

Evaluating Pragmatic Information in Algerian EFL Textbooks: The Case of 'My Book of English, Year Three'

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Abstract

The aim of the present study is to evaluate the pragmatic information in 'My Book of English, Year Three', a textbook used to teach English in Algerian middle schools. The study attempts to answer four research questions pertaining to the amount of general pragmatic information, speech act treatment, explicit metapragmatic cues, and metalanguage functions. The points of strength and weakness in the pragmatic input offered by the textbook under question were identified. To illustrate, a number of speech acts were explicitly mentioned and practised, though most of them appeared in conspicuous absence of adequate metapragmatic and sociopragmatic discussions. In our view, the present findings have important implications for EFL textbook-designers and teachers alike.

Keywords: pragmatic information; EFL; My Book of English; speech acts; metapragmatic; metalanguage

Résumé

Cette étude tente d'évaluer le contenu pragmatique dans « My Book of English » de la troisième année moyenne en Algérie. Elle prétend répondre à quatre questions se rapportant à la quantité du contenu pragmatique général, traitement des actes de parole, contenu métapragmatique et fonctions du métalangage. Les forces et les faiblesses des matériaux pragmatiques offerts par le manuel en question ont été identifiées. En effet, nombre d'actes de parole ont explicitement été approchés. Toutefois, la plupart d'entre eux n'ont pas reçu le traitement métapragmatique et sociopragmatique adéquat. Ces résultats seront d'une grande utilité et pour les concepteurs des manuels et pour les enseignants d'anglais langue étrangère.

Mot clés : contenu pragmatique ; anglais langue étrangère (EFL) ; My Book of English ; actes de parole ; métapragmatique ; métalangage ; langue ; incapacité ; problèmes ; medium ; médecine.

ملخص

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تقييم المحتوى التداولي في كتاب الإنجليزية للسنة الثالثة من التعليم المتوسط. إذ تسعى إلى الإجابة عن أربعة أسئلة بحثية تتمحور حول: كمية المحتوى المتعلق بالجانب التداولي للغة، معالجة الأفعال الكلامية، الإشارات التداولية ووظائف اللغة الوصفية. حيث بيّنت نتائج الدراسة مواطن القوة والضعف فيما يخص المحتوى

التداولي المقدم من طرف الكتاب المدرسي قيد الدراسة. على سبيل المثال، يحوي الكتاب على مجموعة من الأفعال الكلامية ويقدم تمارين عنها، لكن معظم هذه الأفعال الكلامية افتقرت إلى مناقشة الأبعاد التداولية وعوامل السياق التي تتدخل في استعمالها. وعليه، تعتبر النتائج المستخلصة من الدراسة ذات أهمية بالغة بالنسبة لمحرري الكتب المدرسية الخاصة بتعليم الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية ومدرسي هذه اللغة على حدٍ سواء.

الكلمات المفتاحية: المحتوى التداولي، الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، كتابي في الإنجليزية، الأفعال الكلامية، الإشارات التداولية، اللغة الوصفية

Introduction

Given the restricted exposure to the target language in foreign language teaching, the textbook plays a pivotal role in supplying learners with the target community's rules of speaking and how to do things with words in real life communicational situations. Notwithstanding advances in educational technology, the textbook remains an integral part of formal language instruction at all levels (grammar, pronunciation, syntax, pragmatics etc.).

In the present study, the author seeks to assess pragmatic information offered by *My Book of English, Year Three*. The latter is one of three textbooks introduced recently in Algerian middle schools under the so-called 'second-generation manuals'. The textbook writers assert in the preface of the textbook and in Teacher's Guide respectively:

You [addressing learners] will overcome, step by step, the barriers of communicating and conversing with others, especially the foreigners to your language. (Translated from Arabic, textbook authors in the preface)

The listening tasks proposed to learners in these books [second-generation manuals] involve both receptive and productive skills... [T]he main focus is on communicative interaction in class through role playing as an extension to the original, primary oral input materials. (Textbook authors in Teacher's Guide)

This amounts to saying that developing learners' pragmatic awareness and competence is at the heart of the newly introduced manuals. The extent to which this objective can be maintained by the textbook's pragmatic content will be verified. Consistent with the last proviso, the present study will address four questions:

- a. Does the textbook offer an adequate amount of pragmatic information?
- b. How are speech acts treated in the textbook?
- c. What are the types of explicit metapragmatic cues included in the textbook?
- d. What are the types of metalanguage functions prevalent in the textbook?

