

USING FORMATIVE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT TO FOSTER THE  
DEVELOPMENT OF STUDENTS' ENGLISH LANGUAGE  
PRAGMATIC COMPETENCE

A Thesis Presented by  
ASTRID TANGARIFE SANCHEZ

Submitted to the School of Languages of  
Universidad de Antioquia Medellín in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of

MAGISTER EN ENSEÑANZA Y APRENDIZAJE DE LENGUAS EXTRANJERAS

November 2014

Master's in Foreign Language Teaching and Learning

© Copyright by Astrid Tangarife Sánchez 2014

All Rights Reserved.

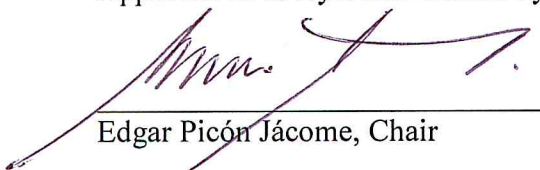
USING FORMATIVE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT TO FOSTER THE  
DEVELOPMENT OF STUDENTS' ENGLISH LANGUAGE PRAGMATIC  
COMPETENCE


A Thesis Presented

by

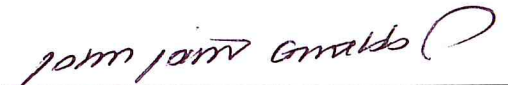
ASTRID TANGARIFE SANCHEZ

Approved as to style and content by:

  
Edgar Picón Jácome, Chair

  
Sandra Omeira Gaviria Monsalve, Committee Member

  
Jaime Alonso Usma Wilches, Committee Member

  
John Jairo Giraldo, School Director

Escuela de Idiomas

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This work would have never been possible without the contribution of all the people who accompanied me along the process: My beloved family: the greatest treasure I have, my encouraging professors, my supporting classmates, and my willing students. The most special gratitude is to my advisor, Edgar Picón Jácome, for all his patience, disposition, timely advice, unconditional support and ample knowledge. This product belongs to him as well.

ABSTRACT

USING FORMATIVE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT TO FOSTER THE  
DEVELOPMENT OF STUDENTS' ENGLISH LANGUAGE  
PRAGMATIC COMPETENCE

November 2014

M.A, ASTRID TANGARIFE SANCHEZ, B.A. UNIVERSIDAD DE ANTIOQUIA

MEDELLIN

COLOMBIA

Directed by: Professor Edgar Picón Jácome

Language pragmatics deals with the production and interpretation of linguistic meaning in context. Pragmatic competence is concerned with the ability to organize and construct messages in order to perform different communicative functions. In English language teaching, in our local context, higher importance has however been attributed to the development and assessment of linguistic competences<sup>1</sup>. As for pragmatic competence, evidence shows that it is not a clear component in English language programs and has thus been neglected in teachers' assessment criteria; therefore, more opportunities to develop this competence are needed.

This case study provides insight into an academic setting to observe the extent to which the implementation of formative performance assessment helped university

---

<sup>1</sup> The concept of Communicative Competences that supports the analysis in this study was taken from the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Council of Europe, 2001)

professors to produce language for a communicative functional purpose, thus fostering the development of their pragmatic competence in English. Data analysis confirmed that the formative character of the assessment procedure allowed students to move their learning forward. The study yet reveals some challenges, demands and implications of carrying out this type of assessment in our local context. Practicality, for instance, becomes an important issue to achieve the dynamism and rigor that such procedure requires.

Professional development in assessment and evaluation is thus essential if we are to explore different learning and assessment procedures that benefit the development of pragmatic competence. It is therefore advisable that policy makers, administrators and educational actors plan strategies to provide teachers and themselves space to develop a deeper understanding of these types of evaluation practices. This is paramount if we take into consideration that our current language policies at a local and global context require high competitive citizens with the ability to communicate in other languages.

*Key words:* formative assessment, performance assessment, pragmatic competence, language policies.



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES .....	xi
Introduction.....	1
Theoretical Framework.....	7
Pragmatic Competence.....	7
Formative Performance Assessment .....	11
Setting .....	14
Method.....	15
Participants.....	17
Data Collection.....	18
Scoring rubrics.....	19
Video recording of assessment activities .....	19
Focus group .....	20
My research diary .....	21
Data Analysis .....	21
Findings .....	24
Development of Pragmatic Competence.....	24
Discourse competence .....	27
Functional competence.....	30
Aspects that Affect the Development of Pragmatic Competence .....	35
Sociolinguistic competence .....	35
Grammatical competence .....	36



Phonological competence .....	37
Lexical competence .....	38
Qualities of Formative Performance Assessment that Fostered Pragmatic Competence .	39
Authenticity .....	39
Transparency .....	41
Dynamism.....	42
Purposeful feedback .....	45
Limitations: Practicality .....	46
Discussion .....	47
Conclusions.....	54
REFERENCES .....	57
APPENDIX A RUBRIC WT1.....	61
APPENDIX B RUBRIC OT1 .....	63

## LIST OF FIGURES

1	Development of Discourse Competence Showed by the Whole Group.....	26
2	Development of Discourse Competence Showed by Andres.....	28
3	Development of Discourse Competence Showed by Diana.....	29
4	Development of Discourse Competence Showed by Luis.....	29
5	Development of Functional Competence showed by Andres.....	31
6	Development of Grammatical Competence Showed by the Whole Group.....	36
7	Development of Phonological Competence Showed by the Whole Group.....	37

## Introduction

This study is about pragmatic competence and the significance of promoting its development within a group of professionals in a foreign language context. Consequently, in the following paragraphs, I will briefly refer to the central concepts that provide support to the importance of the study, namely: pragmatics, pragmatic competence, and the assessment procedures that will be used to foster its development.

The significance of pragmatics and pragmatic competence can be supported from different perspectives. Soler and Martinez-Flor (2008) highlight the importance of exploring the conditions that influence pragmatic learning and teaching in foreign language (FL) classrooms. These authors refer to how it has been claimed that learners in an FL setting do not have the same exposure and opportunities for practice as learners who are immersed in the second language community (p. 14). In their edited book, *Investigating Pragmatics in Foreign Language Learning, Teaching and Testing*, the contributors investigate how pragmatics can be learned, taught and tested in different foreign language settings; a fact that corroborates the importance of this issue in the field of second language learning.

Regarding the central concepts of this study, Fromkin, Rodman and Hyams (2003), state that pragmatics “is concerned with the interpretation of linguistic meaning in context.” (p. 207). In this statement, the role that the context plays in the interpretation of language is evident. Likewise, Bachman (1990, as cited in Fulcher & Davidson, 2007) defines pragmatic competence as “the acceptability of utterances within specific contexts of language use, and rules determining the successful use of language within specified

contexts” (p. 44). The development of pragmatic competence needs consideration when learning another language because it implies, more than just learning words and structures, knowing how to use the language according to specific intentions in specific settings.

In the setting in which this case study takes place, the significance of developing pragmatic competence is justified in the fact that in the exercise of their careers, professionals need to perform tasks such as communicating with academic peers, providing information about their research projects, and reading information in English as part of their academic activities. Developing pragmatic competence in this context thus means developing the ability to use language in actual academic situations at a local and global scale.

Moreover, language policies in Colombia have established standards and evaluation procedures to determine the proficiency of professionals, which emphasize on the use of language for communicative purposes. For instance, the *Programa de Fortalecimiento de las Competencias en Lengua Extranjera* (PDFCLE) is a proposal of the National Ministry of Education aimed at having citizens with the ability to communicate in English with international standards in order to compete with global economies. In relation to this, the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), proposed by the Council of Europe, became a guideline for standardizing the proficiency levels of foreign language learners in different parts of the world. In our country, language learners are currently evaluated and measured with reference to the levels of the CEFR which emphasize on the ability to communicate and use language in different contexts.

If we are to develop pragmatic competence, classroom assessment practices can become the perfect opportunity to meet this purpose. In relation to this, Canagarajah (2006)

states that in a postmodern globalization era, in which the ownership over a language is questioned and there is a space for World Englishes, it is paramount to revise the dominant paradigms of assessment, and move from the discrete-item period, in which language components are assessed in isolation, to a more sensitive period in which performance and pragmatics are considered. It is thus necessary to move from assessment practices that focus on proficiency in grammar and linguistic features, to practices that focus on proficiency in pragmatics (p. 229).

Performance assessment can foster the development of pragmatic competence because it promotes production of language in different ways. This type of assessment has raised the interest of both scholars and teachers in language education and in the educational field in general because learners are exposed to real-life tasks in specific contexts—such as the classroom or the workplace—and the students’ true language abilities can be assessed; facts that sharply contrast with traditional forms of assessment (Brown & Hudson, 1998; Brown, Hudson, Norris & Bonk, 2002; Lee, 1998; McNamara, 1996; Muñoz & Alvarez, 2010; O’Malley & Valdez, 1996; Parke & Lane, 2007; Shohamy, 1998; Wigglesworth, 2008).

Similarly, Davies et al. (1999, as cited in Wigglesworth, 2008) provide a definition of a performance test as “a test in which the ability of candidates to perform particular tasks, usually associated with job or study requirements, is assessed” (p.144). Similarly, Darling-Hammond (2007 as cited in Abedi, 2010) asserts that, performance assessments make a major contribution to the academic careers of the students, especially those who have challenging academic lives (p. 12). Furthermore, an important feature of performance assessment stated by Brown and Hudson (1998) is that, it elicits authentic communication

and estimates the measurement of students' abilities to respond to real-life language tasks (p. 662).

Formative assessment, on the other hand, is understood as a process in which it is required that the learner be engaged in actions, such as reflecting on ways to move his learning forward (William, 2011), and whose main objective is to form the students' competencies and help them to continue their growth process (Brown, 2004). Assessment within a formative approach is assessment for learning, instead of assessment of learning; that is, it goes beyond just measuring knowledge. Formative assessment has been widely explored in educational settings worldwide, originated in the need to improve students' learning and competences. Consequently, a paradigm shift from traditional types of assessment to more formative processes has become necessary, taking into consideration that assessment for learning promotes self-reflection of the learning process to move it forward (Brown, 2004; Cardenas, 1997; Gipps, 1999; Lamb, 2010; William, 2011).

Regarding studies on assessment conducted in our local context, I found that language pragmatic competence has not been the focus of teachers' assessment practices in our English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes. By the same token, neither has performance assessment been systematically applied nor has formative assessment been a common purpose. For example, Frodden, Restrepo and Maturana, (2004) as well as Arias and Maturana, (2005), from a study conducted in two public universities in Colombia, reported that the participant teachers used traditional assessment instruments more frequently than alternative assessment ones. The analysis of their assessment instruments showed emphasis on grammar and vocabulary and absence of the pragmatic aspects of the language; only few of them actually proposed tasks that prompted students to produce

language. Complimentary, these authors found that the participant teachers evidenced lack of clarity in the definition of the linguistic construct to assess and in concepts like summative assessment and formative assessment.

I conducted a pilot study including document analysis and data collection through a questionnaire applied on-line and an interview to the coordinator of the program. The document analysis showed some relevant facts such as the main objective of the program, which is to provide the participants with abilities to communicate effectively in academic situations and in their daily life. Nevertheless, through the interview I found that the contribution of the program to fulfill the participants' academic needs has been low. Additionally, through the questionnaire, I could infer that fostering language pragmatic competence would be significant for the professionals taking part of the program, who are mainly university professors, graduate students and researchers. Regarding assessment practices, most of the participants agreed that these should be connected to their actual needs and reality in order to meet the requirements that their academic environment presents.

