Analysis of pragmatic-discursive errors in an Oral Corpus of the English Language

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تحليل الأخطاء البراجماتية الخطابية في مجموعة نصوص شفوية للغة الإنجليزية

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Abstract

: This study compares the speech of four (N=4) native speakers (control group) to the oral production of forty English as a second language learners to assess their pragmatic-discursive ability. Interviews with university students who speak more than nine native languages and are classified as having low-intermediate proficiency in A2 (N=20) and B1 (N=20) comprise the student interlanguage corpus from which the data originate. Research on learner corpora, including computer-assisted error analysis and contrastive interlanguage analysis, is part of the methodology used. Coherence, which refers to the statement's logical structure and the existence or lack of contradictions, and cohesion, which includes the use of discourse markers, deictic and anaphoric phrases, repetition of elements, and transitions between the present and past, are the main topics of the study. The analysis includes cultural errors, functional exponents, and registers at the pragmatic level. Finally, receptive mistakes and other pragmatic-discursive flaws are addressed. Although there is considerable variation across individuals, the results of this corpus show that cohesion errors are more common. The evolution of the English language corpus and the applications for corpus processing and analysis will be covered in detail. This can be a starting point for academic discussions about the viability of creating an English language corpus model and using it for English language study and learning at the university level.

Keywords: pragmatics-discourse, research in student corpus, English language, oral interlanguage.

الملخص:

تقارن هذه الدراسة بين كلام أربعة (N= ٤) من المتحدثين الأصليين للغة (مجموعة التحكم) والإنتاج الشفوي لأربعين من متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة ثانية لتقييم قدرتهم على الخطابة البراجماتية. تتألف المقابلات مع طلاب الجامعات الذين يتحدثون أكثر من تسع لغات أصلية والمصنفين على أنهم يتمتعون بكفاءة متوسطة منخفضة في A2 (٢٠ = N) و B1 (٢٠ = N) من مجموعة النصوص بين الطلاب والتي تنشأ منها البيانات. يعد البحث في مجموعات المتعلمين، بما في ذلك تحليل الأخطاء بمساعدة الكمبيوتر وتحليل النصوص بين الطلاب المقارن، جزءًا من المنهجية المستخدمة. التماسك، الذي يشير إلى البنية المنطقية للبيان ووجود أو عدم وجود تناقضات، والتماسك، الذي يشمل استخدام علامات الخطاب والعبارات الإشارية والتشبيهية وتكرار العناصر والانتقالات بين الحاضر والماضي، هي الموضوعات الرئيسية للدراسة. يتضمن التحليل الأخطاء الثقافية والأسس الوظيفية والسجلات على المستوى البراجماتي. أخيرًا، تمت معالجة الأخطاء الاستقبالية وغيرها من العيوب البراجماتية الخطابية. وعلى الرغم من وجود اختلاف كبير بين الأفراد، فإن نتائج هذا النص تظهر أن أخطاء التماسك أكثر شيوعًا. وسيتم تناول تطور نص اللغة الإنجليزية وتطبيقات معالجة النص وتحليله بالتفصيل. ويمكن أن يكون هذا نقطة انطلاق للمناقشات الأكاديمية حول جدوى إنشاء نموذج نص اللغة الإنجليزية واستخدامه لدراسة اللغة الإنجليزية وتعلمها على مستوى الجامعة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الخطاب البراجماتي، البحث في نص الطلاب، اللغة الإنجليزية، التواصل الشفهي بين اللغات.

