English language learners' spoken interaction: What a multimodal perspective reveals about pragmatic competence

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ABSTRACT

Broadly speaking, pragmatic competence can be defined as the ability to communicate appropriately in a social context. Learning how to use pragmatic features adequately in a particular setting is paramount for language users in order to achieve communicative purposes effectively. However, since communication involves the interplay of various semiotic modes such as spoken language, gestures, facial expression, head movement or gaze, researchers examining face-to-face interaction should go a step further to explore pragmatic competence from a multimodal perspective, which leads them to focus on multimodal pragmatics. The aim of this paper is to show how a multimodal approach can shed some light in the study of interlanguage pragmatics. We conducted a microanalysis of the performance of learners of English as an additional language at two different proficiency levels, who produced complaint sequences. Results suggest that spoken language is just one of the resources that learners use during the interaction, which is not always prevalent in all the moves in which the complaint is structured, the different roles, and the proficiency levels under examination. This confirms that the centrality of the linguistic mode in the analysis of this speech act will lead to a biased understanding of the interlanguage pragmatic competence.

1. Introduction

With the emergence of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2001), learning an additional language (AL) and obtaining official certificates that accredit the corresponding level of a potential user has become one of the major concerns of language learners. Needless to say, the ultimate goal of language teachers is to increase learners' communicative competence in order to help them to communicate and use the AL successfully in a variety of contexts, with speakers of different linguistic backgrounds and for several purposes. Achieving this particular competence involves delving into communicative competence and focusing particularly on pragmatic competence, which may serve to provide learners with adequate tools for using language (Taguchi, 2009). In addition to this, it is important to note that pragmatics, and particularly in face-to-face interaction, should be viewed from a multimodal perspective since interaction implies the interplay of different semiotic modes.

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The present study aims to discuss the nature of pragmatics and multimodal pragmatics, as well as to illustrate how multimodal pragmatics can be applied to the analysis of face-to-face interaction following a multimodal conversation analysis (CA) approach. In this study, we focus particularly on learners' face-to-face interaction when performing complaint sequences elicited by means of a role-play task. Therefore, this study attempts to exemplify how learners' performance and interaction can be explored from a broader perspective, that is, going beyond the traditional approach grounded in linguistic realisations.

2. Pragmatics beyond language

As a branch of linguistics, pragmatics is a relatively young discipline. It is viewed from different approaches, such as those that maintain that this discipline focuses on the use of language in social interaction and the effects its use may have on interlocutors. As part of the communicative competence construct, pragmatic competence plays an important role. Its development is crucial for language learners as it may help them to increase their ability to use language appropriately under specific circumstances to reach communicative purposes. Communication, however, goes beyond the construction of utterances; rather it is shaped by the interplay of different semiotic modes. In what follows, theoretical background on the notion of pragmatic competence and the nature of multimodal pragmatics is presented.

2.1. Pragmatic competence

It is generally accepted that the ultimate goal of language teachers is to increase language learners' communicative competence to prepare them for authentic interaction using an AL. In this respect, scholars have brought their expertise to describe the phenomenon of language teaching, learning and assessment (Ross & Kasper, 2013). Concerning this, various communicative models have been advanced ever since Hymes (1972) proposed the term communicative competence, which comprises knowledge of grammatical and sociocultural rules of language use. Pragmatic competence, however, was not treated as an independent competence within the communicative competence construct until Bachman's (1990) model. The model proposed by Canale and Swain (1980) includes pragmatic competence within sociolinguistic competence. In Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei, and Thurrell's (1995) and Celce-Murcia's (2007) models, pragmatic competence falls under the categories of actional competence and interactional competence respectively. Pragmatic competence has also been conceptualised in two types of knowledge: pragmalinguistics, i.e. different linguistic resources speakers have at their disposal to construct utterances in a given language, and sociopragmatics, i.e. social conditions that constrain and govern language use (Leech, 1983; Thomas, 1983). Accordingly, in order to produce appropriate and successful utterances, speakers are expected to draw on these two components following a pragmalinguistic or grammatically oriented assessment of the pragmatic force, and a sociopragmatic assessment of politeness variables, including social distance, social power and degree of imposition of a specific face-threatening act (Brown & Levinson, 1987). In the area of second/foreign language acquisition, where this study is placed, pragmatics, and more precisely the exploration of speech acts, is typically known as interlanguage pragmatics (ILP), which focuses particularly on the study of non-native speakers' use and acquisition of the target forms in the AL (Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993).