This study explores to what extent the development of students' English language pragmatic competence can be fostered through the implementation of performance assessment within a formative approach in a foreign language (FL) context. It can contribute to knowledge at different levels: the academic community will learn more about the relevant elements that are involved in a construct that highlights pragmatic competence. In relation to the program administrators, they will gain insight on the necessity to propose and implement curricular changes that match the needs of the community. With regard to foreign language teachers, they will become more aware of the importance of matching the

objectives they set inside the classroom to the actual needs of their students in order to have them use language for a specific purpose in a specific context, which is what pragmatics is about. Regarding assessment practices, the teachers will gain insight on the implications of setting up this type of assessment in this specific setting. Consequently, the following question leads the study: To what extent can formative performance assessment foster the development of students' English language pragmatic competence?



## Theoretical Framework

In this section, I will elaborate on the theoretical foundations that support the study. The concept of pragmatic competence, which refers to the *what* of the assessment proposal, will be presented first. The assessment procedures, which describe the *how*, will be presented at the end of the section. It is important to highlight that the assessment procedures that I will apply in this project will be framed within the principles of performance assessment for formative purposes; therefore, I will call it *Formative Performance Assessment*.

### Pragmatic Competence

As it was mentioned in the introduction, when Fromkin et al. (2003) define *Pragmatics* they draw attention to the importance of the context in the interpretation of language. These authors refer to two main types of context: discourse and situational. *Discourse context* refers to language that surrounds what has been spoken or written and one is intending to comprehend; in other words it has to do with the role of previous sentences or utterances in the interpretation of meaning. *Situational context* refers to the knowledge of the world, which fills much of what is implicit in communication. In words of these authors, “much of the contextual knowledge is knowledge of who is speaking, who is listening, what objects are being discussed, and general facts about the world we live in” (p. 212).

In language learning, pragmatic competence is a very important aspect to be developed and therefore assessed. In terms of assessment, pragmatic competence represents a construct that needs to be understood and well defined. Brown (2004) defines a construct

as “[...] any theory, hypothesis, or model that attempts to explain observed phenomena in our universe of perceptions”. By the same token, Fultcher and Davidson (2007) state that, in order to define the construct of our assessment we need to rely on models: theoretical descriptions of what it means to be able to communicate in a second language; and frameworks: relevant skills and abilities from the model to a specific assessment context (p. 36). These authors elaborate on different models that have been developed in the language context, and in which there are some differences in relation to how they name and group their components.

Nevertheless, it is evident that all of the models that they refer to include pragmatics as an important constituent. Canale and Swain’s model of *Communicative Competence*, for example, includes the socio-linguistic competence, which they define as “knowledge of the rules of language use” (p. 38); Bachman’s model of *Communicative Language Ability* refers to pragmatic competence defined as “the acceptability of utterances within specific contexts of language use” (p. 44). The model of *Language Ability* proposed by Bachman and Palmer (1996) includes what they define as pragmatic knowledge stating that it “enables us to create or interpret discourse by relating utterances or sentences and texts to their meanings, to the intentions of the language users, and to relevant characteristics of the language use setting” (p. 69). In the same line, Celce-Murcia et al. (1995) propose their own model of *Communicative Competence* in which they re-label Canale and Swain’s sociolinguistic competence as socio-cultural competence. This same component is the one that Savignon (2001) refers to as requiring “an understanding of the social context in which language is used: the roles of the participants, the information they share and the function of the interaction” (p. 18). Purpura (2008) also defines pragmatic knowledge as the one that

requires the interpretations of the intentions of language users, not what the literal meanings of the grammatical forms express. As it is evidenced in this paragraph, the pragmatic component is included in all these models.

Likewise, the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) refers to communicative language competences as those capacities that the learners use or apply for the realization of communicative intentions (Council of Europe, 2001). The concepts of pragmatic competence presented in this framework will guide my analysis for two reasons. The first is related to the importance that the CEFR has gained in our global context. We are currently ruled by language policies in which this framework has become the main guideline for language teachers and learners. It is thus advisable to include it in our studies as a research source. The other reason is related to the clarity I found in the concepts for my analysis. The divisions and subdivisions of the communicative competence are clearly explained and exemplified.

In the CEFR pragmatic competences are concerned with two main aspects: *discourse competence*, defined as the learner's knowledge of principles according to which messages are organized, structured and arranged, and *functional competence*, defined as the knowledge of how these messages are used to perform communicative functions (p. 123). *Discourse competence* is related to the ability to arrange sentences in a sequence to produce coherent stretches of language. It includes the ability to structure and manage discourse in terms of thematic organization, coherence and cohesion, logical ordering, style and register and rhetorical effectiveness. Text design is part of discourse competence as well. It is related to the knowledge of how information is structured in realizing different macrofunctions such as description, explanation or exposition; how written texts such as

essays and formal letters are laid out, for example (p. 123). *Functional competence* is defined as the use of spoken discourse and written texts in communication for particular functional purposes. These functions can be microfunctions such as identifying, correcting, asking, answering, expressing intentions and emotions, suggesting, asking for requests, attracting attention among others; or macrofunctions such as description, narration, exposition, explanation, argumentation, demonstration, instruction (p. 126). *Functional success* is an important concept within this competence. A learner has functional success when he/she has *fluency*: the ability to articulate and keep going when he/she lands in a dead end, and *propositional precision*: the ability to formulate thoughts and propositions and make meaning clear. It is important to highlight that although functional success is part of the functional competence in this framework, this success will inevitably be affected by discourse competence in terms of the clarity and coherence that is needed to perform particular functional purposes. In other words, functional success is, to some extent, dependent on discourse competence.

Even though pragmatic competence is the focus of my research question, other language components such as sociolinguistic and linguistic competences have an important consideration as well. Sociolinguistic competence, defined as the knowledge required to deal with the social dimensions of language use, in which linguistic markers of social relations, politeness conventions, and register differences are included (p. 118), is not part of the pragmatic competence in the CEFR as it is in the models presented in the first part of this conceptual framework. However, I strongly believe that sociolinguistic competence affects pragmatic competence since pragmatics is directly connected to the social context in which language is used. Linguistic competence is also important because it is related to

“knowledge of, and ability to use, the formal resources from which well-formed, meaningful messages may be assembled and formulated” (p. 109). Therefore, if we want to develop the ability to structure discourse in a coherent and logical way in order to use spoken and written communication for particular functional purposes, this competence should not be neglected.

### **Formative Performance Assessment**

Performance assessment draws upon a socio-cultural approach of language and learning. Gipps (1999) states that, the conceptualization of the forms of assessment has been changing in the last years due to shifts in the views of learning and she lists performance assessment as one of these new developments in assessment that changes learning paradigms. When Shohamy (1998) identifies different periods in the development of language testing, she refers to *Performance Testing* as an era in which it is recognized that language knowledge interacts with a specific content area and context. Therefore, test takers are required to perform language and employ authentic tasks in a well-defined context. This author also states that, the first step to take when we construct a performance test is to conduct a needs analysis in order to specify the context of the second language use (p. 241).

In the same line, other authors have referred to performance assessment as a practice in which students must perform particular tasks usually associated with study requirements; therefore, it can contribute to the academic careers of the students as it elicits authentic communication and measures students’ abilities to respond to real-life tasks (Abedi, 2010; Brown & Hudson, 1998; Norris, Brown, Hudson & Yoshioka, 1998; Wigglesworth, 2008). In the same line, Wigglesworth (2008) highlights the advantages of

performance assessment by stating that, through performance based assessment, learners are able to demonstrate the mastering of skills that the real world context may require, and they can be evaluated in a wider range of skills than in traditional discrete tests.

Similarly, Norris et al. (1998) elaborate on performance assessments by stating that, the students taking them are asked to perform tasks that are connected with real-life situations, in which they would eventually be expected to use the language (p. 8). From these authors' perspective, some of the most important qualities of performance assessment are its potential for predicting students' abilities for future real-world language use, the compensation for the negative washback effect that standardized testing provides (Miller & Legg, as cited in Norris et al., 1998); and the possibility that it offers for candidates' performance of relevant tasks, rather than abstract demonstration of knowledge through pencil-and-paper tests (McNamara, 1996). In the same vein, Canagarajah (2006) states that, assessment has to be contextualized and performance based, so the objective of the tests should be to assess someone's ability to use English as a second language in the local community. Taking into consideration what performance assessment requires, we can surely state that by having students perform language for a purpose and in a specific context we can foster the development of pragmatic competence.

In relation to formative assessment, Gipps (1999) states that, "the focus has shifted toward a broader assessment of learning, enhancement of learning for the individual, engagement with the students during assessment and involvement of teachers in the assessment process" (p. 367). Formative assessment emerges as a way to share responsibility with the academic actors in the assessment process. The focus of formative assessment is the formation and future continuation of students' learning, so assessment

practices that are used to meet the learning needs become formative (Brown, 2004; Lamb, 2010).

Some authors have developed the concept of assessment for learning making a special emphasis of the function it actually serves. Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshal & Wiliam (2004, as cited in Wiliam, 2011) refer to assessment for learning as “any assessment for which the first priority in its design and practice is to serve the purpose of promoting students’ learning” (p. 10). In this respect, Lamb (2010) claims that assessment for learning implies some actions such as the sharing of learning objectives with pupils, involving learners in peer and self-assessment, promoting confidence that improvement is possible, and involving teachers and learners on the reflection of assessment information (p. 100). Black and Jones (2006, as cited in Lamb, 2010) assert that an assessment activity becomes formative when the information feedback is used by teachers and learners to modify teaching and learning activities; that is, to adapt the teaching work to meet learning needs.

## Setting

This study was conducted at a continuing education program whose students are university professors from different disciplines that study English as a foreign language for professional reasons. Besides professors, many of the participants in the study are graduate students in the same university. The program is supported by the university as part of its efforts to provide professional development for the faculty. Certifying proficiency in a foreign language is a requirement to become full time teachers in this university, and/or pursue graduate studies, which explains part of the students' motivation to study the language. This requirement is explicit in the current language policy that the university has.

One of the objectives of this program is to provide the students with opportunities to develop listening, speaking, reading and writing skills that allow them to communicate effectively in academic situations and in their daily life. This objective is directly connected with pragmatic competence because these students need to use the language in well-defined academic situations such as congresses, presentations of research projects and internships abroad; that is, they are required to develop pragmatic competence in order to succeed in their professional lives. Another objective is to integrate the language learning in academic processes that take place in teaching activities at the university; a goal that corroborates again the importance of developing this competence. In relation to the evaluation proposed, summative procedures such as quizzes, interviews, workshops, tests, presentations of final projects and the like should take place. Students can take courses that go from level one—beginners—to level eight—advanced-- , as well as listening, composition, reading comprehension and conversation courses.



## **Method**

This is a qualitative case study which according to Richards (2003), focuses on a particular unit or set of units such as institutions or programs, and it is aimed to provide a detailed description of the unit. Likewise, Creswell (2003) states that in a case study the researcher explores in depth a program, an activity, a process or an individual by using a variety of data collection procedures. My goal was to implement a specific type of assessment, performance assessment within a formative approach, to know to what extent it could foster the development of pragmatic competence, whose importance I have referred to. This methodology design would allow me to meet this goal.

The study focused on the implementation of performance assessment within a formative approach to foster the development of pragmatic competence of a group of university professors and researchers. It involved three phases. In the first phase there was an adaption of the current contents of the course and a design of an evaluation system with alternative and traditional procedures. Pragmatic competence was highlighted, both in the adaptation of the contents and the definition of the construct to be evaluated, taking into consideration the actual needs of the participants. Aspects related to the language and structures that the students need in order to perform actual communicative activities in their profession led the changes that I made. I considered O'Malley and Valdez (1996) because they provide relevant information on how to design authentic assessments and the design of scoring rubrics which I implemented. In this phase I presented the syllabus and the assessment activities to my students, so that I could make some changes if it was necessary according to their comments or suggestions. For the evaluation system I kept in mind the

phases proposed by Shohamy and Inbar (2006) in relation to purpose, definition of language knowledge, assessment procedures, design of items and tasks, administration of assessment tools, interpretation, and report of the results.