Introduction

Pragmatic-discursive competence has received considerable interest from the English language research community in recent decades. In parallel to the abundance of descriptive studies, there has been a proliferation of works on its acquisition or learning in second/foreign languages. This is explained by the fact that communicative competence, which is the capacity to use appropriate language in every communicative circumstance, is developed by learning pragmatic information (Taguchi, 2018). The consequences of pragmatic failure can be more severe in the social aspect than errors committed at the grammatical or lexical level, especially when the non-native speaker has a high level of linguistic competence and is confident about his or her ability to communicate. The acquisition of pragmatic-discursive competence has been studied from the perspective of discourse analysis or interlinguistic pragmatics or pragmalinguistics, although not exclusively (Mao, 2021). Although they focused on written texts, the error analysis methodology also provided original results from the first works of Puspita, Dian. (2019).Corpus linguistics is an empirical method in linguistic analysis and description to examine the language used by speakers naturally (Qadir, *et al* 2023). This method is increasingly widely used to analyse various linguistic problems broadly and can reveal interesting, fundamental, and even "surprising" things from existing linguistic data. The focus has been oriented towards orality due to the interest in studying speech as a dynamic form of communication and the greater availability of technical means (digital recorders or audio processing programs) facilitating data collection (Adnyani, 2020). Thus, many contributions have been made through the analysis of oral production, especially of discourse markers. Here it refers to studies such as those by Kassim, et al (2023), based on three interviews with international students at a higher level according to CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages), or Cephe, et al (2014), who studied the markers used in oral communication by 26 students at B2. In similar works, the influence of the type of instruction on the acquisition of specific markers has been examined. There are other works, such as (Adam, 2024) work on connectivity (coordinating and subordinating) in Arabic-speaking students, in which cohesion was addressed from a syntactic and not strictly discursive perspective. When reading the published literature on these areas, the delimitation of the discursive or grammatical level becomes more blurred, which seems to be, ultimately, a question of analytical perspective.Jiazhen (2023) points out that the analysis of pronunciation and intonation errors can "avoid pragmatic errors and make intercultural communication effective and successful". His research focuses on analysing pragmatic errors at the phonetic level of Chinese-speaking students. This is an example of the most recent studies on EA that opens up to pragmatic competence because, as Shakir, Abdullah. (2008) points out, "in the field of ELE, we still have the challenge of developing studies dedicated exclusively to conflicts of a communicative, pragmatic or cultural nature".From a contrastive perspective, Mohammed, Samir. (2022) analyses some paralinguistic and bodily gestures of Arabic and English speakers based on pragmatic comparisons of these two cultures. Thus, this author points out the differences in gestures, facial expressiveness, spatial and temporal distribution, greeting, silence and speaking turns. The results of this research point out the importance of addressing certain intercultural content according to the stages of cultural learning. In addition, it points out the importance of empirical research on conversational analysis to improve intercultural competence. According to Tsai, P.-S. (2023), errors made by Chinese-speaking learners in writing, semantic errors of TAM (tense, aspect, mood) and errors concerning conjugations come second among all types of errors, representing a proportion of 15%. We can, therefore, affirm that Chinese-speaking learners do not master verbs well. This could be explained by the fact that verbs are invariable in Chinese, so mastering verbs in French, which involves the acquisition of conjugation, agreement, and TAM (tense, aspect, mood), is particularly difficult for the Chinese. This observation leads us to propose to establish a detailed diagnosis that will allow us to understand their difficulties better. We believe that analysing Chinese-speaking learners' verbal errors in writing provides us with a practical approach to addressing this problem.Once the specific objectives have been set, a series of research works are presented that address errors in the foreign language classroom from different approaches: phonetic, grammatical, lexical-semantic, and pragmatic errors, etc. These analyses are addressed more in written production than in oral production. Based on these investigations, the most frequently used errors are identified, and the interest in developing a characterisation of lexical-pragmatic errors arises. Next, the concepts of error, error analysis (EA), pragmatic competence, lexical competence, oral expression ability and lexical-pragmatic error are presented.This article aims to contribute to the knowledge of the acquisition process of the discursive pragmatic level of English by students of intermediate-low level. It summarises the analysis carried out within the broader research framework presented in the literature. It refers to this work to expand on further aspects of the points we present below.

2. Presentation of the research

This study is part of the research with student corpus, explicitly adopting two methods:

▪ Contrastive Interlanguage Analysis: A contrastive analysis is carried out between native and non-native productions to observe a category's excessive or limited use (in this case, discourse markers). An alternative is to analyse the discourse of non-natives with different L1 to study the degree of linguistic (Shimada, Kazunari, 2014).

▪ Computer-aided Error Analysis: This is based on the error analysis methodology, which consists of the identification, description, classification, diagnosis, and evaluation of the error. The computer-aided error labelling stage allows errors to be retrieved according to search criteria and the frequencies of each type to be extracted (Mariappan, 2022).

The corpus methodology has been increasingly used in research on second language acquisition. For English, there are already resources such as the ICLEV2 (The International Corpus of Learner English (Version 2)) corpus of texts (Granger, 2009).

2.1. Participants and corpus design

The participants included forty (N = 40) international university students enrolled in exchange programs and learning English as a second language. Each student, except one, was pursuing an undergraduate or graduate degree between 19 and 26 years. It was limited to academic English usage in the research framework. Level-wise, half of the students (N=20) were studying at the threshold level (B1), while the other half were at the platform level (A2). Data was collected from over nine different linguistic backgrounds, including Romance languages (Italian, French, and Portuguese), Germanic languages (German and Dutch), Slavic (Polish), Sino-Tibetan (Chinese), and Japanese, by interviewing four students for each mother tongue group (henceforth L1). Another mixed group comprises four students who speak Finnish, Korean, Turkish, and Hungarian as their first languages. A balance in the ten groups' speaker levels and genders was not attained because of the students' availability.