As regards the key terminology in the present study, 'pragmatic information' refers to the areas tackled in questions b, c, and d (i.e. speech acts, explicit metapragmatic cues, the use of metalanguage), as indicated by Vellenga's (2004, p. 1) definition. Regarding speech acts, they are those acts performed by words like requesting, apologizing, complimenting etc. In the literature, they are often analysed at two levels, following Thomas (1983): pragmalinguistic (linguistic resources and their pragmatic functions) and sociopragmatic (the influence of social variables – like social power, social distance, degree of imposition etc. – on linguistic choices). In Vellenga (2004, p. 5), 'explicit metapragmatic cues' include "any information related to culture, context, illocutionary force, politeness, appropriacy and/or register". As for metalanguage, and as discussed by Vellenga (2004), there are four types of metalanguage functions which are relevant to the present study; they are presented and illustrated in sub-section 3.4.

1. Literature Review

Analysing EFL (English as a Foreign Language) and ESL (English as a Second Language) textbooks' content from the pragmatic standpoint is not uncommon in the literature. Some studies have targeted pragmatic information in general (e.g. Vellenga, 2004; Neddar, 2010; Gholami, 2015) while others have paid attention to one aspect of pragmatic competence such as speech acts (e.g. Martinez-Flor, 2007; Dendenne, 2014a; Barron, 2016; Inawati, 2016). Researchers have also attempted to compare pragmatic information in ESL and EFL textbooks (e.g. Vellenga, 2004) or in local and global ones (e.g. Vaezi, Tabatabaei, & Bakhtiarvand, 2014; Meihami & Khanlarzadeh, 2015).

In her seminal work, Vellenga (2004) analyses closely pragmatic knowledge in four ESL textbooks and four EFL ones (grammar and integrated skills respectively). For the author, pragmatic knowledge involves metalanguage, speech acts, and metapragmatic cues. As her findings indicate, the textbooks compared are, to a large extent, compatible in terms of language level and length. In both groups of texts, pragmatic information is, for the author, kept to a minimum. Vellenga (2004) addresses four functions of

metalanguage: description, introduction, explanation, and task-related. The researcher notes that metalanguage in the texts is itself an important source of linguistic input for the learner, especially in the EFL setting. Moreover, it is noted that the pronominal use (*we* vs. *you*) in textbooks is rather a neglected area in coursebooks' analysis. Therefore, if metalanguage is not carefully selected, learners are likely to unconsciously make wrong pragmatic choices and, hence, produce undesired effect on their native interlocutors as in the case of imperative directives use which is prevalent in coursebooks. The author notes a paucity of metalanguage in both groups of textbooks whereby imperative directives predominate in the absence of pronominal reference. It is worth of remark that the present study will devote space for the discussion of the pronominal reference in the coursebook examined as it entails pragmatic bearings, following Vellenga's recommendations (2004). As far as speech act treatment is concerned, Vellenga (2004) concludes that ESL coursebooks provide richer repertoire of speech acts than EFL ones. Besides, the presentation of speech acts is deemed counterintuitive; neither patterns nor the frequency of the speech acts included reflect natural language. Lack of explicit metapragmatic cues is noticed; a speech act may be formulated or mentioned, but without discussions of contextual information which influences its use in natural speech like politeness and appropriateness. This proviso applies to both groups of texts. To illustrate, in ESL books, 22 different speech acts are mentioned explicitly; however, only two speech acts appear with metapragmatic information which shows how they can be employed in context. The discussion of illocutionary force is often linked with modals (i.e. strength of attitudes) and the issue of register appears in proximity with the mention of written and spoken genres. Vellenga (2004) concludes that the acquisition of pragmatic competence through the examined textbooks is 'highly unlikely', and she calls for seeking richer pragmatic content from research on conversation analysis and cross-cultural and interlanguage pragmatics while developing textbooks.

Gholami (2015) is another study on the assessment of pragmatic knowledge in coursebooks. He examines Iranian EFL high school coursebooks, with a focus on the following aspects: speech acts, four politeness strategies, lexical and syntactic classification, tense in temporal deixis, adjacency pairs, and hesitation marks. As the findings show, speech acts (mainly directives) receive more attention than other pragmatic aspects. In conjunction with the speech acts addressed, some politeness strategies are encountered. In addition, hesitation marks and adjacency pairs appear to be very limited in the texts examined. A dearth of metapragmatic discussions is also noticed. Given the fact that sentences and phrases included by the textbook writers are meant to teach syntax rather than pragmatics, the author suggests that the incorporation of pragmatic information is not in the mind of the coursebooks' writers. According

to Gholami (2015, p. 50), pragmatic knowledge should be injected to the 'syntactic skeleton of the book'; otherwise Iranian EFL textbooks would be perceived as merely Persian books translated into English. The author recommends, among others, the involvement of a native speaker to assist in writing textbooks. He further advocates authenticating the coursebooks through the insertion of English names for cities, streets, shops, parks etc.