In the second phase, I developed the new content and implemented the evaluation system along the course. I proposed four performance tasks, two written and two oral, to be executed during the course which were directly connected to the content of the new syllabus and the students' needs. In the first task, they wrote an e mail to an academic peer in another country in order to provide some information about a project being carried out at that moment (see Appendix A). In the second task, they made a ten-minute oral presentation in which they talked about their projects; in the third task, they wrote a short report on the project being carried out; and in the fourth task, they made another five-minute oral presentation in which they presented the findings of their projects. The four activities had specific guidelines, a very specific situation and a specific task to do. The students were asked to self-assess based on the rubric at the end of the assessment process for every task.

The new content was oriented to perform academic activities such as oral and written reports of research projects. These topics included the use of linking words in oral and written reports, different grammatical structures such as active and passive voice and how they could be used to present information about research projects, phrasal verbs used in academic language, and other topics connected to academic contexts. The instruction activities I developed along the course were oriented to learn about these topics and then provide examples or models for the proposed tasks. For example, formal language to use in

e-mails, examples of power points for academic presentations, and academic readings to identify the use of linking words and phrasal verbs.

After the course was developed and the evaluation system was implemented, I selected three focal cases for my analysis in order to find out what factors, if any, affected that development. These participants will be called Andres, Diana, and Luis. The three of them showed different levels of achievement and they will be presented in detail in the findings section. I also analyzed their recordings in detail to be able to show evidence of pragmatic competence development. The criteria to select them were their level of achievement: one with a significant development of pragmatic competence after the implementation of this assessment procedure, another one with an average development and the last one with a low development after the implementation of assessment. During the development of these tasks they had a space for self-assessment with which they were able to reflect on their own learning process and be engaged in it. Throughout this second phase, I collected the information that I would analyze in order to answer my research question. In the third and final phase, I organized the data and analyzed it.

### **Participants**

The specific group of students with whom I did the project was a level four corresponding to an intermediate level of proficiency. The participants of this study were selected through purposeful sampling whose power lies in selecting information-rich-cases from which you can learn a great deal about relevant issues for the purpose of your research (Patton, 1990, p. 169). The strategy to select this information-rich-case was that of “homogeneous samples” because it involves bringing together people of similar backgrounds and experiences. They were a group of university professors who were

registered in English four and had similar academic needs for the exercise of their profession in relation to language use. I chose a level four on purpose because in this level the students are supposed to have developed some language ability needed to produce texts with an intermediate level of proficiency, which would allow me to try out tasks that could match their academic needs.

In order to make sure that the participants actually compiled with the profile described above, I applied a survey during the first class taking into consideration what Rea and Parker (2005) state as the ultimate goal of survey research: “to allow researchers to generalize about a large population by studying only a small portion of that population” (p. 4). The results showed that the majority of the students are professors for whom research is part of their academic activities. They need to know English to communicate orally, understand spoken language, and read specialized information in their area of knowledge. Most of them use the language when they attend conferences with international participation, in presentations of research projects, and in communication through internet. In sum, these students use English mainly for academic purposes; therefore, the tasks proposed along the course are addressed to meet those needs.

### **Data Collection**

In order to analyze to what extent the implementation of performance formative assessment can foster the development of language pragmatic competence and to have an in-depth examination of the case, I collected data from four different sources: scoring rubrics, video recordings of performance assessment activities, a focus group and my personal diary. The process of data collection began in February 2013 when classes started. From the very beginning, students were informed about the research project and their

consent to participate in the study was obtained. The data collection procedures continued until June 2013.

### **Scoring rubrics.**

Taking into consideration that the evaluation I implemented was performance based within a formative approach, I decided to use rubrics to carry out the assessment and grading of the students. I chose rubrics because they would allow me to design authentic tasks. Picón (2013) elaborates on one of the qualities that rubrics promote: authenticity. He states that rubrics are evaluation tools composed by authentic tasks such as presentations and interviews, and their corresponding scales. The author also states that the application of rubrics under certain conditions can increase transparent practices in the assessment processes (p. 10). Likewise, Panadero and Jonsson (2013) assert that the formative use of rubrics may mediate improved performance by increasing transparency, reducing anxiety and aiding the feedback process (p. 138).

I designed four analytic scoring rubrics, one for each task. The construct was focused, but not limited to pragmatic competence because my intention was to assess linguistic components as well. These rubrics became another source of information to answer my research question taking into consideration that my interpretation of the students' achievements and their own interpretation of their achievements with the self-assessment activity were registered in them.

### **Video recording of assessment activities.**

In the process of collecting information intended to know to what extent formative performance assessment could foster the development of pragmatic competence, I video recorded two of the tasks that I proposed. These recordings allowed me to have a record of

the students' performance in order to observe them, analyze the evidence of improvement from OT1 to OT2, and finally report the English language pragmatic competence developed by them. I transcribed the recordings of the focal cases and analyzed their outcomes in light of the components of pragmatic competence that were the focus of the study: discourse and functional competence, and other components that could affect the development of pragmatic competence. The objective of these recordings was also to provide students with formative feedback; that is, made them analyze and reflect on their own performance and learning process. They could do this because they were allowed to have the videos of their performance to observe themselves before doing the self-assessment activity. Another purpose of the video was to inform my decisions when the grading time came.

**Focus group.**

I was interested in inquiring about the participants' feelings, opinions, achievements and difficulties in relation to the evaluation that was implemented, and the tasks that were proposed throughout the course. I wanted to do it in a friendly environment in which they could express themselves without feeling threatened; therefore, a focus group was a good option because of its naturalistic quality since the participants can express different kinds of feelings in a non-threatening environment (Krueger & Casey, 2000). I applied this focus group as my third source for triangulation because I wanted to validate some information related to my research question. In relation to pragmatic competence I wanted to know if the tasks proposed were connected to the students' real needs as professionals and if the development of these tasks could help them meet the requirements of the university. Regarding the evaluation, it was important to know their perceptions about whether

formative performance assessment had actually fostered the development of this competence, and what its implementation implied. The interview included open-ended questions and was held at the end of the second phase of the project when the course had been developed and assessment procedures had already been implemented.

### **My research diary.**

Altrichter, Posch and Somekh (1993) state that diaries are useful for research because they document the development of perceptions and insights across the different stages of the research process (p. 11). I decided to keep a diary because I wanted to have a record of the whole process, step-by-step; from the moment I adapted the contents and the assessment activities, and asked for their consent to collect data along the course, to the last moment when the course was finished. Additionally, I intended to use the data collected in my subsequent analysis. In this diary I wrote reflections and feelings that accompanied me along the research process. I also recorded planning notes when I decided to do a specific activity the following class according to some needs that I had identified, when I thought that a procedure could be done differently and it was worth trying, or when I had doubts about the design of a rubric and had some questions for my advisor. In this respect, this same author asserts that the diary becomes a “memory bank” because it reminds us of plans that we want to put into practice later (p. 23).

### **Data Analysis**

For my data analysis I followed an inductive-deductive approach. Suter (2012) states that in this type of approach, explicit theories are not imposed on the data in order to test a hypothesis; on the contrary, categories and themes emerge from the data. However, the conceptual framework is important in the process of interpretation by the researcher

because he/she must explain the phenomenon being studied with reference to the literature on a topic (p. 347). I followed the steps proposed by Taylor-Powell and Renner (2003) regarding the analysis process: I got to know my data, focused the analysis, categorized information, identified patterns and connections within and between categories and finally, brought it all together for my interpretation.

Regarding the sources, I analyzed a focus group, some scoring rubrics, six video recordings and my personal diary. For the focus group I transcribed the data in a double space format on the left half of the page, keeping a wide right-hand margin for writing codes and categories, as proposed by Saldaña (2009). I used the strategy of coding because I wanted to group similarly coded data into categories that shared some common characteristics (Saldaña, 2009). I highlighted passages related to the answers that the participants provided in relation to the development of the tasks and the evaluation system implemented, taking into consideration that this information would help me answer my research question. Afterwards, I gave a name or a short description to the passage and consequently, some categories emerged from making connections among data.

I did something similar with the scoring rubrics. I read the comment for each descriptor in the rubric and coded it. Afterwards, other categories emerged as well. In order to facilitate the analysis of quantitative data, I converted the scores to percentages to have some graphs. For the analysis of the video recordings, I transcribed the two oral tasks of the six focal cases following the same mechanics that I followed for the focus group. Then I used different colors to highlight the strengths and weaknesses I found with grammar and syntax, pronunciation and word choice in order to categorize these data too.



For the analysis of my diary, I read, reread and highlighted some passages that could be useful in the coding process as I did with the focus group and the video recordings. Subsequently, I coded and categorized following the same technique that I followed for the focus group. In this process I experienced what Altrichter et al. (1993) refer to when they state that, “analysis in research is a kind of rereading of existing data with the intention of reorganizing, interpreting and evaluating them with respect to research interest” (p. 21).

All this process took place simultaneously with the construction of a category tree with the help of my advisor. This strategy helped me to reduce categories and find connections within and between them. In order to enhance validity, I triangulated the data collected during the development of the study. My advisor was constantly checking my analysis procedures, and the findings that emerged from it, acting as a critical friend.

## **Findings**

In this section I will present the findings resulting from the analysis of the data collected. For this purpose, I will refer to the students' development of pragmatic competence. Subsequently, I will refer to other linguistic aspects that were found to affect it, and I will finish with the qualities of formative performance assessment that may have contributed to its development.

### **Development of Pragmatic Competence**

In the following paragraphs, I will report on how pragmatic competence was developed along the realization of this study. All the participants produced two written and two oral tasks<sup>2</sup>. I will refer to the tasks as written task 1 and 2, and oral task 1 and 2, regarding the order in which they were developed. For language economy purposes, I will use the abbreviations: WT1, WT2, OT1, and OT2. The whole group showed some improvement in the WT2 in comparison with WT1 and the same happened with OT2 in comparison with OT1. As for the three focal cases that I chose for an in-depth analysis, some improvement was observed as well in the four tasks. I will present the findings of this analysis overlapping general results for the whole group and the focal cases to show how the latter corroborated the former or showed differences. The focal cases have been named Andres, Luis and Diana. I will refer to two components of pragmatic competence: discourse competence and functional competence, as they have been defined by the CEFR.

---

<sup>2</sup> Since the oral tasks were intended to be supported by a power point presentation, there was integration of writing and speaking. However, the analysis was focused on the oral production of the students.

In order to assess the students' achievement in the different competences I used a five-level scale namely: *Outstanding*, *Good*, *Fair*, *Needs improvement*, and *Poor* (see Appendixes A & B). *Outstanding* refers to a level of performance in which the student achieved more than expected showing a high level of proficiency. *Good* refers to a level of performance in which the student achieved successfully all the important aspects expected in the task. *Fair* refers to a level of performance in which the student achieved the minimum expected results. *Needs improvement* refers to a level of performance in which the students did not achieve some significant results. Finally, *Poor* refers to a level of performance in which the students need to work much more to achieve the minimum expected results.

For the purpose of making it more comprehensible for the students, in the wording of the criteria included in the rubrics key terms that refer to discourse competence, namely coherence and cohesion, were merged with terms that refer to functional competence, namely clarity and fluency. In order to show overall achievement of the participants in terms of Pragmatic Competence I have chosen such descriptor, which was consistent in the four tasks and stayed as follows: "Express ideas in a coherent, clear, cohesive, fluent<sup>3</sup>, and logical form". However, in the analysis of pieces of evidence that come from the focal cases, I will emphasize on its particular aspects separately when referring to either Discourse or Functional competence.