On the other hand, four (N=4) native speakers (control group) of similar educational level and age were interviewed, following the same data collection procedures. These interviews were used as a reference point to compare oral production (e.g., use of discourse markers) and to reveal phenomena common in both groups' speech. Each interview lasted 15-20 minutes, and approximately an hour was recorded for each group (the students' data add up to over thirteen hours). The recordings were made between the 2021-22, 2022-23 and 2023-2024 academic years.Regarding learning English, some informants had gotten official tuition in their home countries, while others had begun in Madrid, combining formal instruction with acquisition in a natural milieu. They all studied in an immersion setting for several months before being interviewed.

2.2. Method of data collection

The informants (both native and non-native) were recorded while the researcher conducted a semi-structured interview with them. Participation was voluntary (with signed consent), and they were then explained their mistakes. After a short presentation (in which the students reported on their studies, knowledge of other languages or years of learning English), everyone had to perform the same tasks to obtain comparable data. The sampling techniques were similar to those of the language tests:

▪ An explanation of two different kinds of food

▪ Using past tenses and discourse cohesion devices, students are given a narrative job based on two stories depicted in vignettes. They are also asked to respond to a question regarding two speech acts (a request and a recommendation).

To get more spontaneous speech, the participants were asked to share their thoughts on various topics (such as changes in their present eating habits) in the last section of the interview.

2.3. Data processing and analysis

Interviews were transcribed manually using Transana®2 software, following the conventions of the C-ORAL-ROM (Integrated Reference Corpora for Spoken Romance Languages). Transcripts were annotated using GRAMPAL, a morphological analyser for English adapted for treating oral data. GRAMPAL processes phrases (e.g., *thanks to*) and discourse markers, often units of several words: POR. OTRO, LADO, QUIERO DECIR, POR ESO, etc. A manual review of the annotation was carried out to correct ambiguities due to the automatic assignment of categories. The ambiguities were due to homonymy (e.g. *Okay* can be a name, 'guard', or a discourse marker), erroneous categorisation (e.g. bueno, which can be an adjective in *good man* or a discourse marker in *Man! Well...*) or erroneous segmentation of the phrases (e.g. That is to say, it is not a marker in What it does is say nonsense). Morphological annotation has allowed us to extract lists of the frequency of use of categories, among them discourse markers.

In parallel to this annotation, the analysis and labelling of pragmatic-discursive errors were carried out. To do this, a typology of errors was designed based on previous works, and a set of labels in XML were created. The errors were manually labelled, and the documents were integrated into a computer interface for consultation and counting each error type.

3. Results

Of the total number of errors corrected in the analysis (6838), 245 were considered pragmatic-discursive (3.58%). The deviations were related to:

▪ Errors in discourse formation (237) led to issues with message cohesion (192).
▪ Coherence or internal logic of the contents (45 errors).
▪ Pragmatically appropriate language (4 errors).
▪ Misunderstandings and comprehension errors (4).

In other works (Breeze. 2011). these deviations are referred to as errors of relevance from a communicative criterion. In any case, the analysis of these errors is more open to other interpretations than at different levels, so it seems more appropriate to deal with the pragmatic-discursive level from a qualitative approach without presenting an excessively detailed quantitative analysis.

3.1. Discourse errors

A total of 237 errors were recorded, although the count must be considered indicative since the format for obtaining data (a semi-structured interview) is not the most appropriate for analysing discursive competence, as it could be an oral argumentative presentation. Likewise, although there are studies on discursive analysis, the demarcation of erroneous units is more problematic than at other levels, such as grammar. Error criteria vary between works on the topic. The problem is evaluating discursive production without first defining the qualities of a good discourse. When analysing the interviews, doubts arose, for example, about whether to correct polysyndeton in speech or how many times to mark the abuse of the same nexus (one error for each connector or indicating globally that the cohesion is poor?).

Likewise, specific errors can be recorded at other linguistic levels, posing problems for noting errors, as in other projects (Mertosono, et al., 2023). A clear example is cohesive relationships, established using connectors (coordination, which would also be included at the grammatical level) or deictic and anaphoric relationships (personal, demonstrative, possessive pronouns, etc.). In the study by Taguchi (2018), certain inaccuracies are included among the discursive errors that are not counted in this work because they were considered grammatical errors. For example, the incorrect choice of the definite/indefinite article to actualise or present the noun in the statement (see the following example; the document reference is indicated in parentheses):

(1) *EME: yes / and → there is a customer // a man // in a restaurant or something like that // and there is a waiter /// and a man → / wants / something to eat /// (TURWB1)

In addition, we could also include errors related to prepositions and subordinate clauses, which posed many problems for Chinese and Japanese students, making their speech abrupt and poorly cohesive (Du et al. 2024). In this work, we decided to address only the following cases at the discursive level:

▪ Anaphoric or deictic (pronouns or demonstratives) that created ambiguity in interpreting the referent.
▪ Changes between the present and past affected the coherence of the statement.
▪ Certain errors in quantifiers caused ambiguity and incoherence.

