could be considered offensive? If so, which (indicate the letter) and why?

All are acceptable but I would never call a police officer 'man'

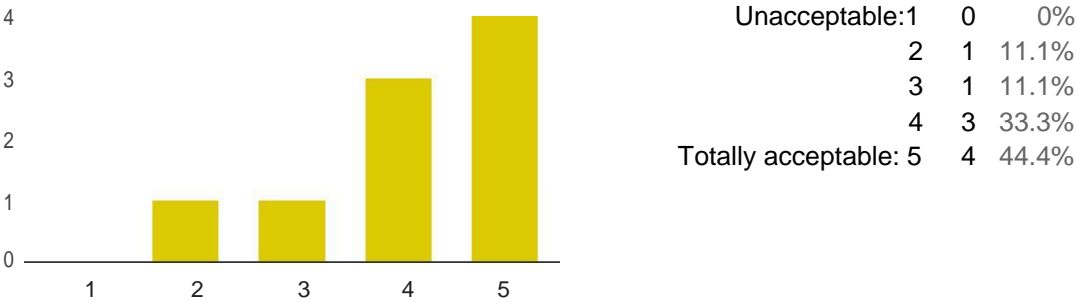
E, not addressing a police officer correctly

No

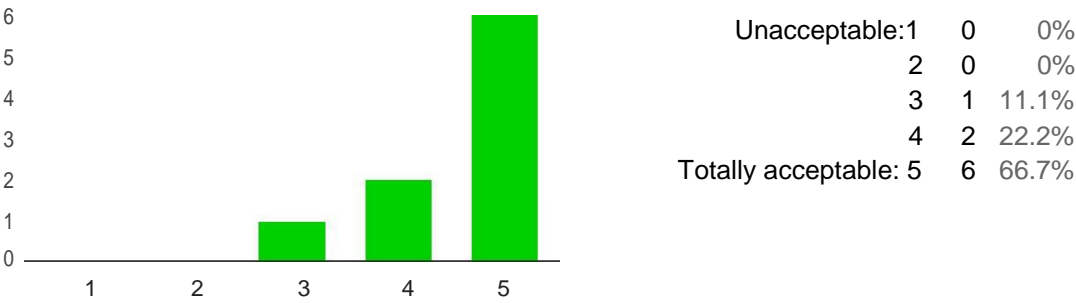
E. I wouldn't address anybody in the street as "Man"

Situation 4: Anywhere. You could not go to one of your best friend’s birthday party and s/he took it as an offence. You know it was really important for her/him that you were there so as soon as you see him/her you say:

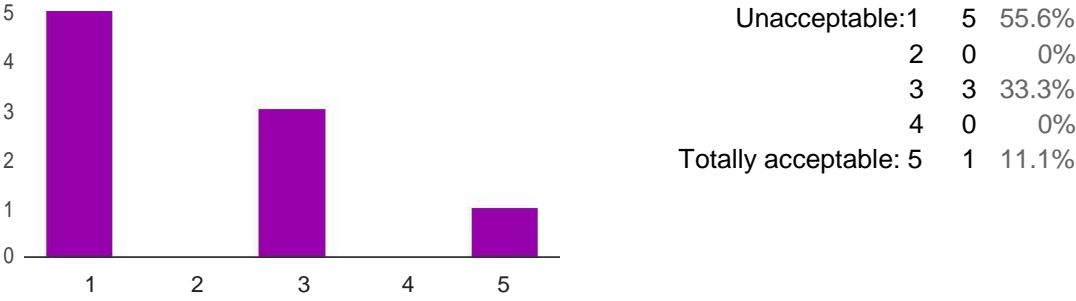
a) Hey, I’m so sorry, I couldn’t go to your birthday but here I have a present for you and I hope you forgive me.