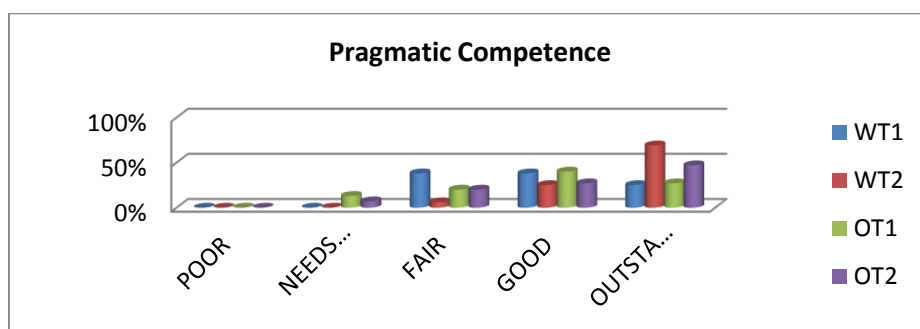
In WT1 the students wrote an e mail to an academic peer. In this task, 25% got *Outstanding*, 38% got *Good*, and 38% got *Fair* for the aforementioned criterion. Comparatively, there was a significant improvement in WT2 in which 69% got

---

<sup>3</sup> The key word "*Fluent*" was only included in the rubrics that were used to assess oral production.

*Outstanding*, 25% got *Good*, and 6% got *Fair*. Regarding the oral tasks for the same criterion, in OT1 27% got *Outstanding*, 40% got *Good*, 20% got *Fair* and 13% got *Needs improvement*. As for OT2, 47% got *Outstanding*, 27% got *Good*, 20% got *Fair*, and 7% got *Needs improvement* for the same criterion. Figure 1 illustrates the performance of the whole group in the four tasks: improvement in WT2 and OT2 in comparison with WT1 and OT1 can be observed.

Figure 1. Development of Pragmatic Competence showed by the whole group.



Following, I elaborate on the analysis of Discourse and Functional Competences separately. Pieces of evidence coming from the focal cases have been selected in order to illustrate the results. Andres' pieces of evidence picture the performance of participants with high level of achievement, Diana's the performance of the ones with an average level of achievement, and Luis' the performance of the ones with a lower level of achievement. As it was described in the previous paragraphs the whole group achieved overall improvement in terms of Pragmatic Competence; this classification has thus been made in order to provide the reader with insight into details that would better show differences among particular aspects of Pragmatic Competence development for particular cases.

### **Discourse competence.**

Discourse competence is related to the ability of the learner to arrange sentences in sequence to produce coherent language. Coherence and cohesion are important components in this competence. Coherence is related to a logical connection and consistency in the discourse while cohesion refers to the way a text is tied together by linguistic devices such as connectors and pronouns.

Regarding the focal cases, in WT2 for example, Andres was able to mark the relationships between ideas when he is referring to the objectives of his project. It is also evident that he can link his sentences to produce a coherent and clear discourse. The following paragraph is taken from his task:

*The first specific objective is to describe the cancer scientific community in Colombia. The second objective is to describe the scientific production of the Colombian researchers between 2004 to 2013. The third is to identify the scientific practice, modes and models of the groups and investigators working on cancer in Colombia. And finally, the last specific objective is to evaluate the use and utility of scientific knowledge generated in Colombia to control cancer in the country (WT2, Andres).*

We can observe that the text is consistent because he is referring to the specific objectives of his study. The sentences are well-structured, which contribute to the cohesion of his text and clarity in his ideas. Similarly, in OT2, in which he presented the results of a study previously conducted, he showed coherence and cohesion in his oral presentation.

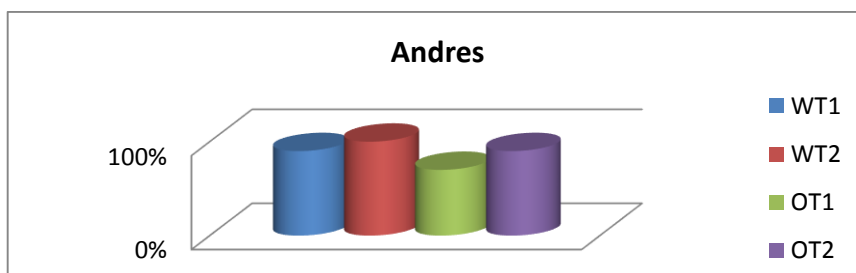
The following is an extract taken from the script of his presentation:

*Occupational factors such as the disregulation of the circadian cycles, stress, fatigue and communication problems at work may be associated with low productivity in the work and mental health risks; for example, depression, anxiety, psychoactive substance abuse and the like, in pilots and aircrew (OT2, Andres).*

In this text there is also evidence of consistency and cohesion in his ideas. His sentences are well-structured and the relationships between ideas are clearly marked. This

participant showed a significant improvement from one task to another. Figure 2 illustrates his performance in relation to coherence and cohesion of ideas in each task.

Figure 2. Development of discourse competence showed by Andres.



Diana showed some strength in written language. In WT2 for example, she was able to produce a consistent text when she was referring to the general objective of her project report, as it is evidenced in this excerpt:

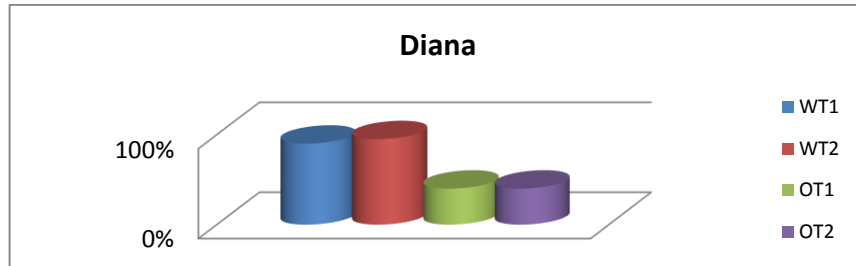
*The general objective of this project is to describe any differences in pretest and posttest assessment of narrative and communication skills of children with Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder who were exposed to a series of workshops tales written narrative (WT2, Diana).*

This student's performance in the written tasks was better than in her oral tasks. In the previous text in which she is referring to the objective of her project she shows coherence in her ideas. Contrariwise, in her oral tasks she shows some difficulties with coherence and cohesion of ideas. This is an extract taken from the script of one of her second oral presentation:

*They have low motivation in the workshops because this characteristic of children with ADHD can be explained from the psychobiological model of Cloninger. Cloninger say, personality that consider, considered search novelty, novelty... , search for novelty, that is a biological temperament dimension and genetical determined and would be association with anatomical and functional level with dopaminergic pathways in left prefrontal cortex and they manifest, manifesting with impulsive behavior and they search the new stimulus, the dopaminergic is low (OT2, Diana).*

Figure 3 illustrates this participant's performance in the four tasks. It can be observed that her performance was better in the written tasks than in the oral tasks.

Figure 3. Development of discourse competence showed by Diana.



Luis also showed some improvement on this aspect in WT2. The following is one of the paragraphs taken from his written report:

*My work in the project is identifying and count words with unexpected frequencies, for example, in the analysis of long DNA sequences. In this project the  $N(W)$  random variable is the number of occurrences of fixed word  $W_k$  with  $k < n$  (were  $n$  is the length of the windows) defined in a sequence of letters generated by a stationary Markov chain (WT2, Luis).*

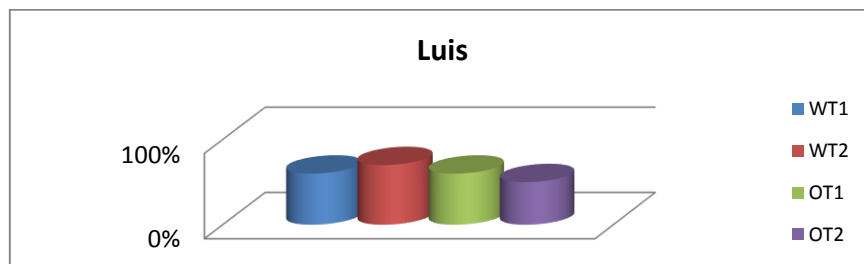
Similarly to what happened to Diana, Luis showed some difficulties with the oral language.

The following is an extract taken from the script of one of his oral presentations:

*The objectives generals is the two, two objectives: the first is the study the approximation the distribution the number of occurrences  $N(W)$  of a word  $W$ ; and the second objective is the estimator parameters the sequence (OT2, Luis).*

Figure 4 illustrates the performance and improvement of this participant regarding pragmatic discourse competence.

Figure 4. Development of discourse competence showed by Luis.



### **Functional competence.**

This competence is related to the use of spoken discourse and written texts in communication for particular functional purposes. In functional competence, functional success is measured in terms of spoken fluency and propositional precision. The former is pertinent to assess oral production while the latter to assess both written and spoken discourse. In WT1, they wrote an e mail to an academic peer. One of the purposes of this e mail was to provide information about a research project being conducted to someone who would be working with them. In WT2, they wrote a three-page report with the most relevant information about their projects. The purpose of this report was to present the project to a group of professionals who were conducting a similar study in another country in order to do some collaborative work. As for OT1, the students did a 10-minute presentation in which they should describe and explain the main points of their projects: relevance, methodology, objectives, etc. to a group of professionals from a university abroad. In OT2, they did another 5-minute presentation, but this time they should present the findings or preliminary findings of their projects to the same group of professionals.

In the following paragraphs, I will present the results of the focal cases in order to allow the reader to get a better understanding of the students' development of functional competence. For the following criterion in WT1: "Establish interpersonal relationships by providing pertinent information about himself/herself", this student got *Outstanding*. Figure 5 is an example of this student's performance in this task.



Figure 5. Development of functional competence showed by Andres

Dear Dr. Name,

I am (full name). ***I'm a medical doctor and magister in epidemiology. I work in Public Health Faculty in Universidad de Antioquia in Medellín, Colombia.*** We met in 2011 in The Training for Ethics for Research Program in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

***At the moment, I'm studying Public Health Ph.D. in Universidad de Antioquia and my thesis proposal is about the social determination of the cancer research in Colombia between 2003 and 2012.*** In this project I want to describe what, who, how, why and, specially, for whom cancer in Colombia is investigated. I start from the affirmation that science is not neutral and it response to social, political and economical interests. That is an ethical and political issue.

***I would like to visit your Bioethics Department next semester. I would like to work with you in the project design.*** I hope to introduce social justice and ethical subjects in my research.

I would appreciate a prompt response.

Cordially,

Full Name

It can be observed that he used a written text for a particular functional purpose. In terms of propositional precision it is evident that he can convey detailed and relevant information reliably and precisely. The information he provided was pertinent for this specific situation because he focused on his professional and research activities. As for WT2, in which he had to provide some specific information about his project, he got Outstanding for the criterion: “Provide the most relevant information about the project being conducted in the local context, as required” Here is an excerpt of this task in which he presents the context of his study:

*Context: Cancer is a serious public health problem in the world. Each year there are twelve million new cases of cancer in the world; 56% of these cases are from developing countries. In addition, 7,6 million people die for this cause each year; 63% in developing countries. In Colombia the trend is raising. The incidence rate was 150 new cases per 100.000 people in 2008. Furthermore, cancer is the third cause of death in this country. In 2006, The Colombian National Cancer Institute*

*designed a Model for cancer control in Colombia. In wich model, the research is a core element. However, the quality and impact of the national research in cancer is unknown. Additionally, a rigorous process for the use of knowledge and the incorporation of new technologies for the cancer control in Colombia doesn't exist. For these reasons it is necessary to know the situation of scientific research in cancer in Colombia in the last decade (2004-2013).*

It is evident that the main point, the context, is clearly presented despite some mistakes.