A well-known definition of pragmatics is proposed by Crystal (2008, p. 379), who states that pragmatics refers to "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". The author further adds that pragmatics "focuses on an 'area' between semantics, sociolinguistics and extralinguistic context; but the boundaries with these other domains are as yet incapable of precise definition" (p. 379). This definition stresses the perspective of the users, speakers, and the choice they make, the constraints they may encounter in interaction, and the effect that language use has on the interlocutors. Kasper and Rose (2001) argue that pragmatics refers to "the study of communicative action in its sociocultural context" (p. 2), and suggest that communicative action involves "not only using speech acts (…), but also engaging in different types of discourse and participating in speech events of varying length and complexity" (p. 2). The act of communication is seen as part of social interaction and it comprises the effects speakers' have on other participants, thereby conforming to Crystal's view that pragmatics is concerned with speakers and listeners (Kasper & Ross, 2013). Moreover, this conceptualization of pragmatics can be aligned with both discursive pragmatics and CA. Although CA is typically used for naturally occurring data (Huang, 2016), it can be applied to the study of pragmatics, and more specifically ILP (Kasper, 2006), in order to see how speakers construct face-to-face interaction.

Broadly speaking, as Hall and Pekarek-Doehler (2011) report, from an interactional perspective, speakers and listeners use a variety of semiotic modes such as prosody, language, and non-verbal resources to produce and interpret turns and actions, and repair problems. Interestingly, Celce-Murcia's (2007) communicative competence model includes interactional competence, which according to He and Young (1998, p. 7) "(…) is not an attribute of an individual participant, and thus we cannot say that an individual is interactionally competent; rather we talk of interactional competence as something that is jointly constructed by all participants". In this model, interactional competence involves actional competence, related to the performance of speech acts; conversational competence, associated with the turn-taking system in conversation; and non-verbal/paralinguistic competence, which encompasses kinesics, proxemics, haptic behaviour and non-linguistic utterances with interactional import, silence and pauses.

The study of pragmatics is therefore fundamental to understand how speakers and listeners co-construct and deconstruct meaning in a given interaction. However, regardless the importance of pragmatic competence in the communicative

competence construct and its prominent role in interaction, this competence is not typically addressed in the language classroom, probably due to the lack of a curriculum planning and materials based on pragmatics (Bardovi-Harlig, 2017). Conversely, linguistic competence tends to receive more attention than pragmatic competence, which, although relevant, is not the only competence that should be developed to guide learners towards appropriate and successful communication in the AL. Concerning this, it is worth mentioning that learners with a general high proficiency level in the AL are able to expand their pragmalinguistic knowledge of the language, but this does not necessarily result in an increase of their sociopragmatic knowledge (Marmaridou, 2011), which in turn would affect pragmatic competence, and consequently the overall communicative exchange.

Communication in general and pragmatics in particular imply the interplay of different semiotic modes that serve to shape human interaction; thus, the interweaving of modes cannot be ignored. Given this fact, the following section discusses the multimodal nature of pragmatics.

2.2. Multimodal pragmatics

Pragmatic competence has been introduced in the previous section drawing mainly on its role within the communicative competence construct as well as on Crystal's view of pragmatics, which consecutively has led to the interactional viewpoint of pragmatics and CA. As indicated above, pragmatic competence is divided into pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics and, as pointed out by Crystal (2008), it involves the perspective of speakers and listeners, which advocates the need to explore pragmatics from a conversational perspective. Participants, in any type of communicative exchange, can co-construct and deconstruct interaction. This becomes even more salient in face-to-face interaction, where participants have at their disposal a great variety of semiotic resources, including, for example, linguistic-oriented resources such as spoken interactional features (e.g. speech acts, turn-taking, overlap), as well as extra-linguistic resources such as gestures, facial expressions, head movements, or gaze, to name a few. ILP studies, however, have typically examined participants' data from the perspective of speakers to, for example, describe how learners produce a specific speech act in a particular context or to explore and compare the realisation patterns of a particular speech act between native speakers and non-native speakers (Huang, 2016). Hence, as a consequence of different specific research purposes, the production of the listener seems to have been neglected. These approaches, however, do not attempt to explain how interaction is constructed; rather they try to examine how speech acts are deployed and/or acquired by non-native speakers in a particular context taking into account the perspective of speakers. In such cases, attention is not typically paid to the perspective of listeners or to the different semiotic modes that can be deployed in a given interaction to achieve particular goals.

This view, however, seems to limit the study of pragmatics to a monomodal perspective as it does not attempt to inform of participants' pragmatic competence from a wider and interactional perspective. In fact, this narrow view has been taken traditionally in second/foreign language pragmatic studies. By contrast, in other areas of linguistics, an interest in exploring how different semiotic modes contribute to the construction of communication has emerged (Jewitt, Bezemer, & O'Halloran, 2016). In this regard, O'Halloran, Tan, and E (2014) indicate that the goals of multimodal studies and pragmatic studies are tightly connected. Both follow a context-based approach that focuses on the interpretation of language use to achieve communicative purposes. However, multimodal studies go beyond language. Drawing on Halliday's social semiotic theory (1978), these authors suggest that his approach to language "provides a productive foundation to explore how linguistic choices interact with multimodal choices in ways which are aligned with the goals of pragmatics" (p. 240). Therefore, it seems that there is room to go beyond the linguistic side of pragmatics to account for the different semiotic modes that may be used to construct a given communicative action (Beltrán-Palanques, 2016a).