In short, the figures collected here seem sufficient to support general trends that, in a few cases, revealed particularities associated with a linguistic origin. Analysing the interviews, it is clear that the interlanguage discourse competence of each student often reflects the idiolect of his or her L1 (and thus his or her rhetorical skills, whether rich or poor). The low-intermediate level student already has a personal style of discourse organisation when faced with English as a second (or third) language and can transfer it to the latter. However, he or she indeed lacks the linguistic mechanisms of Castilian.

3.1.1. Cohesion

Connectors and discourse markers

This includes errors of omission, unnecessary use or incorrect choice of connectors and discourse markers. Sometimes, the assignment of the error to the discourse or grammatical level is unclear, mainly when it affects sentence coordination (e.g. English * and Italian, 'e'). The following cases were assigned to the discourse level:

▪ Incorrectness that went beyond the sentence scope (although in speech, the delimitation of the utterance is very blurred); thus, cases such as the incorrect choice of a nexus in phrases (not two *but three, 'but') are omitted here.

▪ Contexts in which the cohesive relationship that the speaker wanted to express is not clear; e.g., he is thinking about what he wanted for dinner Ø is it fish or other things, '*thinking if it is fish*', '*that is fish…*', '*and it is fish…*'?.

Likewise, like other researchers (Sánchez Iglesias, 2003), the transfer of discourse markers from the L1 could have been included in this section, e.g., 'for that reason'. 13 cases were recorded (9 in A2 and 4 in B1). Likewise, six errors could have been considered due to incorrect formation of markers: e.g., on the other side ('on the other hand'). In the present analysis, both types of error were considered lexical.

First, conjunctions and discourse markers ($mm.dd.$ onwards) are described according to the classification of Hammad, Wafa. (2023). The data show an increase in these particles in B1 (3808, 14.43% of the lexical units, hereafter, $uu.ll.$) compared to A2 (3685, 13.99%). Above all, there is an increase in $mm.dd.$, but the students are far from the natives (18.18% of $uu.ll.$; figure 1 and table 1). The data by group are shown in Figure 2.

Table 1. Conjunctions and discourse markers by level and in native speakers (% uu. ll.)

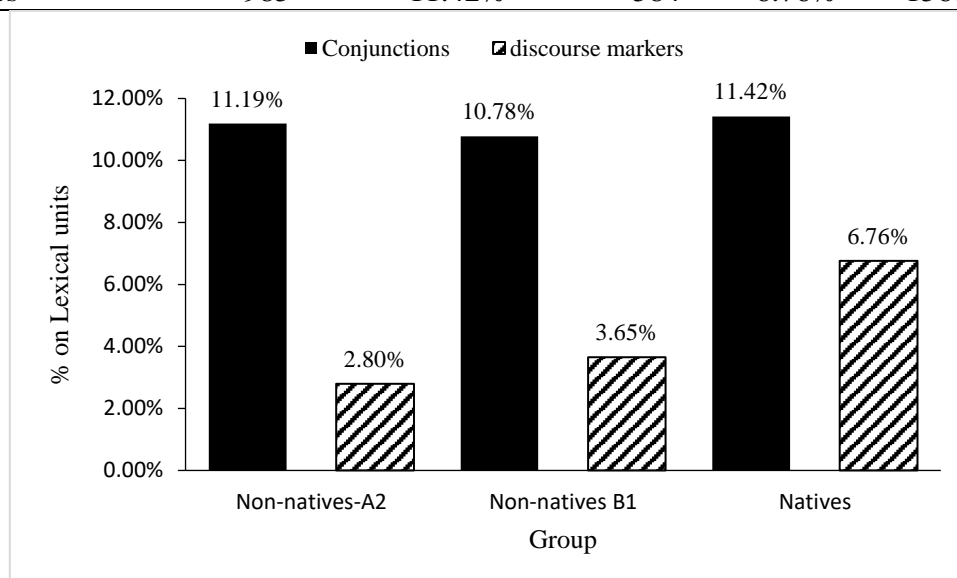| Groups		Conjunctions		mm.dd		Total	
		Frequency	% $uu.ll.$	Frequency	% $uu.ll.$	Frequency	% $uu.ll.$
Non-natives	A-2	2946	11.19%	739	2.80%	3685	13.99%
	B-1	2845	10.78%	963	3.65%	3808	14.43%
	Total	5791	10.98%	1701	3.23%	7492	14.21%
Natives		985	11.42%	584	6.76%	1568	18.18%