Barron (2016) evaluates how well an EFL textbook series used in Germany (G2000A) can help secondary school learners develop pragmatic competence vis-à-vis the speech act of requesting. The author pursues her analysis at two levels: pragmatolinguistic (request strategies and modification) and sociopragmatic (contextual information relevant to the use of linguistic devices). The strategies are analysed also in terms of developmental phases as suggested by research in the relevant literature. As indicated by the author, three out of six request strategies are present in the textbooks, namely mood derivable, locution derivable, and query preparatory (centred on possibility, *can I/you*). The author further notes that direct strategies are addressed before the conventionally indirect ones in accommodation with the developmental phases. Concerning lexical downgrading devices, the conditional is dominant and its introduction after non-modified requests, according to Barron (2016), is in line with the developmental paths. However, the absence of combinations of syntactic downgrading devices is noticed. At the lexical level, mitigation in G2000A coursebook series is centred on the politeness marker *please*. The latter collocates first with mood derivables then with query preparatories. The author indicates that the presence of *please* as the earliest marker is in line with the developmental features. Nevertheless, the textbooks examined fail to address the pragmatic constraints underlying the use of this marker which can be employed as both an indicator of illocutionary force of request as well as a transparent mitigating device. The author reiterates that the dual function of *please* makes its use in standard and non-standard situations such a difficult task for learners. Furthermore, the author draws the attention to the fact that the lack of commentary on the different uses of *please* in standard and non-standard situations is likely to lead to overgeneralisation from the learners' part. Given the limited use of more complex downgraders in German, the author sees the absence of other downgraders like consultative devices (e.g. *do you mind*) and subjectivizers (e.g. *I wonder, I suppose*), which are very common in English, as 'regrettable'. In terms of external modification, the textbooks fail to involve them. Only grounders (reasons and justifications) are implicitly addressed. The coursebooks, from a sociopragmatic standpoint, seem to depict standard request situations (e.g. in the hotel). The only explicit metapragmatic cue provided has to do with the marker *please*, whereby learners are asked to employ this marker with imperatives while explaining a grammar point about imperatives and infinitives. Overall, sociopragmatic aspects are either

addressed implicitly or totally neglected. From a cross-cultural perspective, the textbooks hardly ever discussed differences between English and German, except in discussing differences between *mustn't* in English and *nicht müssen* in German. The author concludes that a range of desiderata at pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic dimensions should have been explicitly addressed by the coursebooks' writers.

As for the analysis of EFL textbooks developed in Algeria, to the best of the author's knowledge, two studies are worth citing, namely, Neddar (2010) and Dendenne (2014a).

The first study deals with pragmatic information incorporated in four Algerian middle school textbooks and contrasts them with four other textbooks produced for the global market (i.e. Headway Oxford). The Algerian textbooks (Spotlight and On the Move series) analysed by Neddar (2010) are no longer in use today, except for the fourth year textbook (On the Move), as they are replaced by second-generation manuals (My Book of English series), as it has already been pinpointed in the introduction. Neddar assesses in depth the pragmatic information offered by the Algerian coursebooks, following Vellenga's framework (2004). The author suggests the presence of a large amount of metapragmatic information, even if it is in terms of quality unlikely to aid learners develop pragmatic competence in the target language. Speech acts covered by the coursebooks do not reflect the ones employed by native speakers in real life communicational settings. Besides, most of these speech acts appear with barely adequate metapragmatic information and discussion. Therefore, learners may acquire linguistic forms, but fail to express their pragmatic intent. As for metalanguage, the dominance of imperative directives, in line with the argument of Vellenga (2004), encourages learners to use them and, thus, convey undesired illocutionary force. As for the de facto use of the Algerian textbooks in classrooms, Neddar (2010) indicates that teachers hardly ever have the willingness or adequate training to supply extra pragmatic material in their classes. The author calls for classroom research and interviews so as to demonstrate how cross-cultural pragmatic competence can be developed through the coursebooks examined.