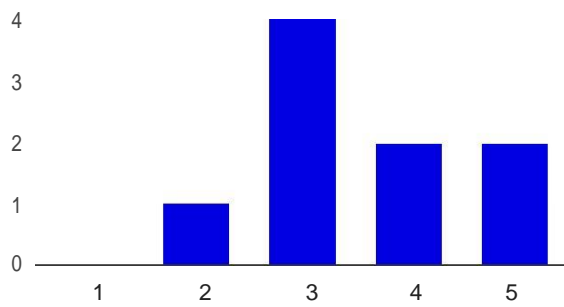
b) Rachel, I’m very sorry I couldn’t go to your birthday party and I do know how important it was for you. And I’m so sorry I didn’t go, but the two of us can celebrate your birthday whenever you want, today, tomorrow...



c) Excuse me for not having gone to your birthday party.

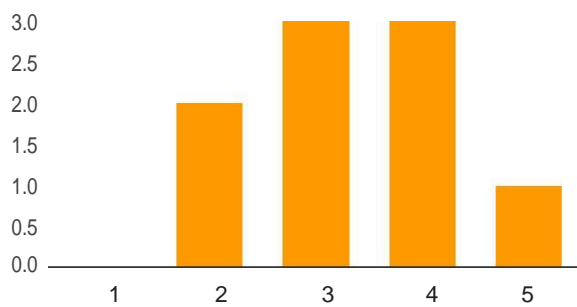


d) I'm so sorry about it, could you forgive me?



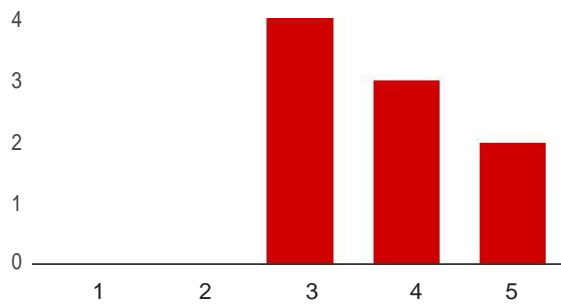
Unacceptable:	1	0	0%
	2	1	11.1%
	3	4	44.4%
	4	2	22.2%
Totally acceptable:	5	2	22.2%

e) Hey man, about that party, I just couldn't make it. My parents went out and I had to stay with my little sister. Sorry one more time.



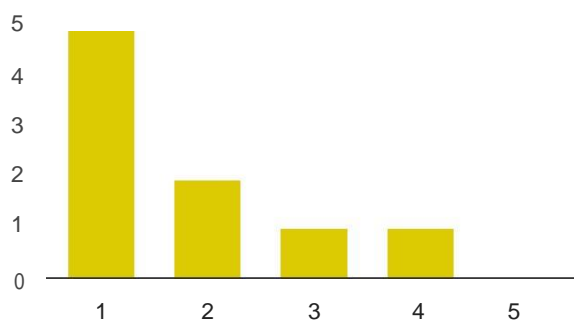
Unacceptable:	1	0	0%
	2	2	22.2%
	3	3	33.3%
	4	3	33.3%
Totally acceptable:	5	1	11.1%

f) Sorry for missing your birthday party buddy, but it was absolutely impossible to get there in time. Hope you can forgive me.



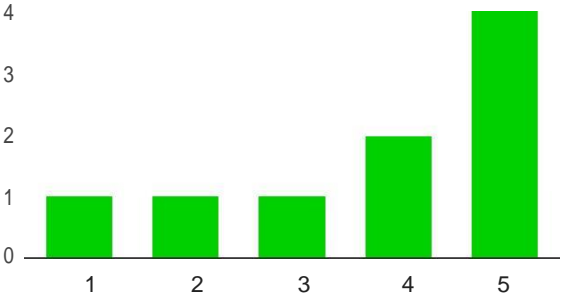
Unacceptable:	1	0	0%
	2	0	0%
	3	4	44.4%
	4	3	33.3%
Totally acceptable:	5	2	22.2%

g) I beg your pardon, I couldn't go.