Figure 1. Conjunctions and discourse markers by level and in natives (% $uu.ll.$)
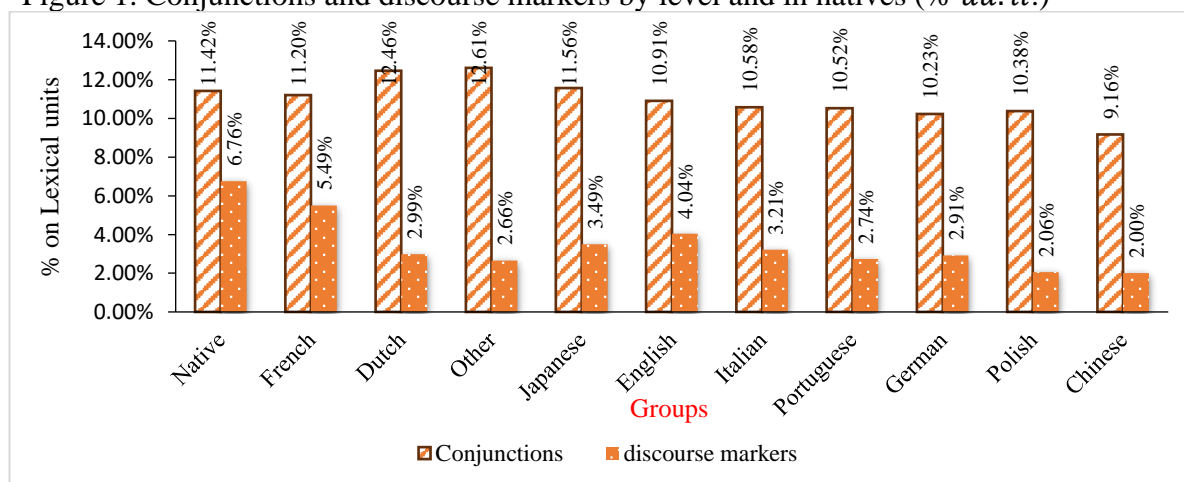

Figure 2. Conjunctions and discourse markers by L1 and in natives

Table 2: Conjunctions and discourse markers (mm. dd.) in non-natives and natives (by L1 groups)

L1	$Conjunctions$	M	SD	% $uu.ll.$	$mm.dd.$	M	SD	% $uu.ll.$	$Total$	M	SD	% $uu.ll.$
Native	993	245.75	67.96	11.42%	588	145.5	69.74	6.76%	1581	195.63	83.28	18.18%

French	725	179.5	35.43	11.20%	356	88	46.22	5.49%	1081	133.75	62.01	16.68%
Dutch	652	161.5	38.06	12.46%	157	38.75	11.7	2.99%	809	100.13	70.6	15.45%
Other	607	150.25	24.27	12.61%	128	31.75	15.69	2.66%	735	91	66.11	15.27%
Japanese	544	134.75	66.95	11.56%	165	40.75	27.74	3.49%	709	87.75	69.11	15.05%
Italian	655	162.25	42.43	10.58%	199	49.25	31.53	3.21%	854	105.75	69.61	13.79%
Portuguese	779	192.75	28.34	10.52%	203	50.25	20.53	2.74%	982	121.5	79.54	13.26%
German	473	117	11.6	10.23%	134	33.25	46.59	2.91%	607	75.13	46.59	13.14%
Polish	556	137.5	43.18	10.38%	110	27.25	8.62	2.06%	666	82.38	65.6	12.43%
Chinese	332	82.25	22.91	9.16%	73	18	5.48	2.00%	405	50.13	37.65	11.16%

It can be observed that the students who used the most significant number of markers and connectors were the French, with values closer to the natives, and the least were the Chinese students (followed by Germans and Poles). The results in these groups could be related to typological factors and incredibly show the difficulties of Chinese students in using cohesion mechanisms. They can also be explained by the influence of instruction since the teaching of discourse markers has been incorporated into the French or Anglo-Saxon language teaching tradition but not in the Chinese tradition. Regarding the other students, the results vary depending on whether the absolute values or those normalised concerning the uu re-observed. $ll.$. It should be noted that this value is not the most appropriate for quantifying cohesive relationships since the number of words in each group does not necessarily have to be associated with the number of constituents between which there is cohesion. On the other hand, the production rate of these particles is biased by repetitions and hesitations:

(2) *ROS: *and* [/] *and* [/] *and the* [/] the English / eat &mm [/] eat / white bread /// (GERWB1_2)

(3) *ALE: I would not say *that* [/] *that* [/] *that* I am one who [/] who stays @c a lot … (ITAMB1)

Consequently, the counts offered must be considered indicative due to oral disfluencies. Finally, although they are not included in the section on connectors and nexuses, the production data for prepositions and relatives could be included (Roberts, 2009), which in the Chinese group (and also the Japanese) reached the lowest levels compared to the rest of the learners, which is another piece of data that reinforces the poorer discursive cohesion of these students. Regarding errors, 137 were marked (M = 3.33 errors per student, SD = 4.96). Deviations affected 7.82% of the discourse markers used (almost one error every 13). Their appearance by level showed a slight decrease in B1 (54, M = 2.60, SD = 2.46) in relation to A2 (83, M = 4.05, SD = 6.58). Since markers also increase with the level, we can speak of positive progress towards mastery of these discursive resources (Table 3).