Framed within this particular theoretical approach, some studies have analysed interaction in different settings: professional (Streeck, 2013), private (Li, 2014), public (Mondada, 2009), and educational (O'Halloran et al., 2014). These studies have explored pragmatics from a wider perspective rather than focusing, for example, on specific speech acts, which are regarded as the minimum unit of interaction (Searle, 1969). In this respect, some of the chapters included in the book edited by Drew and Couper-Kuhlen (2014) offered insights into multimodal pragmatics in relation to the speech act of requests produced in natural settings, and Huang (2017) explored how speech content, prosodic features and non-verbal acts interact to produce different speech acts, and described the mechanisms of different Illocutionary Force Indicating Devices. In the field of ILP, to the best of our knowledge, two studies have been conducted so far. A pioneering study was done by Gass and Houck (1999), who explored the production of refusals and non-verbal aspects of interaction. More recently, Beltrán-Palanques (2016b) focused on complaints and responses to complaints elicited by learners of English as an AL from a multimodal perspective to explore how sequences were performed and constructed from a variety of semiotic modes.

Multimodal data can be explored from various perspectives (see Jewitt et al., 2016 for a review), including, for example, systemic-functional multimodal discourse analysis (O'Halloran, 2008) or multimodal interactional analysis (Norris, 2004). Furthermore, considering that pragmatics is concerned with speakers and listeners' construction and deconstruction of meaning through interaction, it can be argued that a CA approach can be applied to empirically explore conversational aspects of interaction from a multimodal perspective. The CA approach has the potential to facilitate the analysis of multimodal pragmatics, as it can serve to provide insights into participants' performance in terms of, for instance, speech act production and responses to speech acts, adjacency pairs, turn-taking system and overlap, as well as other semiotic resources such as gestures, facial expression, head movement, or gaze.

3. Interlanguage pragmatics across proficiency levels: a multimodal microanalysis

The speech act of complaints involves a face threatening act that is typically uttered when a speaker considers that an offence has been committed (Olshtain & Weinbach, 1993). The complexity of complaints lies in the fact that there is not a prototypical set of discourse functions (Geluykens & Kraft, 2008; Laforest, 2002), and there is not an adjacency structure as in other speech acts, but extended sequences (Drew & Walker, 2009). In this study, unlike the majority of interlanguage pragmatic studies, and particularly in the case of complaints, we adopt a multimodal pragmatic approach that identifies participants' choices from their semiotic repertoire, which is not limited to their linguistic resources. The construction of this speech act is understood and explored as a social interaction that recognises the speaker and the recipient. Accordingly, the performance of the listener is also taken into account in an attempt to explore complaint sequences at a conversational level (Beltrán-Palanques, 2016b; Laforest, 2002).

3.1. The participants and the task

The participants of the study were part of a larger research that focused on the analysis of complaint sequences across proficiency levels from a pragmatic and multimodal perspective at university level in Spain (Beltrán-Palanques, 2016b). For the present study, two pairs of males were selected. They were evaluated at the B1 and B2 levels of proficiency according to the results obtained in the DIALANG Language Assessment System (note that the CEFR scale describes B users as independent, distinguishing between B1 (Threshold) and B2 (Vantage)). They were taking an English for Specific Purposes course in a Bachelor's Degree programme in Video Game Design and Development. The criteria followed to select them were the following: (1) same university degree, (2) similar age and same gender, and (3) similar real relationship at the time the study was conducted.

The learners were involved in a simulated situation, i.e. a role-play task eliciting complaint sequences which consisted of a face threatening act of high offence: the two participants were friends, and the complainer was not invited to a party organised by the complainee where one of their favorite music groups will play. Participants were asked to act in a natural manner and to employ as many turns as necessary to reach their communicative purposes. They decided which role they wanted to perform and which participant should start the conversation. There was no time restriction.

Immediately after the task, we conducted a retrospective verbal interview. The participants reported about their real relationship. They were more than just classmates, although they were not close friends because they met at university that year. When we asked learners about their performance, they considered they would have behaved similarly if the situation were real. These two aspects give credit to the design of the task, as it was our goal to engage them in a situation that was as real as possible. This aspect is paramount when the analysis is focused on interpersonal pragmatics to study the contribution of multimodality to the pragmatic appropriateness of the performance, since it is very difficult to collect similar natural data in AL learning contexts at university. The participants also reported the low impact of the cameras that were video recording them during the task completion. In this respect, they were involved in a previous warm-up role-play to become familiar with the type of task and the physical context.