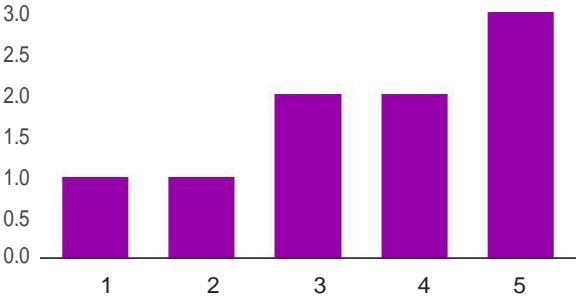
Unacceptable:	1	5	55.6%
	2	2	22.2%
	3	1	11.1%
	4	1	11.1%
Totally acceptable:	5	0	0%

h) I'm sorry that I couldn't go but it was impossible for me, I swear. Let's meet up and do something special together.



Unacceptable:	1	11.1%
	2	11.1%
	3	11.1%
	4	22.2%
Totally acceptable:	5	44.4%

i) Hey, don't be mad. We can have a special party for your birthday, I pay for the beers!



Unacceptable:	1	11.1%
	2	11.1%
	3	22.2%
	4	22.2%
Totally acceptable:	5	33.3%

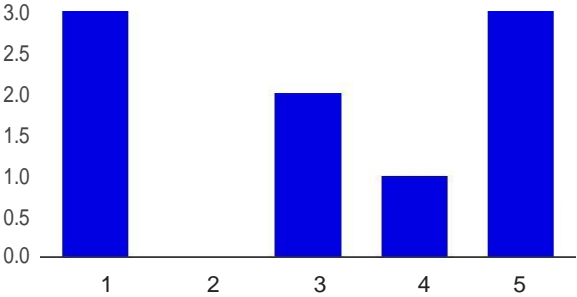
Do you think that any of these answers could be considered offensive? If so, which (indicate the letter) and why?

C + g are too formal to say to a friend
C

C. It sounds rude, it does not acknowledge the other person or their feelings or even apologise properly.

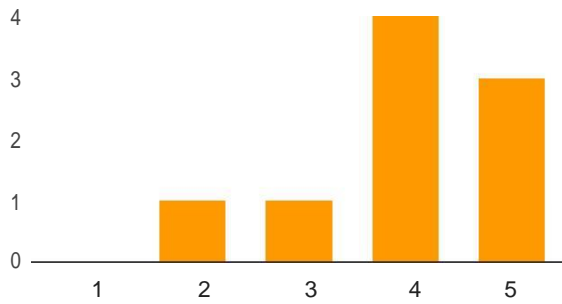
Situation 5: Anywhere. Your neighbour lent you his/her bicycle for a few days and the chain broke. When you return the bike to its owner you tell him/her:

a) I broke the chain but I can buy you a new one if you want.



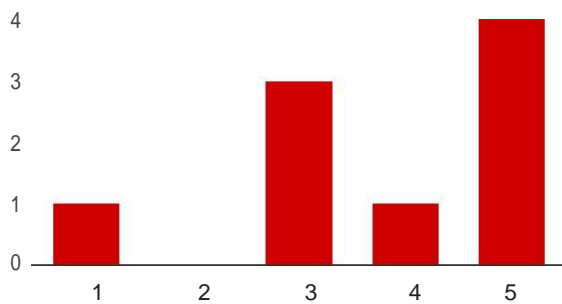
Unacceptable:	1	33.3%
	2	0%
	3	22.2%
	4	11.1%
Totally acceptable:	5	33.3%

b) The chain broke accidentally, I'm sorry. Tell me the cost of it and I'll give it to you.