Table 3. Errors in discourse markers (mm. dd.); absolute and relative frequency, mean (M), standard deviation (SD) and error rate by number of mm. dd. and $uu. ll.$ of the level

CEFR level	Errors	Not ambiguous				
		Frequency (%)	M	SD	% of $mm. dd.$	% of $uu. ll.$
A2	83	60.90%	4.05	6.58	10.98%	0.31%
B1	54	39.10%	2.6	2.46	5.41%	0.20%
Total	137	100.00%	3.33	4.96	7.82%	0.25%

By group, errors are distributed as indicated in Table 4 (they are ordered according to the error rate over the number of markers, which is indicated in parentheses). It can be seen that the greater use of markers (e.g. by French or English speakers) does not necessarily reflect greater correctness (as it happens among Poles or Germans). Regarding the error rate, although the heterogeneous group was the one that presented the highest, it is actually because the Finnish student made 65.6% of the errors (23 out of 37, and almost all of the same type). The same was true for the Dutch group – where an A2 student made 65% of the errors (14 out of 26) – and for the Portuguese group – an A2 student made 17 out of 23, 69.6%. These data reflect, as mentioned, individual variability in the discourse level, which depends mainly on the student's idiolect in his or her L1, which makes it difficult to relate the number of errors to the speaker's linguistic origins. Although these data seem to attribute a poorer skill with discourse markers to the Chinese and Japanese learners (compared to other groups such as the Italian or Polish), the truth is that even in those groups, there were speakers who made many errors compared to others with a commendable command of these resources.

Table 4. Types of errors in discourse markers (mm. dd.); absolute frequency and error rate by the number of mm. dd. and $uu. ll.$ of each group

L1	Errors			Total	% of $mm.dd.$	% of $uu.ll.$
	Choice	Unnecessary	Omission			
Other	13	23	1	37	25.20%	0.67%
Chinese	7	2	3	13	15.28%	0.31%
Dutch	6	17	0	23	12.90%	0.39%
Japanese	5	17	0	22	11.66%	0.41%
Portuguese	13	14	0	26	11.44%	0.31%
French	5	13	1	18	4.55%	0.25%
German	3	1	0	5	3.01%	0.09%
Polish	1	0	0	1	0.92%	0.02%
Italian	0	1	0	1	0.51%	0.02%
Total	52	89	6	146	7.82%	0.25%

On the other hand, the counts of each type of error (omission, wrong selection or unnecessary use) are not decisive since they can vary according to other interpretations. In any case, the majority trend was the superfluous use of connectors together with repetition, incorrect choice, and occasionally omission. In the following, each mechanism is addressed in this order.

Errors due to unnecessary use of connectors or markers or repetition of the same were the most numerous (89). The following are some problematic contexts:

(4) *JUL: the customer is *asking for advice on → / the menu ///
*ENT: yes ///
*JUL: and the waiter should say that the chicken is very good /// so that (…) the customer orders chicken. (PORWA2_1)

(5) *JUL: after / &eh / &ah he also asks for a wine / to drink // and that he is happy (PORWA2_1)

(6) *NUN: and that is why English classes are important that is why (PORMA2)

(7) *ENT: the custom maybe of / eating at midday is a bit longer → <time, right?>
*FAN: [<] <yes / like> the break here at the university is from two to four (…) which in France is from twelve to two (…)
*ENT: and / was it a bit difficult for you or not → that much? (…)
*FAN: it is fine /// like the first week a bit strange but afterwards (…) fine (FREWB1)

(8) *MSU: I was wondering how / &ah // you don't have / another card like a passport? (JAPWB1_2)

(9) *ENT: when you → can't / get people to understand you // you want to express a word that you don't / remember for example → or you don't &t [/] manage to communicate well // what do you do?
*MAR: I ask /// it's like what does it mean...
*ENT: or → / &eh you use your hands gestures <o> …
*MAR: [<] <yes> when [/] when not [/] it's like when I don't know (…) the correct word is like [onomatopoeia]… (DUTWA2_2)