As it was mentioned in the first part of this section, in tasks OT1 and 2, the students made a presentation in which they had to give some information about their research projects with the aid of a power point. They did this activity to perform a specific function: to describe and explain some points of their projects such as the objective, context, relevance, methodology, expectations and findings to some researchers from a university in Canada who would have been interested in it. In sum, they used oral and written language for particular functional purposes in all the tasks.

The analysis of *functional success* for the focal cases showed certain differences between some students who were more skillful to speak and the ones for whom speaking represented a challenge. As mentioned in the theoretical framework, functional success is measured in terms of spoken fluency and propositional precision. For instance, Andres showed a significant improvement in OT2 in comparison with OT1 for the following criterion: “Express ideas in a coherent<sup>4</sup>, **clear, fluent**, cohesive and logical form.” The following extract is taken from the script of his first oral presentation in which he is presenting the context of his study:

*This graphic show... shows the trends in the cancer in Colombia, this is the kind, the types of...cancer... lung... Just the stomach the trend is in decrease but the other*

---

<sup>4</sup> As I discussed in the theoretical framework coherence affects functional success. This criterion in the rubric was the result of merging both functional competence and discourse competence. Since one is interdependent with the other, it was pertinent to express it in one idea.

*tumors the trend is arise... in women and men, the trend is a similar situation, stomach is only decrease and the other tumors are rise... in the last years (OT1, Andres).*

It can be observed that the he has propositional precision to some extent because he can explain the main points in an idea with reasonable precision: different types of cancer and trends per genre, but he shows some limitations in spoken fluency because he has some pauses and hesitation.

The following is another extract, taken from the script of his last oral presentation, in which he is presenting some findings of his project:

*The mortality is similar; the mortality of the pilots and aircrew is less than that of the general population. The risk of cancer, all types of cancer, in pilots and aircrew is less than that of the general population, except for skin cancer and breast cancer. The explanation is for the exposition to ultraviolet and cosmic radiation. The occupational risk factors ... the call to action or the recommendation for airlines and authorities for the occupational risk factors in aviators and aircrew should be controlled and monitored by occupational health programs in Colombian airlines (OT2, Andres).*

In this task we can observe that he can keep going more comprehensibly and effectively, and he can make himself understood better. He can transmit detailed information reliably and with reasonable precision; in this particular case, about the mortality of pilots and aircrew.

On the contrary, Diana did not show a significant improvement on this aspect in the oral tasks. Here is an example taken from the script of her first presentation in which she is presenting the relevance of her study:

*Relevance: there are... there are a high percentage of school children with ADHD three children of a class have... are inattent or hyperactive, three children of a class. One of the cognitive impairments of children with ADHD is the language, but the language problems have not received, have not received attention because the behavior problems overshadow the problems of language (OT1, Diana).*

It can be said that the text lacks propositional precision because some ideas are not clear, and she also lacks fluency because of the constant pausing and reformulation.

This is another example taken from the script of her last presentation in which she is presenting some findings of her study:

*In the first story that served as a baseline for comparing, the results of the workshops, we observe...observEd that there was lack of cause-effect relationships, lack of plot or complication and little connection to the events because the children was...the children have difficult to organization the information of the story (OT2, Diana).*

We can notice some improvement in this text in relation to propositional precision because she can express the main point in a relative comprehensive way. However, it still lacks fluency because there are still pauses and repair.

Luis did not show improvement in OT2 in comparison with OT1. He lacked fluency and propositional precision in his ideas, especially in the second task in comparison with the first one. This is an example taken from the script of his first presentation in which he introduces the expected results of his study:

*Binomial distribution and the approximation of  $N(W)$  new word. The expected results, I hope to show that the number of overlapping occurrences the sequence letter Markov Chain. For example, the alphabet, the words... the new word and the new sequences (OT1, Luis).*

We can observe that the text lacks precision in his ideas. The function is not fully met because the expected results of the study are not clearly expressed. Spoken fluency was another limitation because there was a lot of hesitation and pausing.

This is another example taken from the script of his last presentation in which he is presenting the relevance of his study:

*It is the import in the long sequence DNA, in biology is the sequence, the chain of the DNA. For example, in the sequence and the definition de words, I fix the word the first and the sequence and the cons the words (OT2, Luis).*

Again, propositional precision is missing because the main points of the relevance of his study are not clear. He also lacks spoken fluency because he hardly makes himself understood.

### **Aspects that Affect the Development of Pragmatic Competence**

Even though, the focus of this study is the development of pragmatic competence, it is important to take into consideration other components of Communicative Competence that influenced its development. In this section I will present the findings concerning these components.

#### **Sociolinguistic competence.**

This competence is connected to pragmatics because it refers to the ability to deal with the social dimension of language use and identify levels of formality, among others. Therefore, the context in which language is used plays a very important role. This competence was one with the highest punctuations. In WT1 for instance, all the participants developed sociolinguistic competence in terms of their use of linguistic markers of social relations and identification of register differences for this particular situation. For the criterion: “Use language that is appropriate for this particular setting: registers and expressions” 88% got Outstanding, 6% got Good and 6% got Fair. The following are some of the expressions that the students used in their e mails:

*I would greatly appreciate any help in this matter. If you need any more details, I will be glad to provide any information you require. Your prompt answer will be truly appreciated. I look forward to your reply, Thank you for your prompt reply to our request. Sincerely. Cordially.*

Regarding the three focal cases, a good performance and high scores were obtained. Andres used some formal expressions in his message: *Dear Dr. Ruth, I would appreciate a prompt*

*response, cordially, (Written task 1, Andres).* Likewise, Diana used expressions such as *Dear Mrs. Sanchez, Your contribution will be greatly appreciated (Written task 1, Diana).*

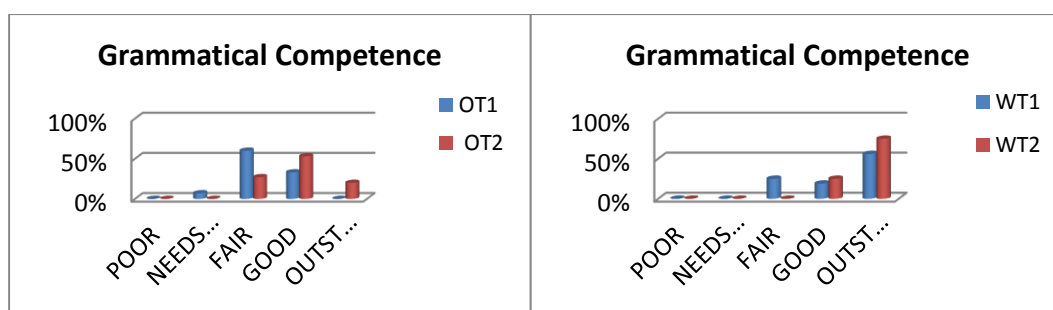
Luis showed a high level of formality in his message by using expressions such as

*Dear Mr. Adilson Simonis, I would be very interested in any suggestions you may have regarding words in DNA sequences and k-Coloring. I look forward to your reply and if you have any questions please email us any time (Written task 1, Luis).*

### **Grammatical competence.**

The ability to understand and express meaning with well-formed sentences and phrases according to some principles are undoubtedly connected to discourse competence. The students' performance was different in the oral tasks in comparison with the written tasks. For the following criterion: "Use correctly a variety of grammar structures worked in class as needed", nobody got *Outstanding* in OT1, while 20% got *Outstanding* in OT2. As for the written tasks, the improvement on grammatical competence was more noticeable; 56% got *Outstanding* in WT1 whereas 75% got *Outstanding* in WT2. Figure 7 shows information of the whole group regarding this competence.

Figure 6. Development of grammatical competence showed by the whole group.



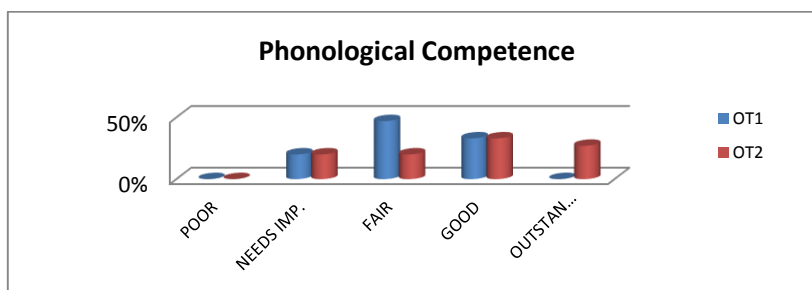
Regarding the focal cases, Andres did not show significant difficulties with syntax. Diana showed some difficulties with syntax in her oral presentations. These are some extracts taken from the scripts of her presentations: "I have a professor for four years",

“Three children improved in your histories, they write more longer stories, more description, more consistence in your stories” (OT1, Diana). Luis also showed some difficulties with syntax as it can be observed in the following extracts taken from the scripts of task 2. These are some of the sentences that Luis used in his presentation: “*Poisson distribution is very study and the compound is the rare study*”, “*The expected results, I hope to show that the number of overlapping occurrences the sequence letter Markov Chain*” (OT1, Luis).

### Phonological competence.

This competence turned to be the one with the lowest results. For the criterion: “Use an appropriate pronunciation that facilitates comprehension for the audience”, the whole group showed difficulties. This competence is connected to pragmatic competence in terms of clarity and precision of ideas when presenting information. The highest percentage that figure 7 shows is 47% which corresponds to the students who got *Fair* in OT1. In OT2, only 27% of the participants got *Outstanding*, while in OT1, nobody got this score; 33% got *Good* in both oral tasks.

Figure7. Development of phonological competence showed by the whole group.



As for the focal cases, the three participants showed difficulties with the pronunciation of -ed forms. Some examples of the words that were mispronounced during the presentations are these: *studied /studIed/*, *worked /wɔrked/*, *named /neimed/*, *proposed*

*/prɔpsed/, controlled /kɔntroled/, served /served/, observed /ɔbserved/, unplanned /ʌnplanned/, detailed /detailed/, showed /ʃoued/ and explained /eksplained/.* Andres showed difficulties with the pronunciation of plurals /SIZ/, Luis showed difficulties with the pronunciation of diphthongs and Diana with word stress. Andres showed a significant improvement on this competence in OT2, in which he got 80%, in comparison with OT1, where he got 50%. Diana and Luis did not show a significant improvement on this aspect. Diana remained in 40% in both tasks, whereas Luis moved from 30% in task 2 to 40% in task 4. These pronunciation difficulties need to be considered because they can affect clarity and precision of ideas when speaking.

### **Lexical competence.**

The vocabulary of a language, which is another component of the linguistic competence, includes lexical and grammatical elements. Most of the participants in this study showed strength in the use of a wide range of vocabulary associated with their specialty. However, they have some difficulties with literal translations; for instance, in fixed phrases such as *depend on, consist of, related to*, they usually use the prepositions used in Spanish, *depend of, consist in and related with*. This was corroborated in the analysis of focal cases:

*For the first and second specific objectives I will use quantitative methods: a cross sectional survey and a bibliometric study, respectively. For to identify the scientific practice, modes and models, I will carry out a qualitative ethnographic study. And for the last specific objective, I will perform focus groups and deep interviews with analysis based in the Grounded Theory (WT1, Andres).*

Likewise, it was evident that the three focal cases showed difficulties with the use of affixes for word formation. Andres used words such as *increasement* and *disregulation*. Something similar happened to Diana when she used words such as *inattent, psychology*



instead of *psychologist* in the sentence: “I am a psychology”, *difficult* instead of *difficulty* and *organization* instead of *organize* in the sentence: “The children have difficult to organization the information of the story”. Luis showed similar difficulties with word choice when he used *inexpected*, *mathematic* instead of *mathematician* in the sentence: “I am a mathematic of Antioquia University”, *engineer* instead of *engineering* in the sentence: “I’m working in the institute of mathematics and the engineer faculty”, and *import* instead of *important*. This aspect is considerable because when a word is wrongly chosen, this may affect clarity; therefore, pragmatic competence is affected.