As for the second study, Dendenne (2014a) analyses Algerian EFL secondary school textbooks in terms of structures and pragmatic information related to the speech acts of requesting and apologising. The author concludes that the input provided in terms of frequency and quality is counterintuitive when compared to empirically validated data. At the pragmalinguistic level, the three examined textbooks (first, second, and third year) present learners with some typical forms for the realisation of the two speech acts in question such as the modals *can* and *could*, the politeness marker *please*, in requests, and

IFIDs (illocutionary force indicating devices, e.g., *sorry, excuse me, pardon*), in apologies. For the author, the over-presentation of some structures is deemed counterproductive, i.e. learners are likely to overuse them. At the sociopragmatic level, the impact of the socio-cultural and contextual factors like the age, status, degree of imposition, interlocutor's relationship is barely addressed. The researcher also reports a dearth of metapragmatic information in the coursebooks explored. Therefore, learners may know a given linguistic form but remain incompetent as regards how to use it in context and unaware of the cross-cultural factors contributing in making pragmatic choices. Furthermore, the tendency towards associating the two speech acts with certain linguistic devices makes overgeneralisation highly likely. Given the fact that pragmatic data is largely implicit in the texts, a considerable amount of pragmatic-relevant information goes unnoticed unless teachers intervene to bring them to light. The study's recommendations corroborate the ones in the aforementioned studies; the author urges Algerian textbook writers to enrich the texts with empirically validated data from research on cross-cultural and interlanguage pragmatics as well as (quasi-)authentic data (e.g. films).

According to studies on pragmatic input analysis, including the already-cited ones (Vellenga, 2004; Neddar, 2010; Barron, 2016, among others), textbooks undergo a plethora of limitations. The ignorance of the sociopragmatic dimension, paucity of metapragmatic information, lack of explicit focus on the content, artificiality in terms of frequency and quality of linguistic forms, and the utilisation of imperative directives in metalanguage stand out arguably as the major defects in ESL and EFL textbooks.

2. Methodology

The textbook under investigation is organised in terms of the following four sequences:

- a. Sequence 1: Me, my abilities, my interests, and my personality
- b. Sequence 2: Me and lifestyles
- c. Sequence 3: Me and the scientific world
- d. Sequence 4: Me and my environment

Each of the book's sequences includes the following rubrics:

- a. My project
- b. I listen and do
- c. I pronounce
- d. My grammar tools
- e. I practise

- f. I read and do
- g. I learn to integrate
- h. I think and write
- i. Now, I can
- j. I play and enjoy
- k. I read for pleasure

Most of the speech acts practised by learners appeared in 'I Listen and Do' and 'I Practise' rubrics while metapragmatic cues and metalinguistic discussions appeared mainly in 'My Grammar Tools' and 'I Practise' rubrics. As far as the counting of information is concerned, any example of speech act given to learners or formulated by them when performing activities is counted as one instance of speech act while any discussion of metapragmatic issue(s) which appears at one go is counted as one instance of metapragmatic information.

3. Findings

The present section deals with the findings of the study. As already mentioned before, four questions will be addressed, which are relative to: the amount of pragmatic information, speech act treatment, explicit metapragmatic cues, and metalanguage functions.

3.1. General metapragmatic information per page

A page-by-page examination of the textbook allowed us to identify the amount of pragmatic content per page. 40 out of 159 pages include pragmatic information (25.16%). This amount and the amount of pragmatic information in Spotlight 3, from the old series, are approximately matched (24.47%, as shown in Neddar, 2010). In terms of quantity, presenting learners at this level with such an amount is advantageous even if the page may include only a small portion of pragmatic-relevant text.

	N	%
Pages including pragmatic information	40	25.16
Total number of pages	159	100

Table 1: Pages Including Pragmatic Information in the Textbook

3.2. Speech act treatment

The following speech acts were explicitly mentioned in the textbook: asking for information, giving information, narrating, expressing ability/inability, describing, expressing obligation/prohibition, making recommendations/advice, requesting, and comparing (see Table 2). The preponderance of asking for and giving information speech acts is to be related to the fact that these two speech acts lend themselves to the various

themes addressed by the textbook as displayed in Table 3. For example, we can ask for and give information about personality features, daily activities, science, environment etc. On the contrary, narrating speech act fits only a limited number of topics such as talking about past events, lifestyles and biographies.