(10) *YTO: and I also like to read books (…) and so I want to read an English book
('and' or 'so') (JAPWB1_3)The unnecessary use of links was a support mechanism to assemble the constituents in the statement, perhaps by hypercorrection or even to gain time to think (and that the waiter let me know that the chicken is delicious). The use of $that$ (6 cases) in specific contexts even seemed to be due to the speaker attributing to it a function of other markers, such as well (e.g., after (…) the customer orders chicken) or $then$ (Also ask for a wine to drink and you are happy). This resource seems unconscious and was not widespread (it only appeared repeatedly in one Portuguese student and three French students). In another 6 cases, the error lay in the use of $that$ with another nexus (but what, and so, then that), perhaps as a mechanism to reinforce cohesion. However, the most widespread phenomenon in different groups (and which was marked in the most significant number, 67 cases) was the expletive use of the adverb as, frequently in the construction es as, although 2 uses of the English like were also recorded. This marker usually expresses a softening or approximation of an idea; learners. However, poor cohesive resources used it in any context, so it sounded forced or unnecessary (although the correctness of certain contexts is debatable). Although it is not severe and does not impede understanding, it is stigmatising and fossil sable:

(11) *REM: [<] <there is> like fondue bourguignonne /// which is like → pieces of meat (FREMB1)

This tendency is also quite frequent in youth speech, although it was not recorded in the control group. In other cases, although less frequently, students used *as* to introduce indirect speech (I was wondering *as* ¿don't you have another card as a passport?).

Regarding repetition and the lack of variety of connectors, foreign speakers often overused a conjunction or discourse marker that can become a crutch, which makes the non-native's speech monotonous. The most frequently repeated units were:

• and as an illative conjunction, as occurs in the speech of children or poorly educated people:

(12) *LAY: and → / I → [/] like English a lot /// and → / well / it's that / now he speaks → &ah [/] I speak / English / and Dutch / and / I wanted to learn another language / to [/] to &eh improve / my [/]

*ENT: very <good> ///

*LAY: ¬ [<] <my> international knowledge and ... (DUTWA2_1)

In the control group, there were also cases of polysyndeton and abuse of and (see example below), so these phenomena were not marked as errors. However, it would be advisable for students at higher levels to avoid them.

(13) *VAL: and then you get used to [/] that and you have to do it and I think you get used to it and ...

*ENT: <hhh {%act: assent}> ///

*VAL: [<] <and the> best thing is to go to an academy ///

*ENT: hhh {%act: assent} ///

*VAL: and then / well watch movies in <English → > ... (SPAW_2)

• then or because of that as consecutive connector, which sometimes lose meaning (see example).

(14) *JUS: and then I was very / undecided whether to come or not ///

*ENT: <of course> ///

*JUS: [<] <and then> / for nothing / and / suddenly / &eh I felt / good / and then I'm going to Spain to learn English /// (PORWA2_2)

(15) *JIY: ¬ [<] <when> I speak English comes out first that's why hhh {%act: laugh} / it's very difficult to speak English now <also hhh {%act: laugh}> ///

*ENT: [<] <hhh {%act: assent}> ///

*JIY: that's why I'm very sad because / English and / English / both are not / perfect ... that's why hhh {%act: laugh} ... (KORWB1)

Regarding then, excessive use was recorded among participants in the control group (see an example context):

(16) *DAR: [<] <bah! then / there were> [/] there were a lot of us // and then / well / the girls drink &m → [/] they drank less /// and then they said // ah! such // have the beer // have the beer /// well / then / a little group of us got together there // with twenty beers hhh {%act: laugh} (SPAM_2)

Thus, it did not seem necessary to correct it –that said, using other links such as therefore or thus would provide greater richness and variation to the discourse–.

▪but as an adversative or counter argumentative connector:

(17) * JUL: I think that the → first five days were / the [/] not worse // but as a good experience but → difficult /// but /

*ENT: <hhh {%act: assent}> ///

*JUL: ¬ [<] <&de> [/] afterwards no /// (FREWA2)

The natives themselves in the control group also produced this same phenomenon, and for this reason it was not judged convenient to mark it as erroneous (although it would be advisable to use other connectors such as however or although in order not to produce a monotonous speech):

(18) *VAL: &eh / but → / as a general rule / it seems to me a very nice country / but I would not live in it (SPAW_2)

Only the following context was marked in which the repetition of but seems to show more clearly a poverty of cohesive resources:

(19) *LAU: I like → the hamburger but I don't like chips /// and (...) I've eaten paella in Ibiza /// and it was the best food in Ibiza /// but I've eaten paella in the Plaza Mayor too and I didn't like it /// but I like (...) English food /// but I don't like McDonald's and... (HUNWA2)

The errors due to incorrect choice of the discourse marker amount to 47. Below are some of the recorded contexts:

(20) *FCH: my contract is only for three years (…) well now it's two more years

('so' or 'then') (FREMA2)

(21) *JHA: and the second one, well // how do you say it? // junk food (…) that hamburger with chips and… ('so', 'well'?) (FREWA2)

(22) *AIS: it's full, isn't it? (…) it's full and so they go to a pizzeria (ENGWA2) ('then' or 'after'?)