### **Qualities of Formative Performance Assessment that Fostered Pragmatic Competence**

Insights from data revealed some qualities in the assessment process that was implemented along the course. Most of these qualities refer to aspects that would eventually foster the development of pragmatic competence. In the following paragraphs I will elaborate on these qualities.

#### **Authenticity.**

This quality is defined by Bachman and Palmer (1996) as “the degree of correspondence of the characteristics of a given language test task to the features of a target language task” (p. 23). Similarly, O’Malley and Valdez (1996) assert that authentic assessment is “based on activities that represent classroom and real life settings” and include performance assessment within this category (p. 1). The characteristics of the tasks proposed in this study were connected to real academic needs, which were identified from the very beginning. In my diary, I registered some of the activities that I planned and did in class: “I’ll have them think about a situation that could be real for them and write a formal message to someone (...) they wrote a formal message to a professor asking for the

guidelines for a final paper. I liked the activity because it made them think about something that could be real” (Teacher’s diary, February 14th). In the focus group session, one of the participants accounted for this: “I think that this experience of working around projects has been very important because most of us work with hard sciences, and we have to write papers and attend congresses all the time” (Carolina, focus group).

The data analysis also showed the students’ perception of performance assessment. As it has been stated in the theory, with this type of assessment learners are exposed to real-life tasks in specific contexts and their true language abilities can be assessed. In the focus group session, one of the participants shared an experience she had along the course:

*When we started the course, she [the teacher] asked us to send an e mail to someone... with a purpose. We worked on that for a while; we worked on formal expressions and other things. About one month and a half later, I needed a paper for my master’s program. A partner of mine had traveled to another country and she had a contact in France and he [the contact in France] had told her: “Any paper you need, feel free to e mail me”. That was the opportunity; (...) I used all those phrases she [the teacher] had explained to us, and it worked because next day the guy sent us the article. I could not believe it! That was a very good experience! (Carolina, focus group).*

As authenticity is connected to real-life situations, it is likely to generate meaningful learning; that is, learning perceived as useful and applicable to current needs. The participants highlighted the importance of being prepared for any similar activity that they might face in the future. They even perceived the tasks proposed in the course as a good preparation for future performance in their professional life as it is stated by one of the participants:

*There were a lot of meaningful things at a professional level. I work for a company in Florida where I have to submit reports in English, and I am preparing to present my thesis work in English too. I had not even done the first translation exercise; neither the experimentations, nor the preliminary results, nor the graphs. So it was very meaningful because it was all about improving, you know... starting to work on a draft of what I am going to do later. And then ... at least, I have something now,*

*and it is totally focused on what I am doing, I did not make up anything. Everything is related to my thesis work, and that was very important (Ana, Focus group).*

Other participants agreed: “It was very important to me because it was like

rehearsing a situation that we will probably have in the future: a presentation of one of our projects” (Camilo, Focus group). “Regarding our real needs, I think that if we want to write a paper, we have to do it in English, at least the abstract. I think the course surely helped us in that aspect because now we are more able to write that part [the abstract]” (Diana, focus group). “I talked to the teacher about writing according to the CODI5 project. We are required to have research projects in the university, and we are usually told that if we write in English, it is better” (Luis, focus group).

### **Transparency.**

Transparency was another quality found in the analysis. It is defined by Arias, Estrada, Areiza and Restrepo (2009) as the level of detail and precision in the information provided to the test taker: the purpose of the task, what is expected from them, the punctuation, the passing grade, the estimated time and others (p. 17). This quality proved to be important for the development of pragmatic competence because the context in which they should develop the task and its purpose were clear for the participants. Evidence of transparency in this study is specifically related to clarity of the guidelines, clarity of the expectations and the grading process. During the development of the course all the rubrics were always shared and explained in detail. Regarding the clarity of the guidelines, I registered in my diary how important this was to me: “My duty is to make everything clear to them” (Teacher’s diary, February 7th). “I will tell them what they are supposed to do now, including the self-assessment and the guidelines for the second step of the first task”

---

<sup>5</sup> CODI is the office that regulates research at Universidad de Antioquia.

(Teacher's diary, March 12th). In the focus group session one of the participants referred to this: "The teacher always made a big effort in trying to leave everything clear to us". This participant also recognized how the grading process was explained: "[The teacher] showed us the tools...this is graded like this..." (Diana, focus group). In relation to the clarity of the expectations, a participant said: "With all the information she gave us, it was impossible not to know what she expected" (Yamile, focus group).

### **Dynamism.**

In *Dynamic Assessment* (DA), instruction and assessment become a single activity that takes place simultaneously. Mediation is thus provided during the assessment procedure in order to bring to light problems and find a way to overcome them. The theoretical foundations of DA are framed on Vigotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD); the notion that higher forms of thinking, such as learning, are always mediated is central to the ZPD (Lantolf & Poehner, 2008, p. 273). Vigotsky (1978) defined the zone of proximal development as "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (as cited by International Center for Educators' Learning Styles, ICEL, n.d., para. 12). Such guidance and collaboration is understood as mediation in DA, being the independent problem to solve the assessment task to be developed by the students. In the concept of DA, mediation is a key characteristic because it is through mediation that learners can achieve better results. Vigotsky demonstrated that children can achieve better results with the assistance of others than by themselves.

In the context of my study we could assert that through the mediation that took place between the teacher (the expert guide) and the students, and between the students and the rubric as a tool, a ZPD took place. Vigotsky's theory promotes learning contexts where students play an active role in learning and this is exactly what I promoted during the development of this study. The participants had some class instruction that included topics such as prefixes and suffixes for word formation and their importance when choosing key words for presentations; grammar structures, such as simple past and passive sentences that could be used to present findings of a research project; and use of linking words to present information clearly and coherently, among others. Subsequently, they used or applied what they had learned through a task and got feedback from the teacher. After they got feedback, changes in the instruction activities emerged taking into consideration the difficulties presented during the realization of the task. My intention with these activities was to work on the difficulties found in order to improve. By analyzing my diary I could identify some planning notes that account for this quality of the assessment process.

*My idea is to sit down with each of them for a while and make clear what it might not be clear for them. After that, I'll be more certain that they can improve the task to send it again (Teacher's diary, March 14th, 2013). When they finish, I'll give them some general feedback about their performance, making a special emphasis on their difficulties with pronunciation. Then, I'll present some material I prepared in which they will find phonetic symbols and the sounds they correspond to. I'll give them some tips to check the pronunciation of a word when they are not sure about it (Teacher's diary, April 23rd, 2013).*

In the focus group session, some participants referred to the dynamism of the procedure: "Regarding the evaluation, I liked it a lot because it was very structured. Additionally, they were always including the topics covered in class; that is, you got some content and you immediately applied it to a real life necessity" (Diana, focus group) . "I liked it because when we were going to do any activity, she [the teacher] always gave us

the theoretical bases and then we moved to something practical that we were doing at the moment” (Catalina, focus group). Regarding the importance of mediation, a participant said: “I did not know I pronounced so badly. I liked that she emphasized on it, because it was an invitation to improve that [skill]” (Ana, focus group, June 11th). Another one emphasized on the commitment required: “... If I sent it [my task] to her on a Sunday at 4:00, at 4:30 I would have her answer. It seemed she was always attentive to the tasks” (Luis, focus group). Dynamism in the assessment process fostered the development of pragmatic competence because it provided them with opportunities to identify their difficulties and improve them.

Another important quality that may have contributed to the development of pragmatic competence was the rigor required for the planning and precision of this assessment procedure. In my diary, I registered some details that could evidence the rigor of this process. For instance, for the design of the rubric it was very important to be coherent with the construct; therefore, the criteria to assess each specific competence were carefully planned. It was very important to be clear about the task, the situation stated in it, and what it was expected from the students. When I finished designing the rubrics, I shared them with the students and asked them if they had any doubt, suggestions or changes to implement which account for the dynamism of the rubric.

In the focus group session, some participants acknowledged the rigor of the procedure: "Well, I was very impressed by such a structured evaluation system. Well...sitting down and preparing it [the rubric], thinking about what it is expected... the punctuation ...well, it is impressing”<sup>6</sup> (Marcela, focus group). Another student agreed:

---

<sup>6</sup> The quotations taken from the focus group have been translated by the author.

“Regarding the evaluation, I liked it a lot because it was very structured. Whenever you were assigned an activity, you were always given the guidelines to do it.” This participant also referred to the level of demand of this type of evaluation: “I have a lot of difficulties, for example to write (...) but if it is done with that level of demand... you will surely see the results” (Diana, focus group).

### **Purposeful feedback.**

In the analysis, I realized that I had a very clear purpose with my feedback: to raise students’ awareness of difficulties in order to overcome them. Consequently, I was precise and comprehensive with the aspects that I wanted to emphasize so that they could take advantage of my comments. Black and William (1998a as cited in William, 2011) state that, feedback information is at the heart of effective learning; therefore, it should be used for assessment to function formatively. Here is an extract of the feedback information I provided to one of the participants in oral task 2:

*The information was presented in a logical and organized way. However, you lacked fluency and clarity in the ideas you wanted to express with your own words. Sometimes the words chosen were confusing: children have difficult to organization; the correct form would be: children have difficulties to organize... When you referred to Cloninger, it was very confusing because you read. It is better to explain with simple words for the audience. When you talk about “low motivation”, it was not clear when this situation was observed. The explanation of the graph was good (Oral task 2, Diana, May 30th).*

In one of the self-assessment activities realized along the course, one student referred to the feedback he received: “The corrections made by the teacher were very useful in the learning process to express the ideas clearly and correctly” (Self-assessment task 3, Andres). Regarding the precision and the amount of information provided in the feedback, a participant expressed her own perception during the focus group session: “The feedback?

Very complete! She writes about our performance and what we are missing, and she is very precise on that. You can never say: ‘She did not say anything’.

### **Limitations: Practicality**

Practicality is defined as the relation between the available and the necessary resources for the design, administration and evaluation of a test. One of the aspects considered when we refer to practicality is time (Arias et al., 2009). In two entries of my diary, I express my own perception about how demanding this process was: “Last night was very stressful because I checked my students’ tasks and I took a lot of time. I never thought it would be so challenging” (Teacher’s diary, March 21st). “Today we’ll have the last presentations of task 4, so I will have more work. I have to check the videos, send the feedback, and design the final test as well. It’s really overwhelming!” (Teacher’s diary, June 4th).

In the case of self-assessment, the analysis showed that this activity was time consuming for the students too. Although they recognize its importance, they complained a little about all the time it might take. In the focus group session, one of the participants referred to this activity: “I think self-assessment is very important, but with [our] time constraints (...) sometimes when I got the formats...it became boring to me. But I understand its importance” (Marcela, focus group).



## Discussion

The current study investigated to what extent the implementation of formative performance assessment could foster the development of students' English language pragmatic competence. The analysis revealed development of English language pragmatic competence at two different levels: discourse competence and functional competence.

As for discourse competence, insights from the data showed that the participants improved in terms of cohesion and coherence in expressing their ideas both in WT2 and OT2. However, in the realization and delivery of the tasks, they showed some difficulties with syntax and word choice. Additionally, performance on pronunciation was the lowest for the whole group, which might have prevented many participants to be clear when they wanted to express their ideas (see Figure No. 7). In interpreting such finding, we can suggest that many of the difficulties they showed with pragmatic competence may have been partly caused by their limitations with grammatical, phonological, and lexical competence.