3.2. The research design

We analysed the complaint sequences from a multimodal conversational approach taking into account five semiotic resources: spoken language, gestures, facial expression, head movement, and gaze. First, we focused on the verbal production of the participants to analyse the macrostructure of the speech act of complaint, which is structured into three moves: *pre-complaint*, *topic negotiation* and *post-complaint* (Beltrán-Palanques, 2016b). Though the speech act can be framed by two non-obligatory moves of the conversation, the *opening* and *closing*, for the purpose of this microanalysis attention was paid exclusively to the complaint moves. Indeed, the B2 pair did not use the closing move, as the B1 pair did; they chose instead to conclude the conversation with the post-complaint move. Then, we proceeded with the microanalysis of how the participants' talk and simultaneous talk, as well as the four extra-linguistic resources, intertwine to shape the interaction.

The co-construction of the speech act was analysed with the acknowledgement that "elements in a multimodal whole are *mutually modifying*, making it highly problematic to attend to language or any other mode in isolation" (Jewitt et al., 2016, p. 25). Following this multimodal principle, we explored the multimodal density which can be achieved through modal intensity and/or modal complexity (Norris, 2004). Regarding modal intensity, "the more intensity or weight that a mode carries, the higher the modal density", and as regards modal complexity "the more intricately intertwined the multiple modes are, the higher the modal density" (p. 79). Modal intensity was measured by indicating the time in seconds that each mode was chosen by the participants during the interaction. Modal density was measured following Querol-Julián's (2018) approach that studies and represents in radar charts how the different semiotic resources interweave over time to construct the interaction. This way of representation is very useful to compare the two proficiency levels by plotting the value of each resource along a separate axis that starts in the centre of chart and ends on the outer ring. The farther the point is from the centre, the greater the value is. Querol-Julián claims that the area formed by the intersection of the time that each mode is used in an interaction represents the value of the multimodal discourse. GeoGebra software was used to measure areas. The present study adopts this technique to make a significant contribution of its application to the field of interlanguage pragmatics and the microanalysis of face-to-face interactions.

ELAN (EUDICO, European Distributed Corpora, Linguistic Annotator) (Wittenburg, Brugman, Russel, Klassmann, & Sloetjes, 2006) was also used in the analysis. This software allows for multiple annotations and transcriptions. Thus, we annotated the three moves of the speech act (pre-complaint, topic negotiation, and post-complaint), and the verbatim transcription of spoken language, gestures, facial expression, head movement, and gaze of each participant. Among other features, ELAN measures the time, in milliseconds, of each annotation/transcription. A quantitative analysis was done to explore the modal density in each move. We measured the intensity of the five semiotic resources in seconds. For example, during the B2 topic-negotiation move that lasted 109.8 s, the intensity of the complainer gesture was of 91.3 s; we calculated it as the sum of the duration of the 34 gestures used by the participant during the move. In light of the outcomes of this case study, we considered five levels of modal intensity to facilitate the understanding of the comparative analysis: low, 0.1–20.9 s; medium-low, 21–40.9; medium, 41–60.9; medium-high, 71–80.9; and high, 81–100. The modal interplay was represented in radar charts and quantified in area units. A similar scale (from 0 to 100) was used to visually represent the modal complexity during the three moves that comprise the complaint sequence. We compared the modal density of the performance of the complainer and complainee of the two proficiency levels (B1 and B2), which helped to bring to the fore the contribution of multimodality to understand ILP.

The linguistic transcriptions of the conversations are included in the appendices. We followed some CA conventions regarding turn-taking and overlap (Appendix I). See the transcription of the two conversations in Appendix II.

4. Analysis and discussion

The learners' interaction during the role-play task required the exploration of modal density through the analysis of modal intensity and complexity. As explained, the modal density was calculated as the area formed by the intersection, in the radar charts, of the time (in seconds) that each mode was used during the move.

Fig. 1 shows the modal density during the pre-complaint move. The shaded area indicates the modal density that is shared by the two proficiency levels when playing the same role (around 14% in the complainers and 36% in the complainees). Participants introduce the topic of the complaint and respond to it by the interplay of spoken language, gestures, facial expressions, and gaze in a low modal intensity.

Regarding the dissimilarities between the proficiency levels in both roles, B1 shows higher modal complexity than B2 since the five modes (spoken language, gesture, facial expression, head movement, and gaze) are used to express meaning, in contrast to B2 who does not use head movements. However, the multimodal area displayed by the B2 complainer is wider than the B1's, as it is shown in Fig. 1. This indicates that the modal intensity of some modes used by the B2 complainer is higher. In this respect, we identify two predominant modes, spoken language and gestures (19.2 and 14.6 s), whereas there are subtle differences in the modal intensity in B1 (ranging from 6.2 to 1.5 s, corresponding to facial expression and gestures respectively). Concerning the complainees, there are also minor differences due to the general low modal intensity in this move. However, B2 gaze seems to prevail, as it does spoken language in B1. However, it seems that spoken language is not foregrounded for the B2 complainee in this move.