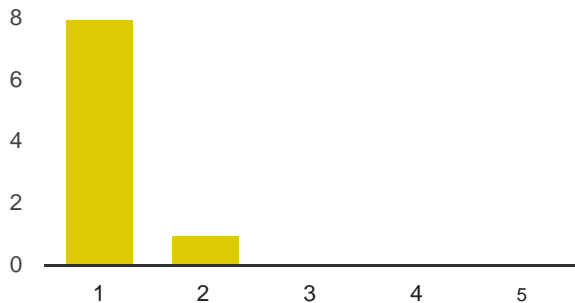
Unacceptable:	1	0	0%
	2	1	11.1%
	3	1	11.1%
	4	4	44.4%
Totally acceptable:	5	3	33.3%

c) Look, I'm sorry but I broke the chain. It wasn't on purpose. If you let me, I'll pay for the repair.



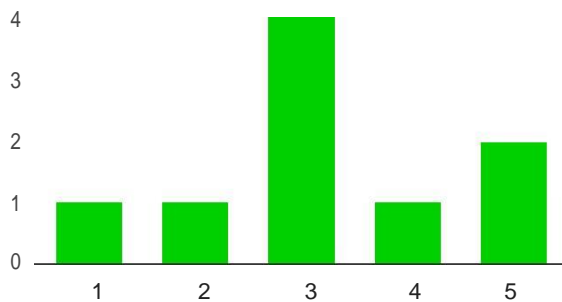
Unacceptable:	1	1	11.1%
	2	0	0%
	3	3	33.3%
	4	1	11.1%
Totally acceptable:	5	4	44.4%

d) What a pity! The chain broke.



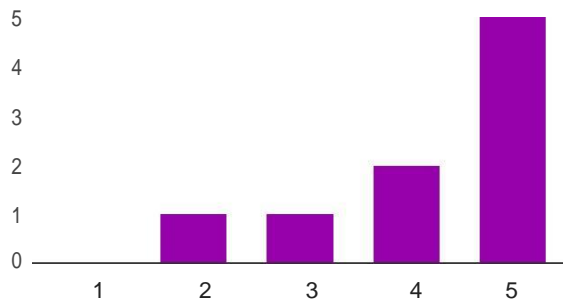
Unacceptable:	1	8	88.9%
	2	1	11.1%
	3	0	0%
	4	0	0%
Totally acceptable:	5	0	0%

e) Hey Pete, here's your bike. Thank you so much for lending it to me but as you can see the chain broke. I'll pay for it if you want me to.



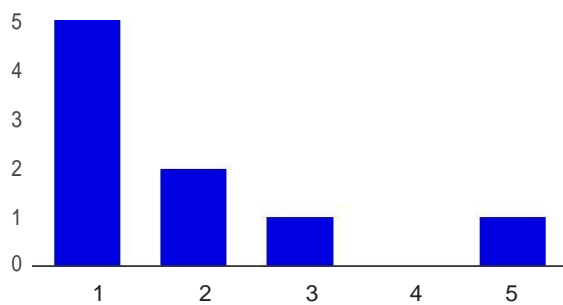
Unacceptable:	1	1	11.1%
	2	1	11.1%
	3	4	44.4%
	4	1	11.1%
Totally acceptable:	5	2	22.2%

f) Hey man, thanks for lending me the bike. The chain broke. I don't know if it was me or it was old... I bought you a new one. Thanks!



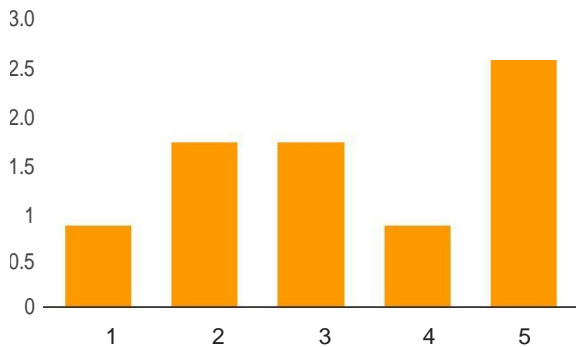
Unacceptable:	1	0	0%
	2	1	11.1%
	3	1	11.1%
	4	2	22.2%
Totally acceptable:	5	5	55.5%

g) I'm so sorry but the chain broke... It wasn't my fault.