With respect to functional competence, it was observed that although there was improvement in both propositional precision and spoken fluency, the improvement in propositional precision was more noticeable than in spoken fluency. Such improvement seems to have been achieved because after the participants performed the tasks, purposeful feedback and instruction activities emerged in order to overcome the difficulties presented. Those procedures were found to have been consistent and applied on a dynamic rigorous basis. However, progress in spoken fluency remained limited in spite of the dynamism and rigor of the procedure; we can hence conclude that spoken fluency is an ability that may

require much more time and practice to develop successfully than propositional precision. In fact there might be personal characteristics such as physical and psychological aspects hindering its development.

As a final conclusion, it can be stated that it is not possible to successfully use the language for particular functions—in other words develop pragmatic competence—without strengthening linguistic competences at the same time; there is an inevitable interdependence among all the components: it appears to be impossible to have propositional precision and spoken fluency without developing a coherent, clear and cohesive discourse; likewise, achieving a coherent, clear and cohesive discourse is dependent on the development of linguistic components such as grammar, lexicon and pronunciation.

Speaking of those linguistic competences that interact in order to foster pragmatic competence, throughout the course I identified and developed instructional strategies in order to tackle particular students' needs. For instance, I got aware of the necessity to help students to improve their pronunciation by developing some learning strategies such as the identification of certain phonemic symbols in order to check the pronunciation of unknown words. This finding suggests that it is important to be flexible with instruction activities; that is, the syllabus should not be a straitjacket. On the contrary, it is important to be willing to plan different workshops along the course based on students' actual limitations.

The evaluation implemented in this study was in line with Canagarajah's proposal in relation to assessment. From his perspective, it is important to revise the dominant paradigms and move to a sensitive period in which performance and pragmatics are considered in assessment practices (Canagarajah, 2006). In line with this idea, pragmatics

was emphasized. On the one side, the rubrics were designed purposefully to reach such goal. The transparency of the rubrics—reflected both in the tasks and the scales—contributed to the development of pragmatic competence because the students focused on the linguistic function to be achieved when they planned and performed the tasks. Changing dominant paradigms becomes a challenge because the preparation of communicative tasks that develop pragmatic competence requires time and knowledge. In addressing such challenge, it is paramount to be aware of the importance of designing tasks that fit the students' needs.

On the other side, development of pragmatic competence was found to be supported by the fact that the assessment procedure was performance based and thus created the right conditions for the students to use the language purposefully. This supports Soler and Martinez-Flor (2008)'s claims about the importance of creating conditions that influence pragmatic learning and teaching in foreign language (FL) classrooms taking into consideration the little exposure that FL students have to the target language community. In line with these authors' idea, this study created conditions for the participants to perform one way or another; that is, all the tasks were proposed for them to produce language. By preparing the presentations for example, the students had the opportunity to develop discourse competence as they needed to organize their ideas in a coherent and logical manner to make themselves understood when the time of the presentation came. Likewise, they always had a specific situation and a specific purpose for the task. Thus, the data analysis revealed that the implementation of performance assessment along with classroom instruction both planned and developed throughout the course provided the students with

opportunities to develop pragmatic competence because they actually produced language in order to communicate.

Authenticity was a quality promoted by performance assessment in this study, (Bachman & Palmer, 1996 and O'Malley & Valdez, 1996). The situations and the communicative functions were always connected to their real needs; therefore, the participants were able to demonstrate the mastering of the skills that the real world context may require (Wigglesworth, 2008). This connection between performance and authenticity appear to have promoted meaningful learning. In the focus group session, the participants recognized the importance of doing this kind of tasks as a preparation for future performance which is connected to one of the most important characteristics of performance assessment: its contribution to those who have challenging academic lives and the measurement of the students' abilities to respond to real-life language tasks.

By the same token and regarding students' experience in previous courses, many participants agreed that they had not been exposed to this kind of activities before. They referred to the different tasks they did along this course: "The most important about the course for me was to prepare a presentation in English, carry it out in English and get questions from the partners and the teacher. This is the closest I have been in this respect" (Manuel, focus group, June 11th). "I loved it because for the first time I dared to write something in English" (Luis, focus group, June 11th). "Make a presentation, do the exercise of being concrete to be able to present it, the exercise of thinking how you are going to pronounce: this is daring to do something practical that you had not done before" (Catalina, focus group, June 11th). "The most important contribution of the course for me was that for the first time I got to develop an idea in English" (Yamile, focus group, June 11th). This

corroborates what Kasper (1997) asserts regarding pragmatic competence: “The challenge for foreign or second language teaching is whether we can arrange learning opportunities in such a way that they benefit the development of pragmatic competence in L2” (para 1). As the data have shown, this study arranged learning opportunities that fostered such development. From the students’ previous experiences, we can conclude that authentic tasks in which they are required to produce and use the language for a purpose connected with their real needs are paramount in order to have a real communicative approach in our courses.

The significance of having a formative purpose in this study was evident in the analysis of students’ progress from one task to another. An important aspect of formative assessment in this study was the dynamism reflected in the mediation and the quality of feedback provided to the students. They became fundamental for improvement and learning because the participants were allowed to do their tasks twice or three times and improve it after they got feedback. In the focus group session a participant referred to the characteristics of mediation: “A teacher needs to have a lot of understanding of all this process ... it is a very personalized evaluation” (Focus group, Luis, June 11th). We can conclude that when the feedback information has a clear purpose and this purpose is focused on improvement and learning, the students have more opportunities to move forward.

The formative nature of this procedure was also reinforced by the constant changes I made in my instruction in order to fulfill my students’ needs. Along the course, I introduced some instruction activities designed to overcome the difficulties that came up after the assessment activities took place. In those activities the most important remarks were

addressed to the importance of having a well-structured discourse in order to be clear and precise in any communicative situation. These instruction activities may have positively contributed to the improvement and development of pragmatic competence. This corroborates Black and Jones (2006)'s claim that formative assessment is achieved to the extent that instruction is adapted to meet students' needs based on feedback information . It can be concluded that having assessment that is performance based is not enough. If we want students to take an active role in their learning process, a formative purpose in the assessment procedure is necessary.

One limitation that I found along the realization of this study was that sometimes I felt that as a non-native English-speaking teacher I needed more experience in English as a Second Language (ESL) contexts to determine what was appropriate or not. Being non-native English speakers with little experience in ESL settings can become a limitation and a challenge because communication will always be context-specific and we will have to learn about the rules of use of a specific setting if we are to help students develop this competence. However, the context in which I developed this study helped me overcome this limitation with judicious reading and research; that is, being a graduate student offered me advantages to carry out this study because all the tasks were directly connected to academic activities in which I was involved as well.

The current study showed that there are also challenges for the implementation of this type of assessment. The rigor that this procedure requires can affect practicality because it might become very demanding for the teacher and for the students as well. Moreover, it is important to conceive the syllabus in a flexible way taking into consideration the likelihood that new contents or topics that were not considered at first

might come up through the development of the courses. The biggest challenge for educational actors would be to move from traditional assessment practices to more alternative ones. This paradigm shift requires deep understanding of evaluation and learning processes, especially on the active role that the learner has in formative assessment processes. It was evident in the analysis that this type of evaluation requires a lot of planning and knowledge to make it systematic; therefore, a high level of awareness and commitment is also necessary. Time is another considerable issue; one of the findings is related to how time consuming it can be. In this respect, it is important to find a way to make it practical, but at the same time meaningful and useful for teachers and learners.

## Conclusions

The current study found that the development of pragmatic competence can be fostered by the implementation of formative performance assessment. On the one hand, evidence showed that functional competence was developed in terms of both propositional precision and spoken fluency, being the latter the one that caused more difficulty for the participants to develop. With respect to discourse competence the participants showed some improvement as well; however, the analysis showed the importance of other language components to produce coherent and structured language. In this regard, many of the students had difficulties with certain grammatical, lexical and phonological components which may have prevented them from being clear and coherent when expressing ideas. The previous finding evidences the importance of developing linguistic competences in order to get communicative functional success. Nonetheless, it is also prove that the communicative function of the task needs to be placed as the leading component of the construct.

On the other hand, performance assessment proved to be an effective strategy to create opportunities to develop pragmatic competence as the tasks proposed during the course required that the learners produced language for different academic and communicative purposes. Besides this, the tasks promoted authenticity and generated meaningful learning in terms of preparation for real-life future performance. The participants acknowledged the importance of this assessment approach perceiving it as an opportunity to get prepared for their future professional activities. This is positive if we take into consideration that the language policies being implemented in our global and local context represent a challenge for language learners in terms of competitiveness.



As for the formative purpose of the procedure, even though it proved to be challenging and demanding for its implementation, it certainly generated opportunities for learning and improvement as it was evidenced in the findings resulting from the data analysis. Likewise the dynamism identified during the process led to flexible and purposeful practices inside the classroom. Transparency was another important quality of the procedure that facilitated its formative intention as the students always knew what was going to be assessed and how this process would be conducted.

Regarding implications for policy makers, administrators and language teachers to implement alternative assessment practices such as the one conducted in this study, we must first state that it is indispensable to move from traditional assessment paradigms that focus on isolated components of the language, to assessment practices that focus on the actual use of it. The context in which a language is learned should never be neglected. On the contrary, all our teaching and assessment practices should be connected to our context and reality. It is important to stop conceiving assessment, instruction and the real-life context as isolated components.

It is obvious that changing paradigms about assessment practices does not happen overnight; it certainly requires a lot of aspects including reflection, training and knowledge. To achieve a high level of awareness and understanding, administrators and educational actors in general should include professional development on alternative assessment practices before they integrate them to their curricula.

Pragmatic competence holds a lot of importance in the context in which this study was carried out. The participants asserted how meaningful and useful its implementation was for them; they also acknowledged the significant role of the assessment procedure that

was developed, and showed a high level of interest and motivation along the course. However, time limitations must have prevented more significant results. A second stage of this study could be an implementation of this type of evaluation, from the basic levels, in the same context, in order to investigate to what extent a student cohort could develop their pragmatic competence, and how useful this gain would be for them in their real professional lives. A longitudinal study including a diagnosis of the students' pragmatic competence at the beginning and established testing events over a period of time would be a pertinent design to serve this purpose.

## REFERENCES

- Abedi, J. (2010). *Performance assessments for English language learners*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University, Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education.
- Altrichter, H., Posch, P., & Somekh, B. (1993). *Teachers investigate their work: An introduction to the methods of action research*. NY: Routledge.
- Arias, C., Estrada, L., Areiza, H., & Restrepo, E. A. (2009). *Sistema de evaluación en Lenguas Extranjeras*. Medellín, Colombia: Reimpresos, Universidad de Antioquia.
- Arias, C., & Maturana, L. (2005). Evaluación en lenguas extranjeras: Discursos y prácticas. *ÍKALA, Revista de Lenguaje y Cultura*, 10(16), 63-91.
- Bachman, L. F., & Palmer, A. S. (1996). *Language Testing in Practice*. NY: Oxford University Press.
- Brown, D. H. (2004). *Language assessment: Principles and classroom practices*. NY: Longman.
- Brown, J., & Hudson, T. (1998). The alternatives in language assessment. *TESOL Quarterly*, 32(4), 653-675.
- Brown, J. D., Hudson, T., Norris, J. M., & Bonk, W. (2002). Test development. In *An investigation of second language task-based performance assessments*. (pp. 17-32). Honolulu: University of Hawaii, Second Language Teaching & Curriculum Center.
- Canagarajah, S. (2006). Changing communicative needs, revised assessment objectives: Testing English as an international language. *Language Assessment Quarterly*, 3(3), 229-242.
- Cardenas, R. (1997). Exploring possibilities for alternative assessment in foreign language learning. *ÍKALA, Revista de Lenguaje y Cultura*, 2 (1-2), 57-73.
- Council of Europe. (2001). *Common European framework of reference for languages: Learning, teaching, assessment*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Creswell, J. W. (2003). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed approaches*, (2nd ed.), Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Frodden, C., Restrepo, M., & Maturana, L. (2004). Analysis of assessment instruments used in foreign language teaching. *ÍKALA, Revista de Lenguaje y Cultura*, 9 (15), 171-201.