The analysis of the modal density during the second move of the complaint sequence depicts the dominance of the B2 participants over the B1 ones, since, as illustrated in Fig. 2, the B2 participants show a wider area of multimodal performance than the B1 (49% more in the complainer and 41% more in the complainee). Topic negotiation is a complex part in the speech act as an appropriate and successful negotiation demands a high pragmatic competence. On the one hand, complainers and complainees shared about 14% and 16% of the modal density respectively (see the shaded area). Participants negotiate through the interplay of the five modes; however, there are dramatic differences regarding modal intensity. In the complainers, the highest intensity is taken by the spoken language with a medium value, followed by gaze medium-low, and facial
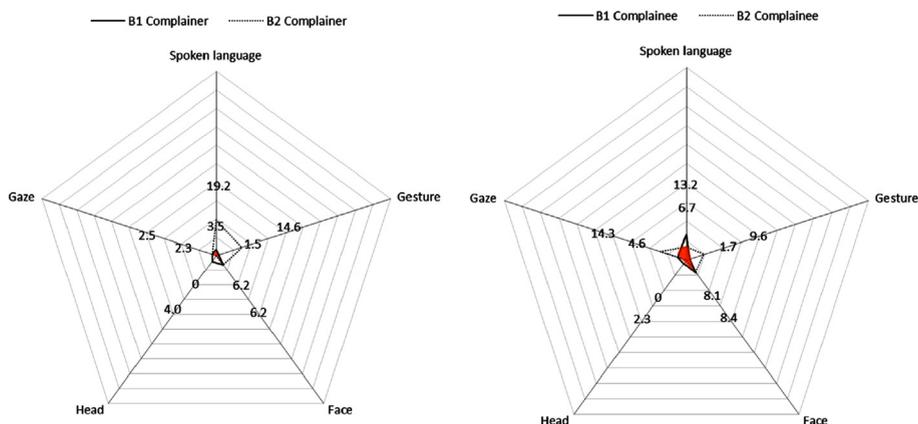

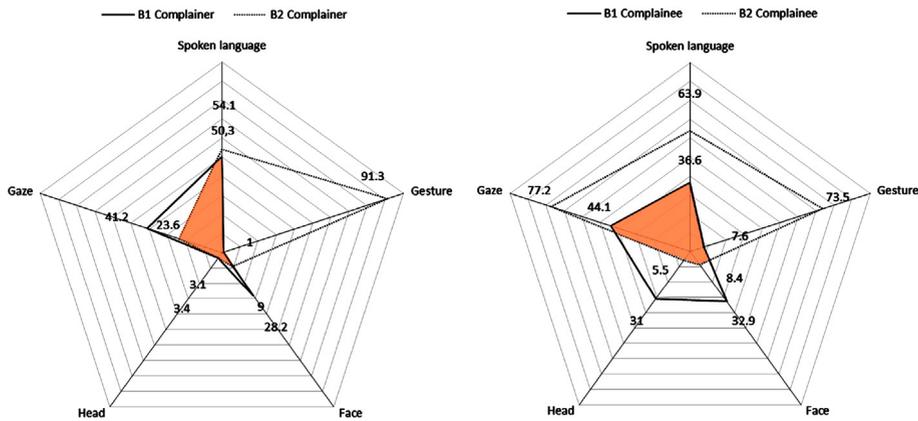**Fig. 1.** B1 and B2 modal density during the pre-complaint move.

Fig. 2. B1 and B2 modal density during the topic negotiation move.

expression and gestures low intensity. In the complainees, gaze is the prevalent mode which takes medium intensity, followed by medium-low spoken language, and low facial expression and head movement.

On the other hand, if we have a close look at the modal density that is not shared by the proficiency levels, it is observed that the B2 complainer gestures take a high modal intensity: it is very low in B1 (1 s in comparison to 91.3 s in B2). This is the most remarkable difference between the two levels. Conversely, B1 gaze achieves medium modal intensity which is medium-low in B2, and facial expression takes medium-low in B1 and low in B2. Regarding the complainees, the wider multimodal area of B2 exhibits a medium-high intensity of gaze, gesture and spoken language; whereas in B1 gaze takes medium intensity, spoken language medium-low and gesture low. However, in a similar way to the complainers, there is a significant difference that foregrounds the B1 complainee, the medium-low intensity of facial expression and head movement (32.9 and 31 s), in contrast to the low intensity of these modes in B2 (8.4 and 5.5 s).

All in all, the negotiation shows many differences between the two proficiency levels in terms of modal intensity. Thus, gestures are foregrounded in B2, overcoming spoken language mode, but they take low modal intensity in B1; gaze is also a predominant mode in B2. Furthermore, modal complexity in the B1 complainee is deployed by a quite balanced interplay of gaze, spoken language, facial expression, and head movement, though gaze is a bit more intense than spoken language (44.1 and 36.6 s respectively).