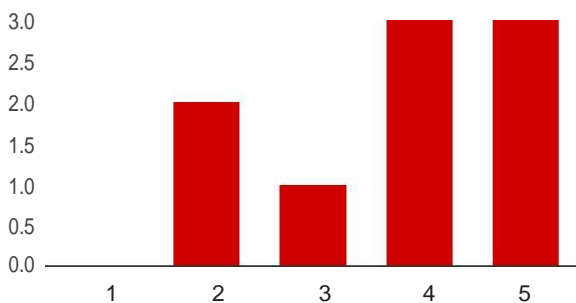
Unacceptable:	1	5	55.6%
	2	2	22.2%
	3	1	11.1%
	4	0	0%
Totally acceptable:	5	1	11.1%

h) I'm afraid that the chain is broken. I'm so sorry. What can I do?



Unacceptable:	1	1	11.1%
	2	2	22.2%
	3	2	22.2%
	4	1	11.1%
Totally acceptable:	5	3	33.3%

i) I'm very sorry. The chain broke while I was riding and I couldn't fix it. Do you want me to pay for the repair?



Unacceptable:	1	0	0%
	2	2	22.2%
	3	1	11.1%
	4	3	33.3%
Totally acceptable:	5	3	33.3%

Do you think that any of these answers could be considered offensive? If so, which (indicate the letter) and why?

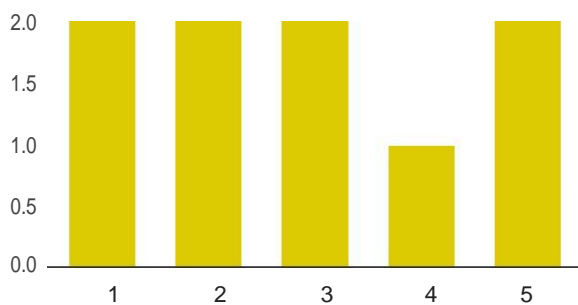
D, g + h. I would automatically buy a new chain and fit it before giving it back D, no offer of repair

D. No apology or even explanation for what happened

A: The chain should be fixed without having to ask, I think. D: That's just plain rude. D. Doesn't show much remorse for breaking the chain.

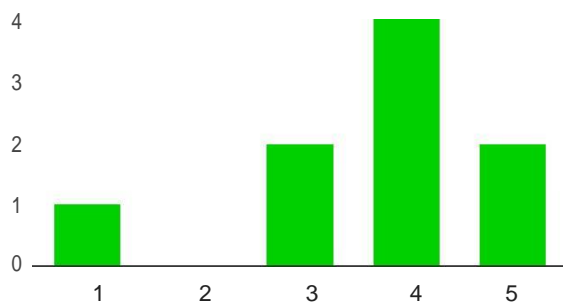
Situation 6: In a restaurant. You are having dinner in a restaurant. You went to the toilet and on your way back to your seat you stumble and spill a glass of wine all over a stranger. You say:

a) Sorry! Let me help you clean the wine off your clothes.



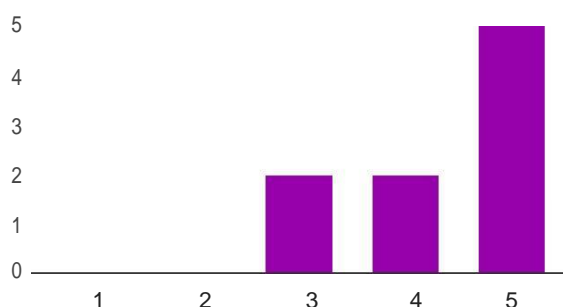
Unacceptable:	1	2	22.2%
	2	2	22.2%
	3	2	22.2%
	4	1	11.1%
Totally acceptable:	5	2	22.2%

b) Excuse me, I didn't mean to do this. Are you OK?