- Fromkin, V., Rodman, R., & Hyam, N. (2003). *An Introduction to Language*. Boston Ma: Thompson Heinle.
- Fulcher, G., & Davidson, F. (2007). *Language testing and assessment: An advanced resource book*. Routledge Applied Linguistics.
- Gipps, C. (1999). Socio-cultural aspects of assessment. *Review of Research in Education*, 24, 355-392.
- International Center for Educators' Learning Styles, ICEL (n.d.). *Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development*. Retrieved from [http://www.icels-educators-for-learning.ca/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=45&Itemid=60](http://www.icels-educators-for-learning.ca/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=45&Itemid=60)
- Kasper, G. (1997). *Can pragmatic competence be taught?* (NetWork #6) [HTML document]. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i, Second Language Teaching & Curriculum Center.
- Krueger, R. A., & Casey M. A. (2000). *Focus groups: A practical guide for applied research*. Thousand Oaks, Calif. Sage.
- Lamb, T. (2010). Assessment of autonomy or assessment for autonomy? Evaluating learner autonomy for formative purposes. In A. Paran & L. Sercu (Eds.) *Testing the Untestable in Language Education* (pp. 98-119). Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- Lantolf, J., & Phoene, M. (2008). Dynamic assessment. In E. Shohamy & N. Hornberger (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of Language and Education, Language Testing and Assessment* (pp. 273-284). NY: Springer.
- Lee, C. (1998). Culturally responsive pedagogy and performance-based assessment. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 67(3), 268-279.
- McNamara, T. (1996). *Measuring second language performance*. NY: Longman
- Muñoz, A., & Alvarez, M. (2010). Washback of an oral assessment system in the EFL classroom. *Language Testing*, 27(1), 33-49.
- Norris, J., Brown, J., Hudson, T., & Yoshioka, J. (1998). Performance assessments. In *Designing second language performance assessments*. (pp. 7-30). University of Hawaii Press.
- O'Malley, J., & Valdez, L. (1996). *Authentic assessment for English language learners: Practical approaches for teachers*. NY: Longman
- Panadero, E., & Jonsson A. (2013). The use of scoring rubrics for formative assessment purposes revisited: A review. *Educational Research Review*, 9, 129-144.

- Parke, C., & Lane, S. (2007). Students' perceptions of a Maryland state performance assessment. *The Elementary School Journal*, 107(3), 305-324.
- Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods* (2nd ed.). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Picón, E. (2013). La rúbrica y la justicia en la evaluación. The role of rubric in fair assessment practices. *ÍKALA, Revista de Lenguaje y Cultura*, 18 (3), 1-16.
- Purpura, J. (2008). Assessing communicative language ability: Models and their components. In E. Shohamy & N. Hornberger (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of Language and Education, Language Testing and Assessment* (pp. 53-68). NY: Springer.
- Rea, L. M., & Parker, R. A. (2005). *Designing and Conducting Survey Research: A Comprehensive Guide* (3 ed.) San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Richards, K. (2003). *Qualitative inquiry in TESOL*. NY: Palgrave
- Saldaña, J. (2009). An introduction to codes and coding. In *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers* (pp. 1-30). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Savignon, S.J. (2001). Communicative language teaching for the twenty-first century. In M. Celce-Murcia (Ed.), *Teaching English as a second or foreign language* (3rd ed.), (pp. 13-28). Boston: Heinle & Heinle.
- Shohamy, E. (1998). Evaluation of learning outcomes in second language acquisition: A multiplism perspective. In Byrnes H. (Ed.). *Learning foreign and second languages*. MLA's Teaching Languages, Literatures and Culture series, 238-261.
- Shohamy, E., & Inbar, O. (2006). *The language assessment process: A multiplism perspective*. CALPER Professional Development Document 0603. University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University.
- Soler, E., & Martinez-Flor, A. (2008). Pragmatics in foreign language contexts. In *Investigating pragmatics in foreign language learning, teaching and testing*, (pp. 3-21).
- Suter, W. N. (2012). Qualitative data, analysis, and design. In *Introduction to Educational Research. A Critical Thinking Approach* (pp. 342-486). Little Rock, AR: Sage.
- Taylor-Powell, E., & Renner, M. (2003). *Analyzing qualitative data. Program Development & Evaluation*. University of Wisconsin-Extension. Madison, Wisconsin.
- Wigglesworth, G. (2008). Task and performance based assessment. In E. Shohamy & N. Hornberger (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of Language and Education, Language Testing and Assessment* (pp. 111-122). NY: Springer.

William, D. (2011). What is assessment for learning? *Studies in Educational Evaluation*, 37, 3-14.

## APPENDIX A

### RUBRIC WT1

**UNIVERSIDAD DE ANTIOQUIA ESCUELA DE IDIOMAS**  
**PROGRAMA DE CAPACITACION DOCENTE**  
**LEVEL 4 INTERMEDIATE 2**  
**Written task 1: An e mail**  
**Summative evaluation (10 %)**

**SITUATION:** You are carrying out a research project at the university. Next month you will be traveling to a university in an English-speaking country for your internship. There is another researcher in that university who will be working with you on this project. Write an e-mail telling him/her about yourself: some personal information, the state of your project, and your goals and expectancies related to the project, etc. The activity is intended for you to become familiar with this peer when you meet him/her there.

**TASK:** An e-mail has six main parts :e-mail address, subject, salutation, body of message, closing and signature line. It may include any information that you want to submit. In this case, you should provide the information required by following the instructions below.

**To complete this task successfully you need to:**

- ✓ Include all the parts of an e-mail address.
- ✓ Write three six-line paragraphs in which you provide information to your peer. Along the text, include some personal information, information about your project and expectancies related to it.
- ✓ Use appropriate language and expressions for this specific situation.
- ✓ Use different tenses in affirmative and negative form, as necessary, to provide information about yourself, the state of the project and your expectancies about it.
- ✓ Take into account the appropriate use of commas, periods, capital letters and spelling.



Student's name:		Date:					
%	Criteria / Score (number 1 is the lowest scale; 20 the highest)	Poor	Needs improvement	Fair	Good	Outstanding	Total
	The student is able to:						
20	Establish interpersonal relationships by providing pertinent information about himself/herself.	1-4	5-8	9-12	13-16	17-20	
<b>Comments</b>							
20	Provide enough information about a research project being conducted: goals and expectancies.	1-4	5-8	9-12	13-16	17-20	
<b>Comments</b>							
15	Use language that is appropriate for this particular setting: registers and expressions.	1-3	4-6	7-9	10-12	13-15	
<b>Comments</b>							
10	Follow the textual organization that an e-mail has.	1-2	3-4	5-6	7-8	9-10	
<b>Comments</b>							
10	Express ideas in a coherent, clear,	1-2	3-4	5-6	7-8	9-10	

	cohesive and logical form.						
<b>Comments</b>							
10	Use correctly a variety of grammar structures worked in class as needed.	1-2	3-4	5-6	7-8	9-10	
<b>Comments</b>							
5	Use of punctuation in an appropriate way (commas and periods).	1	2	3	4	5	
<b>Comments</b>							
5	Use capital letters appropriately.	1	2	3	4	5	
<b>Comments</b>							
5	Have a spelling of words without interfering with meaning.	1	2	3	4	5	
<b>Comments</b>							
<b>Final comments:</b>				<b>Final score</b>			
				_____/2 =			



## APPENDIX B

### RUBRIC OT1

#### UNIVERSIDAD DE ANTIOQUIA ESCUELA DE IDIOMAS

#### PROGRAMA DE CAPACITACION DOCENTE

#### LEVEL 4 INTERMEDIATE 2


#### Oral task 2: My project

#### Summative evaluation (10 %)

**SITUATION:** You are conducting a study in our local context. A group of professionals from a university in Canada got interested in your project and they would like to know more about it. They will be here soon, so you should get ready to provide information about your study.

**TASK:** A presentation in which you include relevant information about your project. It should include: (1) Title of the study, (2) relevance, (3) context, (4), methodology (5) objectives, (6) state of the project, and (7) expected results: contribution, impact, etc. Be as clear and concise as possible. You have 10 minutes to do this task. You can use power point, prezi, slideshare, pearltrees or any available resource.

**To complete this task successfully you need to:**

Oral Presentation	Slides/Written Part 
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Use appropriate language, vocabulary and expressions for this specific situation.</li> <li>✓ Use different grammar structures in affirmative and negative form, as necessary, to provide information about your project.</li> <li>✓ Take into account language aspects such as pronunciation, fluency and accuracy.</li> <li>✓ Be ready to answer questions from the audience in a coherent way.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Include the seven parts required for the task.</li> <li>✓ Use appropriate language, vocabulary and expressions for this specific situation.</li> <li>✓ Present main ideas in a consistent way: nouns, infinitives, gerunds, key words, phrases or sentences, etc.</li> <li>✓ Use grammar structures accurately to provide information about your project.</li> <li>✓ Cite sources appropriately.</li> <li>✓ Take into account the appropriate use of commas, periods, capital letters and spelling for the slides of the presentation.</li> <li>✓ Create slides that are easy to read: not crowded, friendly color, clear font.</li> </ul>

#### ORAL PRESENTATION

Student's name:		Date:					
%	Criteria / Score (number 1 is the lowest scale; 10 the highest)	<i>Poor</i>	<i>Needs improvement</i>	<i>Fair</i>	<i>Good</i>	<i>Outstanding</i>	<i>Total</i>
	The student is able to:						
10	Provide relevant information about a project being conducted in the local	1-2	3-4	5-6	7-8	9-10	

	context, as specified in the task guidelines.						
<b>Comments:</b>							
10	Use language that is appropriate for this particular setting: registers and expressions.	1-2	3-4	5-6	7-8	9-10	
<b>Comments:</b>							
10	Express ideas in a coherent, clear, fluent, cohesive and logical form.	1-2	3-4	5-6	7-8	9-10	
<b>Comments:</b>							
10	Use an appropriate pronunciation that facilitates comprehension for the audience.	1-2	3-4	5-6	7-8	9-10	
<b>Comments:</b>							
10	Use correctly a variety of grammar structures worked in class as needed.	1-2	3-4	5-6	7-8	9-10	
<b>Comments:</b>							
Topic management: reflects knowledge and preparation Strategies to involve the audience: keeps eye contact, does not read the slides, uses an appropriate tone of voice.							
<b>Comments:</b>							

**POWER POINT LAYOUT**

10	Provide relevant information about the findings of a project conducted or being conducted in the local context, as required.	1-2	3-4	5-6	7-8	9-10	
<b>Comments:</b>							
10	Use language that is appropriate for this particular setting.	1-2	3-4	5-6	7-8	9-10	
<b>Comments:</b>							
10	Present ideas in a coherent, clear, cohesive and logical form.	1-2	3-4	5-6	7-8	9-10	
<b>Comments:</b>							
5	Use correctly a variety of grammar structures worked in class as needed.	1	2	3	4	5	
<b>Comments:</b>							
5	Use of punctuation in an appropriate way (commas and periods).	1	2	3	4	5	
<b>Comments:</b>							
5	Use capital letters appropriately.	1	2	3	4	5	
<b>Comments:</b>							
5	Have a spelling of words without interfering with meaning.	1	2	3	4	5	
<b>Comments:</b>							
Slides are easy to read Language used in slides is appropriate				<b>Final score</b>			
<b>Comments:</b>				_____ /2 =			