The last move in the complaint sequence is the post-complaint, where the participants attempt to repair the situation, and which, as in the case of topic negotiation, demands a high level of pragmatic competence. As Fig. 3 shows, in this move there is a wide area of multimodal performance that is shared by the two proficiency levels (21% in the complainers and 25% in the complainees). Similarly to topic negotiation, the modal complexity is high in the two levels as all the modes interplay to construct the interaction; however, there are modal intensity differences. The complainers share medium-low intensity of spoken language, gaze, and gestures, and low intensity in facial expression and head movement. The complainees' spoken language takes medium-high intensity, gestures and gaze achieve medium, and the other two modes low.
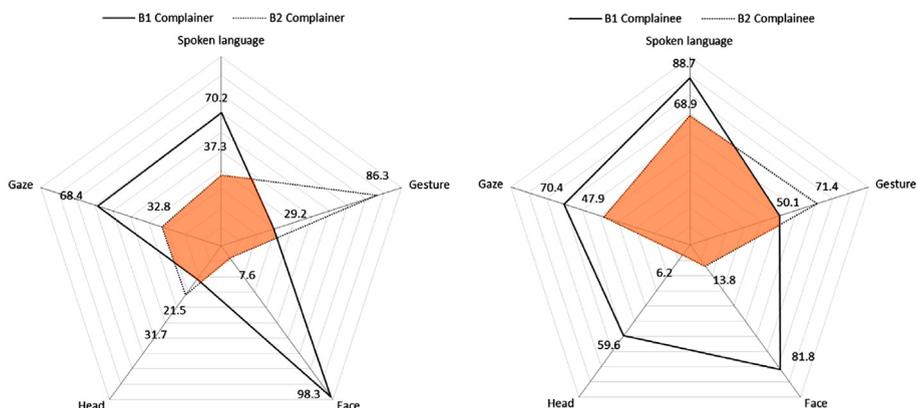

Fig. 3. B1 and B2 modal density during the post-complaint move.

Concerning the differences in the modal density of the two proficiency levels, contrary to the results of the analysis of the topic negotiation move, the B1 multimodal area is wider than B2 (about 35% more in the complainers and 42% more in the complainees). The complainer gestures take high modal intensity in B2 and medium-low in B1. However, the B1 complainer facial expression achieves high intensity, but it is low in B2; furthermore, B1 spoken language and gaze take medium-high intensity in contrast to the medium-low in B2. Regarding the complainees, high modal intensity is achieved by the spoken language and facial expression of B1; whereas in B2, medium-high and low intensity are taken respectively by these modes. Besides, B1 gaze achieves medium-high intensity and head movement achieves medium intensity; but, these two modes take medium and low intensity in B2.

We can say that in the post-complaint move, where the repair of the act of offence is done, the modal density of the B2 participants is quite similar to that in topic negotiation. In this proficiency level, the complainer gives more intensity to gestures which is higher than the intensity given to spoken language (86.3 and 37.3 s), but reaches similar values in the complainee (71.4 and 68.9 s); gaze is also quite relevant, while facial expressions and head movements are kept in the background. However, facial expression is central in B1, even overcoming spoken language in the complainer (98.3 and 70.2 s); moreover, as in the topic negotiation move, gaze is also salient in B1. Although in the present study we do not analyse the different discourse functions of the interaction and how these are built up by the interplay of the several semiotic resources, it is interesting to notice that B1's facial expression (mainly smiles), gaze, and eye contact avoidance, convey emotional meaning that contributes the development of the interaction. According to Beltrán-Palanques (2016b) this is related to the proficiency level and the level of engagement in the task which is lower in B1.

5. Conclusion

This study has shown that pragmatics can be viewed from a wider perspective that encompasses both interaction and the use of different semiotic resources. As reported, adopting a multimodal approach for the study of pragmatics serves to explore data from a different perspective, that is, going beyond the traditional linguistic-based approach where speech is the only mode examined. This approach offers the potential to analyse and describe how speakers co-construct and deconstruct meaning in and through interaction relying on the use of different semiotic resources. Hence, using a multimodal approach, this study has demonstrated how learners at two different proficiency levels employ the combination of various semiotic resources to accomplish a role-play task eliciting complaint sequences.

The study reveals that the microanalysis of the modal density, which embraces the study of modal intensity and modal complexity, can be used effectively to examine ILP. The outcomes have shown that modal complexity was in general high in both proficiency levels, particularly in the topic negotiation and post-complaint moves, where participants employed the five semiotic modes to negotiate the complaint and repair the situation. Both represent complex moves where a high level of pragmatic competence is required. Multimodal pragmatics has allowed the observation of how participants used various semiotic resources to construct and shape the interaction, especially in more demanding moves. Concerning modal intensity, in general we can conclude that gestures were central in B2, though these were hardly employed in B1; however, gaze and facial expression achieved higher intensity in B1, and head movement was also significant in the B1 complainee. Regarding topic negotiation, gaze was also relevant in the B2 complainee. Finally, in general the modal intensity of B1 reached the highest values in the topic negotiation move.