Speech Acts	N	%
Expressing ability/inability	21	8.50
Describing	18	7.29
Narrating	23	9.31
Comparing	6	2.43
Expressing obligation/prohibition	15	6.07
Making recommendations/advice	11	4.45
Asking for information	78	31.58
Giving information	66	26.72
Requesting	9	3.64
Total	247	100

Table 2: Explicit Mention and Frequency of Speech Acts in the Textbook

It is noteworthy that requests are very frequent in authentic conversations, but they appear to be less frequent in the textbook examined. Another recurring speech act, apologising, was inexplicably overlooked though it plays a crucial role in repairing offenses in communicational situations. Furthermore, some speech acts present in the old version, namely accepting requests, making suggestions, and refusing invitations are conspicuously absent in the textbook examined. This seems to be reasonably unsupported in a textbook addressed to EFL learners. In this respect, Vellenga (2004, p. 9) seconds that "the importance of teaching learners how to threaten is questionable when they do not get input about learning what might be considered more practical speech acts such as *apologizing, making introductions, or refusing invitations*" [emphasis added].

Speech Act	Theme
Expressing ability/inability	Daily activities
Describing	Interests, people, lifestyles, personality features
Narrating	Past events, biographies
Comparing	Animals
Expressing obligation/prohibition	Animal and environmental issues
Making	Animal and environmental issues

recommendations/advice	
Asking for information	All the themes of the textbook
Giving information	All the themes of the textbook
Requesting	Real-life situations (e.g. requesting a classmate to pass the salt in the canteen).

Table 3: Thematic Distribution of Speech Acts in the Textbook

3.3. Metapragmatic cues

As can be seen in Table 4, different types of metapragmatic cues were offered by the coursebook, with varied degrees.

Explicit Metapragmatic Cues	N	%
Appropriateness/illocutionary force	19	55.88
Register	1	2.94
Extralinguistic and contextual Information	8	23.53
Cultural Information	6	17.65
Total	34	100

Table 4: Explicit Metapragmatic Cues in the Textbook

Information related to appropriateness and illocutionary force is predominant. This type of information appears in 'My Grammar Tools' rubric. Figure 1 is an example of (linguistic) appropriateness and illocutionary force.

1. Talking about what I can or can't do (my abilities or inabilities)

- To talk about the things I (or another person) can do (abilities),
I use: "can + V (stem/base)".
eg: Amadou can watch birds for hours.
- To talk about the things I (or another person) can't do
(inabilities),
I use: "can't + V (stem/base)".
eg: Enzo can't play Sudoku.

Figure 1: Expressing Ability and Inability (My Book of English, Year Three, p. 21)

Extralinguistic and contextual information was identified in eight spots. In the example below (see Figure 2), the learner is given a description of a situation endorsed by pragmatic-relevant information: the setting, the interlocutors' relation, object requested, reference to the parameter of appropriateness (tick the appropriate request).

Task 8. I read each situation and tick the appropriate request.

SITUATION 1

You are having lunch at the school canteen. You ask one of your schoolmates for salt. What should you say?

- ☐ **a)** Can I have the salt?
- ☐ **b)** May I have the salt, please?

Figure 2: Selecting the Appropriate Request (My Book of English, Year Three, p. 97)

As far as register is concerned, explicit information can be found in page 94 whereby the textbook writers define what a request is and illustrate how a request can be made informal or formal by means of *can* and *may* respectively. It is worth of remark that politeness/impoliteness was not mentioned and, thus, it is only presupposed as relevant when talking about register.

3. Making requests using the modals: "can" and "may"

➤ What is a request?

I make a request when I ask someone for something, or when I ask someone to do something: "Can/May + Subject + V (stem) + (rest of sentence)?"

➤ I can use the modal verbs "can" and "may" to make requests.

- **"can"** is informal: I use it with friends, classmates, people I know well.

eg: **Can** you *help* me do my homework?

- **"may"** is formal: I use it with people I don't know (well).

eg: **May** I *have* some more sugar, please?

Figure 3: Making Informal/Formal Requests (My Book of English, Year Three, p. 94)

Any reference to elements related to English-speaking countries, mainly, England was counted as cultural information. The following elements were distinguished:

- a. BBC Radio (Listen to the BBC Radio interview (Part 1) and fill in the first part of each teenager's profile, p. 13.)
- b. The English farmhouse lifestyle (past and present) (Porridge breakfast, Yorkshire pudding, roast beef on Sundays, boiled

- potatoes with gravy, meatballs kidney pies and brown bread, homemade cookies with afternoon tea..., pp. 48-49.)
- c. Pictures of the Queen Elizabeth II (p. 50)
 - d. Heathrow airport (You are at Heathrow airport, in London, the immigration office asks for your address in London, p. 97.)
 - e. The University of Durham (Dr. Sian Waters, from the University of Durham in England, has studied the Barbary Macaque for the last ten years. I listen to the interview and reorder the jumbled exchanges using numbers from 1 to 6, p. 119.)
 - f. The UK Eco-School (p. 121)

3.4. Types of metalinguage functions

According to Vellenga (2004, p. 6), four types of metalinguage functions are employed in textbooks; examples are retrieved from the textbook under review:

- a. *Description*: information about how to shape forms and how to utilise them, usually boosted by means of examples.