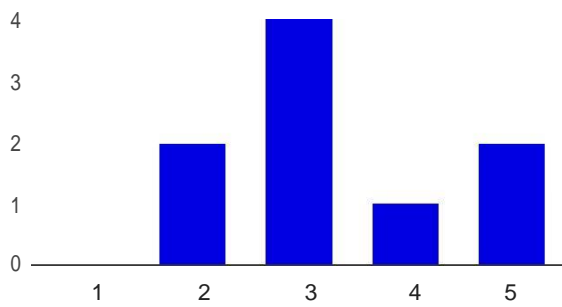
Unacceptable:	1	1	11.1%
	2	0	0%
	3	2	22.2%
	4	4	44.4%
Totally acceptable:	5	2	22.2%

c) I'm sorry, I didn't mean to do that, sir, is there anything I can do to help?



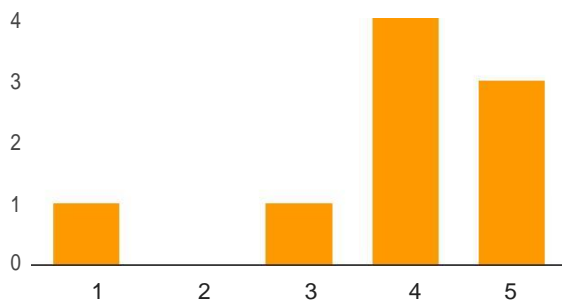
Unacceptable:	1	0	0%
	2	0	0%
	3	2	22.2%
	4	2	22.2%
Totally acceptable:	5	5	55.6%

d) I'm very sorry, it was an accident.



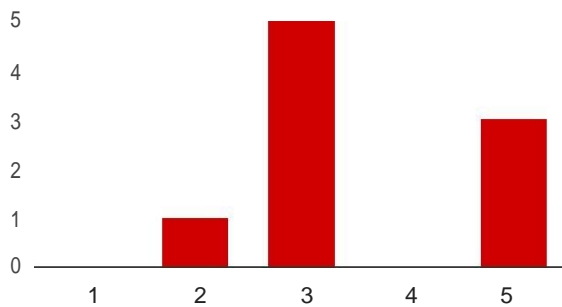
Unacceptable:	1	0	0%
	2	2	22.2%
	3	4	44.4%
	4	1	11.1%
Totally acceptable:	5	2	22.2%

e) Oh my god! I'm so sorry! I'm really sorry! Can I do something for you?



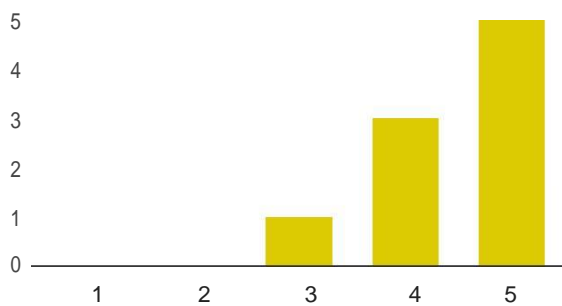
Unacceptable:	1	1	11.1%
	2	0	0%
	3	1	11.1%
	4	4	44.4%
Totally acceptable:	5	3	33.3%

f) Excuse me! I'm really sorry! It was not my intention.



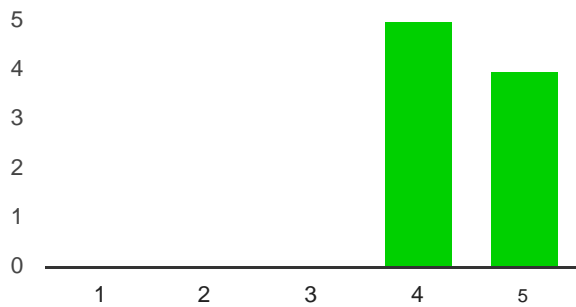
Unacceptable:	1	0	0%
	2	1	11.1%
	3	5	55.6%
	4	0	0%
Totally acceptable:	5	3	33.3%

g) Sorry, sir! I stumbled! I'm sorry! Please, let me pay you for the mess. Here you have my number; I'll pay for the cleaning!