Although the results obtained in this study cannot be generalised, as this is a case study, and the number of semiotic modes analysed is limited to five, our findings show a promising avenue of research in the area of multimodal pragmatics. The study of modal density has been enlightening to identify differences in the multiple semiotic resources that participants chose in the interaction. This particular approach served to explore the importance of the semiotic modes deployed in and through interaction and how they are interrelated. Despite the fact that further research is needed to explore the gap between pragmatics and multimodality, there are grounds to posit that pragmatic competence can be viewed from a multimodal perspective. Furthermore, the study of multimodal pragmatics can also be expanded to the area of interpersonal pragmatics, which focuses on the relational side of language in use (Locher & Graham, 2010).

This new perspective on pragmatics however, would imply, revisiting both the approach adopted to examine pragmatics (as argued in this study), and the traditional teaching and assessment practices followed in the language classroom to promote learners' pragmatic competence. The teaching of pragmatics, albeit complex and difficult to define, should place CA at the core in order to explore, for example, turn-taking construction, sequence organisation, or repair from a multimodal viewpoint. Therefore, it should focus on language use from a multimodal and socially-oriented perspective where interaction is constructed and shaped not only by means of speakers' pragmalinguistic repertoire and sociolinguistic knowledge and rules of appropriateness, but also taking into account the performance of non-linguistic semiotic modes, the interpersonal relationship of the participants and how these elements affect and contribute to the overall interaction.

Appendix I. Transcription conventions

-er	Complainer
-ee	Complainee
\<x\>	Overlap
//x//	Repetition
((laughter))	Laughter
=	No break or gap in speech
::	Stretched sound
Italics	Italics mark that Spanish is used
[x]	English translation

Appendix II. Linguistic transcription of the conversations

Proficiency level B1

Turn	Participant	
Opening		
1	-er	hello
2	-ee	hey hi Jorge how are you
3	-er	I'm ok and you?
4	-ee	fine
Pre-complaint		
5	-er	erm what are you doing tomorrow?
6	-ee	er I have a party
7	-er	oh which party?
8	-ee	er I have organised a party with my friends and we invite your friends *bueno* [well] with our friends but
Topic negotiation		
9	-er	you don't have invite me no one said anything to me
10	-ee	I forget it
11	-er	I was thinking that I were going I was I will be staying at home all night tomorrow and there were a party at the same time \<yes\> because//because//nobody invited me
12	-ee	hmm sorry er we forget it Ortxata will come ((laughter))
13	-er	oh I really like Ortxata
14	-ee	we know it ((laughter))
15	-er	it's//it's//my favorite group and nobody thinking me
16	-ee	sorry I think hmm someone tell you
17	-er	no anybody did it \<oh\> because \<fuck\> I don't know I//I//talk with my friends every day and nobody asked me//asked//me to come
18	-ee	I don't know I//I//say they invite all they want of our group friends but I think they//they//tell you
19	-er	is not your party and is not your responsibility to invite somebody?
20	-ee	\<yes\> it's true//it's true//but I don't know sorry ((laughter)) I forget it
Post-complaint		
21	-er	then I don't believe but can I go now?
22	-ee	er it's so difficult I can't
23	-er	\<why\>//why//is so difficult?
24	-ee	we::ll we I have not//not//space in my home
25	-er	oh man your//your//house is so big
26	-ee	yeah bu::t I can try it
27	-er	you can try it?
28	-ee	I can try it but I can't er
29	-er	make sure anything
30	-ee	I can't make sure of anything sorry
31	-er	yes the party is on Saturday?
32	-ee	er yes tomorrow not?//tomorrow//
33	-er	tomorrow? Okay if//if//I can go to the party notice me later \<ok\> or call me or something
34	-ee	yes I WhatsApp you or call you or something \< send a message \> yes don't worry \<yeah\> I try really \<okay\> I'm sorry forget it but I have so much to do with the party and you know \<okay\> the exams
35	-er	try//try//
36	-ee	yes sorry
37	-er	please it's my favorite group it's \<yes\> Ortxata Sound System \<((laughter))\> coming to Castellón
38	-ee	yeah today \<tomorrow\> there will be a big party//a big//big//party//
39	-er	and I think that a lot of girls will go
40	-ee	er
41	-er	hot girls
42	-ee	probably//probably//\<probably\> ((laughter)) it's a Ortxata concert =
43	-er	= I need to go it's \<((laughter))\>//it's//time to I don't know I if I have
44	-ee	maybe er a party x//x//party like the film ((laughter)) we//we//will part our house not my house ((laughter))

(*continued*)