Example: To talk about repeated actions/activities or events that happened in the past but are no longer true in the present, I can use the semi-modal verb "used to + V".

e.g: We **used to** take a bath once a week. (= but today this is *no longer true*.)

(My Book of English, Year Three, p. 64)

- b. *Instruction*: information about forms (usage or topical) which does not provide linguistic description of forms under discussion.

Example: "Who" and "which" are relative pronouns. "Who" refers to people and "which" refers to things and animals.

(My Book of English, Year Three, p. 94)

- c. *Introduction*: information that prepares learners to activities and serves in focusing their attention on a given topic.

Examples: In the region where we live there is an old musical genre (or a traditional musical instrument, or a popular songs or dance), or a traditional craft [...]

-My partners and I decide to write a short article (with photos) and send it to the press to raise people's awareness of the importance to preserve this part of our cultural and national heritage.

(My Book of English, Year Three, p. 10)

- d. *Task-related*: information that shows how to do listening, speaking, reading, and writing activities, which are oftentimes done with a partner or in groups.

Examples: I work with my partner. We compare our answers in tasks (10 and 11) and correct each other (p. 87).

-I work with a group of partners. We discuss our answers in task (1, 2 and 3) and correct each other (p. 100).

-I read each situation and tick the appropriate request (p. 97).

-I use the information I learnt about wildlife and my environment in my listening tasks to answer the following questions about the signs and texts in task (1). Answer (7) is given as an example (p. 134).

(My Book of English, Year Three)

The significance of metalanguage data in textbooks is twofold. Firstly, it is by itself part of language use and input in the textbook. Secondly, through explanations and reflections on language use, metalanguage can also provide pragmatic-relevant input as regards context, interactants, appropriateness, politeness etc. (Vellenga, 2004).

In My Book of English, Year Three, task-related metalanguage takes precedence over the three remaining metalanguage functions (see Table 5), which is no surprise as the textbook by its nature, involves various activities for developing learners' skills. Almost all the pages include activities prefaced by information that aims at showing learners how to perform tasks. The description, instruction, and introduction metalanguage functions were also considered, with varied percentages.

Metalanguage Functions	N	%
Description	81	17.05
Instruction	25	5.26
Introduction	15	3.16
Task-related	354	74.53
Total	475	100

Table 5: Metalanguage Functions in the Textbook

It is noteworthy that the author of the present work is interested in the metalinguistic data that has bearings on learners' pragmatic awareness and/or development. As regards task-related metalanguage, two points are worth sharing. First, the textbook writers avoided imperative directives while prefacing the tasks. Instead, they opted for pronominal reference by means of a

speaker perspective (a-d), a joint perspective (e-g), and need statements (h-j). This stands in sharp contrast with the findings of previous studies on metalinguistic content; Vellenga (2004) and Neddar (2010) are exemplary ones. The former notes that the metalinguistic content in the integrated skills textbooks is dominated by imperative directives. In a similar vein, the latter indicates that metalanguage in the textbooks examined, including Algerian middle school textbooks from the old series, is monopolised by imperative directives. The following examples single out instances of pronominal reference as used in My Book of English, Year Three:

- a. I listen to the BBC Radio interview and fill in the first part of each teenager's profile (p. 13).
- b. I use the arrows to show the geographical location for each musical instrument [...] (p. 24).
- c. I read text (2) and complete the bibliographical notes (p. 74).
- d. To write Mohamed's profile, the following layout and my previous reading notes (text 1, 2, 3) will also help me (p. 38).
- e. I work with a group of partners. We discuss and compare our answers (task 8, 9, 10). Then, we correct each other (p. 33).
- f. I work with my partner. We read again "My Grammar Tools (2)" and correct each other's sentences (p. 68).
- g. Let's sing a song! (p. 43)
- h. To write Dr. Bourouis' biography, I need to fill in the missing information in the following table (p. 103).
- i. I need to select five of the most important dates [...] (p. 106).
- j. I need the following profile to write text about the Barbary deer and the list of the threats facing this animal (p. 143).