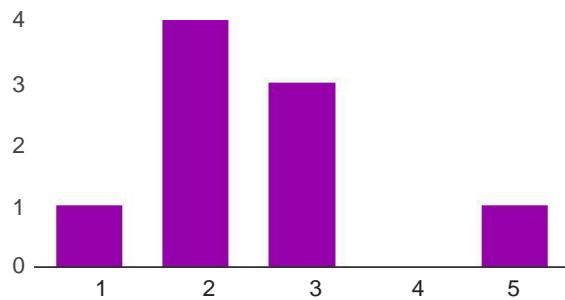
Unacceptable:	1	0	0%
	2	0	0%
	3	1	11.1%
	4	3	33.3%
Totally acceptable:	5	5	55.6%

h) Oh, damn it! I'm so sorry! Please, let me help you cleaning this mess.



Unacceptable:	1	0	0%
	2	0	0%
	3	0	0%
	4	5	55.6%
Totally acceptable:	5	4	44.4%

i) Oh! I'm so sorry, sir! I'm truly sorry. What can I do for you? Can I invite you at least?



Unacceptable:	1	1	11.1%
	2	4	44.4%
	3	3	33.3%
	4	0	0%
Totally acceptable:	5	1	11.1%

Do you think that any of these answers could be considered offensive? If so, which (indicate the letter) and why?

D possibly - doesnt show enough apology!

Using damn it. If they are religious they would be offended.

If you found yourself in these situations, what would YOU most naturally say? Please disregard the options above, and try to write what your instinctive reaction would be.

1. At a café. You order a drink and after that, you realise that you do not have any money. Fortunately, you are with a friend that can pay for it and you ask her/him:

- I'm really sorry but I've left my purse at home, if you get these I'll get the next ones! I'm such an idiot!
- Hey, I think I have left my purse at home, could I borrow a few pounds and I'll pay you back straight away?
- Any chance you could pay this time? I'll sort you out with the next one.
- Oh bugger, I thought my wallet was in my bag. Would you be able to pay for me and I'll buy the next one for you. I'm so sorry X

- I'm really sorry, I must have forgotten my wallet somewhere, are you okay to get these and I'll pay you back or buy them next time?
- I'm so sorry, I'm embarrassed to say that I've forgotten my wallet! Do you mind getting the drinks and I'll take you out for drinks next week to make up?
- I'm really sorry, I thought I had my wallet but I obviously don't. I'm sorry to have to ask but could you get this one please and I'll pay you back straight away?
- Oh no I forgot my purse. Could you do me a favour and buy it for me and I'll sort you out later?
- I'm terribly sorry. It seems that I don't have any money. Would you mind terribly paying for my beverage.

2. At home. You are having dinner with your family and you want a piece of bread but you cannot reach the basket. One of your relatives has to pass it to you, so you say:

- Could someone pass the bread please?
- Dad could you pass me some bread please?
- Anyone fancy passing some bread?
- Please could you pass me the bread.
- Could you pass the basket of bread please?
- Can somebody pass the bread over please?
- Sorry, could you pass me the bread please?
- Can you pass me the bread please.
- Pass me some bread please Brother.

3. At the airport. You have just arrived in London. You are at Heathrow Airport and want to find out the fastest way to get to the city centre. You see a police officer that can help you, so you ask:

- Excuse me? Which is the fastest way to get to the city centre from here?
- Excuse me officer, can you help? I have just arrived and am looking for the city centre, do you know how to get there quickly?
- Excuse me officer, I'm trying to work out the fastest way to get to the city centre any chance you could point me in the right direction?
- Excuse me, could you help me, I am trying to get to the city centre but I am not sure on which way to go and I don't want to get lost. Please.
- Hi, excuse me sir, really sorry to bother you, but do you know the quickest way to get to the city centre?
- Excuse me officer, I'm trying to find the fastest way to the city centre. Do you mind telling me the best way from here?