Turn	Participant	
45	-er	you will part your house <((laughter))> okay what did your parents say about it? That
46	-ee	<er> I don't know they are in Paris <in Paris oh > when they come er
47	-er	they will need to buy
48	-ee	<maybe> scream a lot ((laughter))
49	-er	maybe first buy a new house to make
50	-ee	<er it's> a good option buy a house burn it and then
51	-er	then party burn bury <((laughter)> and later < forget the house > forget er forget the party and forget <yeah> everything =
52	-ee	= maybe it's a good option
53	-er	okay I need to go another time
54	-ee	to?
55	-er	if you call me <yes> later
56	-ee	yes I now I'm going to house I I'm er check the//the//er the <the people> assist the people who come <the assistance> and hif you//hif you//have <if> a slot sorry <okay> I will call
57	-er	<someone> can add to the party er I'm so thank you for you
58	-ee	sorry I forget it//forget//really completely sorry
59	-er	<no next> time we will talk <((laughter)) don't kill me> and then if I organise a party I will call you I make sure
60	-ee	thanks//thanks//sorry
Closing		
61	-er	okay see you latter
62	-ee	see you latter
63	-er	bye

Proficiency level B2

Turn	Participant	
Opening		
1	-er	so hey how are you? =
2	-ee	= hey how is it going?
Pre-complaint		
3	-er	I wanted to talk to you <okay> and <yeah> er I heard you just er organised a big//big//party a::nd < oh yeah that party yeah > er yeah <yeah> and I know that er one group that I personally love <yeah> has been invited as well <yeah> and you haven't invited me you know we've been friends for such a long time and you <hmm> haven't invited me why?
Topic negotiation		
4	-ee	yeah you know it was like it's not like my house it's my parents house and they were like very strict with everyone and they didn't want me to invite like two hundred people
5	-er	yeah but//but//you invited//you invited//many//many//people and people you//you//<okay yeah I> know for less time than me <hmm> and people who are <yeah> I thought they were less friends to you than me and//and//you invited them < yeah I'm//I'm//> and I'm here left alone
6	-ee	<yeah I just > yeah I didn't think about that I don't know maybe I made my//my//listing wrong I should have chose better the people who were coming and
7	-er	<but you know > you//you//got me on that//that//er WhatsApp group and <yeah> you know I love that group <yeah> and you I know that you've created that a WhatsApp group for all the people you were inviting <yeah> and you didn't invite me either to that group
8	-ee	yeah well you know on WhatsApp we have like this excuse like for the people I can invite it's no more than fifty and that's one of the reasons maybe because I//I//couldn't invite more than fifty people because there I wasn't allowed to//to//inv to add more than fifty people to a group you know in WhatsApp
9	-er	<so> you invited fifty people and you didn't invite me
10	-ee	<yeah> maybe I wasn't going to make another group just like party one and party two like the names of the group I wouldn't//I wouldn't//make another one so I thought well that's//that's//enough//that's enough//people these people and this group and it's perfect but I just didn't think about you man I should have//I should have//just
11	-er	<you know//you know//> I love that group man you know we've been listening for that group I even bought you that CD <yeah> you//you//know that group because of me < yeah//yeah//I'm sorry> and now you don't inv you *o sea* [I mean] you may//you may//need to//to//invite that group and you don't invite me look <yeah> I don't know what to do with you I I know I
Post-complaint		
12	-ee	<well I think//I think//> we can still solve this like I can <how?>//I can I can I can I can//do something < I can't//I can't//> maybe I can
13	-er	<I don't> trust you anymore you know <bah> what do I do now with you <come on> man we've been friends <well yeah> for so much time and
14	-ee	<we can> still solve this we were friends we can still solve this
15	-er	how?
16	-ee	come on I can uninvite someone
17	-er	you will uninvite someone
18	-ee	Yes
19	-er	I think he'll get er quite pissed off if you do that =
20	-ee	= at least it would be better than having you pissed off because I know you for a long time
Post-complaint		
21	-er	<you know> I don't want other people to be//to be//left out because of me but you know//you know//I'm//I'm//quite angry with you =
22	-ee	= yeah well I can//can//just plan another party with <look er>//with//less people or more people we can plan a party at some sort of like place
23	-er	yeah but you won't be able to invite this//this//group

(*continued*)

Turn	Participant	
24	-ee	<yeah> I will be able to invite you even if I//if I//had to make another group yes with you and me < but I don't > then you are going to come to that party < but I don't > I can tell you
25	-er	I don't want to listen to another group I just love this one
26	-ee	<no> this group again I would pay them <hmm> I would pay them to come I you know what I'm going to//to//get er I I'm bah come on this has to work I mean people coming to this party are going to pay a fee like two Euros for drinks I don't care and with that money we're going to invite the same group next time and we're going to repeat the party so you can come next time I've messed up I know I've messed up a lot but this can be solved I think we can solve this <okay> we're friends
27	-er	okay deal? You promise? <deal> to do that?
28	-ee	<I promise>//I promise//to do so <okay> I do promise yeah
29	-er	er I'll trust you but don't do this =
30	-ee	= I won't <okay> I won't don't worry
31	-er	okay

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