Second, the preponderance of declarative and imperative sentences in textbooks is likely to encourage learners to use them unintentionally believing that they are prevalent models in the target language (Grant & Starks, 2001). We venture to say that the textbook writers are more or less following this argument when opted for the non-use of imperative sentences. Vellenga (2004) seconds that pronominal reference deserves attention from researchers as it has pragmatic consequences. In interlanguage pragmatics, this point is often discussed when dealing with requests under *request perspective*; the choice of the four types of perspective (hearer, speaker, joint, and impersonal) serves in signalling politeness and distance and, hence, mitigating the request coerciveness (e.g. Blum-Kulka & Olshtain 1984; Woodfield & Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2010). It is worth of note that description and instruction metalanguage functions included pragmatic-relevant information which has already been considered in the discussion of metapragmatic cues (see subsection 3.3.).

4. Discussion

Having analysed pragmatic input present in *My Book of English, Year Three* which is used in Algerian middle schools, the following points are distinguished:

The focus of the textbook was centred on the pragmalinguistic level of speech act realisations. That is, it covers the linguistic devices rather than how they are used in context in relation to the sociopragmatic considerations, such as politeness, interlocutors' status, formality of the situation, the setting, the imposition on the other party, and so on. The textbook writers, we would argue, assume that dealing with the latter dimension requires supplying learners with a new system of beliefs that might not be accessible to them at that level; it is a rather plausible decision.

There is a general tendency towards integrating the teaching of pragmatics at the pragmalinguistic level within grammar. The fact that metapragmatic information is present in a rubric labelled 'My Grammar Tools' lends support to this claim. This is reminiscent of Thomas (1983) who argues that the pragmalinguistic dimension of language use can be taught straightforwardly as part of grammar.

The presentation of the pragmatic information in *My Book of English, Year Three* inevitably encourages learners to resort to memory instead of making pragmatic choices as they are exposed to one-to-one- correspondence between forms and pragmatic functions (Bardovi-Harlig, 2002). We should not ignore, however, that learners acquiring minimum linguistic tools for performing a number of speech acts, at this level, is very useful. Yet, if learners are only exposed to limited pragmatic choices, they are likely to lay back on their mother language when interacting in English. One of our previous studies (Dendenne, 2014b), which was devoted to Algerian EFL learners', draws conclusively that more advanced learners (university students) resort to translation from their mother language in order to compensate for the lack of pragmalinguistic means when requesting.

In a nutshell, the pragmatic input in the textbook examined in the present study fosters overgeneralisations as regards the forms presented (e.g. *can* and *may* for informal and formal requests respectively). The textbook writers are aware of this constraint which, for them, leads to 'broad generalisations' only:

'My Grammar Tools' are meant to be exploited as learning aids whose main pedagogical function is to

succinctly sum up the main tenses, structures and structural lexis dealt within each sequence in the form of "rules" or, sometimes, broad generalisations. (Teacher's Guide)

From the above statement, there is an evidence to maintain, very much in the same way as Gholami (2015), that the incorporation of pragmatic information in 'My Grammar Tools' might not be meant for teaching pragmatics per se, but it rather aims at teaching grammar and syntax.

Learners are oftentimes asked to perform dialogues with a focus on one of the speech acts while keeping their authentic roles (Me and My partner). Most probably, replacing such exchanges by role-playing where learners perform other roles can help raise their awareness of how to do things with words in real contexts. For instance, role-playing was deployed with respect to the speech act of requesting wherein learners are offered a description of a situation stating the role he/she is supposed to play and a space to write his/her response (You are a traffic policeman/policewoman. You ask a motorist for his/her driving licence. What should you say?) (My Book of English, Year Three, p. 97). In fact, this is a widespread tool for speech act data collection in interlanguage pragmatics called 'discourse completion task/test' (Blum-Kulka, House, & Kasper, 1989).

The use of imperative directives as a means to give recommendations/advice in public signs (My Book of English, Year Three, p. 135) needs the teacher's clarification that bare imperatives are casually employed by native speakers in face-to-face interactions as they are perceived as coercive and, thus, rude. Bare imperatives are mainly expected in public signs and instructions when the interlocutors are not face-to-face and the message has to be conveyed in a clear and explicit way. This socio-cultural information is what the coursebook needs to provide as the non-native teacher could ill-afford. Yet, the avoidance of prefacing activities by means of imperative directives (e.g. listen, read, do, think) is worth of remark. The textbook authors employed the speaker perspective, the joint perspective, and need statements instead (e.g. I listen, we read, I need to fill). In so doing, they eliminated a shortcoming, which has long been highlighted in textbooks by research findings (e.g. Vellenga, 2004; Neddar, 2010).