- Sorry to bother you, could I ask you to point me in the way of Heathrow airport please? Thank you.
- Excuse me. Could you tell me the quickest way to...
- Good morning officer. Could tell me the quickest way to get to the city centre from here?

4. Anywhere. You could not go to one of your best friend's birthday party and s/he took it as an offence. You know it was really important for her/him that you were there so as soon as you see him/her you say:

- I'm so sorry that I couldn't come, you know I wanted to but I couldn't make it! We'll go out just the two of us soon - my treat.
- Really sorry (friend's name) I couldn't make it to your party I was working. Can we go out and celebrate it tonight? I'll pay.
- I'm really very sorry for not being able to come along, name a time and a place and I'll be there, drinks on me.
- I am so sorry I can't make it to your party, I have other things planned. But what we should do is go out on the town and the drinks are on me.
- I'm really sorry, I know it was a big deal to you and I feel awful that I didn't make it. Let me buy you a drink.
- I'm really sorry that I couldn't make it to your party, I know it was important. Can I make it up to you? Would you like to go out and do something special?
- I'm really sorry I couldn't make it; I had to go to an important appointment that I couldn't miss. Let's do something to make up for it.
- I'm so sorry I couldn't make your special day. I had a nightmare emergency. Please forgive me. I'll make it up to you.
- I'm so sorry I couldn't go to your party Laura I know how much it meant to you to have me there. I'm free this evening, if you like I can make it up to you in a special way.

5. Anywhere. Your neighbour lent you his/her bicycle for a few days and the chain broke. When you return the bike to its owner you tell him/her:

- I'm sorry - the chain broke but I got a new one and fixed it for you.
- Thank you for lending me the bike it was a great help! The chain broke as I was cycling back, can I pay for a new one?
- Thanks for lending me your bike, it's very much appreciated. However while I was using it the chain broke, let me know how much it will cost and I'll give you the money
- I am so sorry the chain broke. I have bought you a new one to replace it if that's OK X

- Thank you for letting me borrow it, I'm really sorry but something happened with the chain and I think it's totally broken. I'll pay for the repair because it's not fair to return it to you like this. Let me know the cost and I'll give you the money.
- I really appreciate you lending me your bike and I don't know how but the chain broke. I'm really sorry and of course I'll pay to repair it or replace it.
- I'm really sorry but the chain broke while I had your bike. Is it OK if I keep it a bit longer so I can take it to the repair shop? Or would you prefer me to pay for it?
- I'm so sorry but your chain broke on my watch. I've had it fixed for you. Thanks.
- Thanks for the loan of your bike. The chain broke this morning so I bought you a new one. Here's the old chain in case you want to repair it and keep it as a spare.

6. In a restaurant. You are having dinner in a restaurant. You went to the toilet and on your way back to your seat you stumble and spill a glass of wine all over a stranger. You say:

- I am so sorry! Let me help you clean up! I'll pay for any cleaning!
- Ooo I am sooo sorry, is there anything I can do to help?
- I'm really very sorry, can I do anything to help at all?
- I am so sorry I am such a klutz. Please let me help you get cleaned up
- Omg, I'm so, so sorry, this is just typical. Let me get some towels for you, God this isn't going to come out. I'll pay for the cleaning costs on everything, here's my number, let me know what I can give you. I'm so sorry.
- Oh no! I'm so sorry, I didn't mean to do that! Can I get something to clean your clothes with? Please send me the bill for any dry cleaning.
- I'm so sorry, it was an accident, I can't apologise enough. Let me pay for your dinner.
- I'm so very sorry. I don't know what happened just then. I just tripped. How can I fix this?
- I'm so sorry. You have wine all over your blouse, I live round the corner if you like you are welcome to come over and wash it. It should be dry by tomorrow morning.