There is a dearth in metapragmatic cues in the textbook examined though the striking advantage of exposing learners to some of them at this level should not be denied. The reason is that not all the speech acts in the textbook are accompanied by adequate cues pertaining to appropriateness, register, politeness, and extralinguistic and contextual information. The fact that register

(formal vs. informal) is discussed only when dealing with requests is a case in point. Similarly, learners are asked to practise most of the speech acts as dialogues with their classmates. Only requests are practised in a context boosted with presumably adequate contextual information (e.g. You are at Heathrow airport in London, the immigration officer asks for your passport. What should she say?) (My Book of English, Year Three, p. 97). In his study, Neddar (2010) justifiably suggests that the explicit metapragmatic cues present in proximity with speech acts are very limited in Spotlight series; among 43 speech acts, metapragmatic cues are encountered only in eight cases.

Regrettably, some points were raised in the textbook but the writers missed to highlight their pragmatic relevance. For instance, they mentioned 'cannot/did not' along with their contracted forms 'can't/didn't' without tackling the point of formality. In a similar vein, while discussing intonation, the textbook writers state that "[t]he raise and fall in my voice effects the meaning of what I say" (My Book of English, Year Three, p. 126). But again, without tackling the additional pragmatic meaning intonation conveys if, for instance, the same word is pronounced with rising and falling intonations. Furthermore, there is no reference whatsoever to politeness. Politeness is only presupposed when talking about formal and informal requests in the tip-box cited before (see Figure 3). In such cases, teachers' intervention through supplying additional pragmatic content in situ is highly recommended.

Conclusion

When the textbook offers fairly limited pragmatic knowledge, the teacher has a paramount role to play while instructing learners in pragmatics at lower levels. Therefore, teachers themselves should be aware of the crucial importance of developing pragmatic competence in foreign language classroom. In this regard, the findings of the present investigation bear implications for textbook writers and teachers alike.

First, only by doing an awareness-raising work, teachers can guide their learners to benefit from the pragmatic information made available at their disposal by the textbooks. Teachers should give equal attention to the linguistic competence and the pragmatic one. As a former secondary school teacher, when teachers feel the urge to skip a lesson, due to time constraints or some other reasons, it is often the pragmatic lesson that is sacrificed. Teachers often justify such a decision by the fact that learners will have a written exam by the end of the term.

Second, when teachers detect a shortage of pragmatic knowledge, they should never hesitate to supply extra material. Moreover, teachers should

create opportunities for reflection, discussion, and comparison of speech acts so as to raise learners' cross-cultural awareness, and they should not only content themselves with teaching decontextualised language forms. Since learners at this age are likely to perceive the way they use language as the natural way, teachers may, from time to time, ask their learners: how can you say this in your mother language? How can you request such a help politely in your language? How can you translate this utterance into Arabic and does it function adequately in an identical situation?

Third, textbooks should be updated on the findings of recent research in interlanguage and cross-cultural pragmatics. Particularly, studies that deal with speech act production and perception by Arab learners are very insightful (Abdul Sattar, Che Lah, & Suleiman, 2009; Al-Ali & Alawneh, 2010; Alfattah, 2010; Al-Zumor, 2011; Dendenne, 2014b, to mention but a few).

Fourth, according to Boxer and Pickering (1995, p. 56), "through the materials that reflect how we really speak, rather than how we think we speak, will language learners receive an accurate account of the rules of speaking in a second or foreign language." In this regard, following Vakilifard, Ebadi, and Ebrahimi-Marjal (2015), the Canadian Language Benchmarks Support Kit (Centre for Canadian language Benchmarks, 2012) introduces a framework for devising pragmatic content in textbooks; it offers topics which vary in accordance with proficiency levels. Such frameworks would be very insightful for Algerian EFL textbook-writers and teachers.

As the focus of the present paper has been restricted to the third year textbook, it is not inconceivable that dissimilar evaluations of the pragmatic content would have arisen if the focus had been on the other two textbooks (i.e. first and second year second-generation manuals) as well. It is therefore recommended that further research should explore pragmatic knowledge in these coursebooks.

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