(23) *LAY: people who don't have time eat things very quickly so a mixed sandwich doesn't seem very healthy to me ('for example'?) (DUTWA2_1)

(24) *ROS: with school / &ah / I went to Malaga / (…) <and> to Granada / and to Seville ///
*ENT: <hhh {%act: assent}> ///
*ROS: [<] <yes> /// that's why {%com: whispering} /// (GERWB1_2)

(25) *JIY: that's why in my country McDonald's (…) is open all day twenty-four hours
*ENT: <hhh {%act: assent}> ///
*JIY: [<] <because> it's not successful that's why they want to make a lot of money but Koreans don't go there ('well' or 'although'?) (KORWB1)

(26) *ENT: and then you / compare one with another // or you &co [/] tell / when you eat one thing // when you eat another ...
*EME: <hhh {%act: assent}> ///
*ENT: [<] <Okay> ?
*EME: *Okay* /// and → / one is hamburger /// and another is / paella /// (TURWB1) ('well'?)

Correcting these errors is still a proposal since it is unclear what kind of discursive nuance the speaker intended to express. However, the markers indicated seem to grate on native ears. A tendency that appeared in speakers of different native languages was the use of the conjunction y to introduce ideas in the line of the previous topic, in the manner of a commentary marker equivalent to *well*, as in native English it would sound more natural (e.g., *Okay* /// and one is *hamburger). Likewise, an expletive *that* was also frequently used: e.g., and the second *well* // how do you say it? // junk food (…) that hamburger with chips and… ('well', or even 'o sea'?). As explained above, in many of these cases, the speaker abuses the same marker and uses it to express inappropriate cohesive relations. This is what happens with the marker so that or for that reason in certain students in the corpus (see the previous examples of students KORWB1 or GERWB1_2, who used the marker even in an independent utterance, simply as an unfinished end to a turn and without a consecutive meaning).

Of the other confusions, it is worth mentioning the mistake of using well (perhaps instead of *then*) committed by an English learner (see the previous example of student ENGWA2), which could have been confusing *after*. This mistake is common among foreigners and occurred in the interview with this student.

Finally, regarding the omission of links and connectors, 5 errors were marked. In oral communication, the juxtaposition of sentences is common since pauses or intonation contribute to delimiting discursive units. Examples of this type were recorded in the control group:

(27) *JAD: as if I were in a restaurant // Ø I am reading the → [///] it is as if &e [/] I am reading the menu // Ø I am thinking <what> /
*ENT: [<] <hhh {%act: assent}> ///
*JAD: ¬ eat or have dinner + (SPAM_2)

For this reason, it was necessary to correct statements such as the following:

(28) *MAR: it is called paella Ø it is like → / with rice / and → … (DUTWA2_2)

(29) *AMA: There is a gentleman in a restaurant Ø he is / about to / choose (PORWB1)

(In the last example, the speaker could have used the Portuguese link e, which would not be perceived with the synalepha phenomenon: there is a gentleman in a restaurant and is…). The only marked cases are justified because the omission of a connector impoverishes the message or the cohesive relationship that is intended to be expressed is not clear:

(30) [Talks about his city of origin]
*FAN: for studying it seems perfect to me /// Ø I would not like to live there
('but', 'although'…?) (FREWB1)

(31) [Compares Madrid with his city of origin]
*ENT: and do you like more / this → / or <do you miss it? hhh {%act: laugh}> ///
*LIU: [<] <&mm hhh {%act: laugh}> /// I like it Ø bigger and / quieter
('that it is bigger…' or 'yes/because it is bigger…'?) (CHIWA2_1)

(32) *FAN: Spain I think / &eh paella / there are many places Ø very famous / but / they all differ little ///
(CHIWA2_2)
('because' or 'well it is very famous…'?)
(33) *LIU: [<] <now> &mm / Ø many people I can't → / go ('hear') xxx / another person
→ / has said [/] what has he said // <no>
*ENT: [<] <hhh {%act: assent}> ///
*LIU: ¬ I can <go> +
*ENT: [<] <you can't> /
*LIU: yes <yes yes> ///
*ENT: ¬ [<] <understand> <well> (CHIWA2_1)
('when there are a lot of people…', 'if there are a lot of people…', 'with a lot of people…?')
(34) *FIN: he is thinking what he wanted / &ah / for dinner // Ø is it / fish or / other things ('if it is fish…', 'what could it be fish…'?) (FINWA2)
Of the few 5 inaccuracies, 3 appeared in the Chinese group, which is related to the lack of links that contributes to the abrupt and poorly cohesive speech characteristic of these speakers. Finally, it should be noted that errors were also recorded due to the absence of introductory conjunction in subordinate clauses, but it was decided to classify them at the grammatical level, although they could also be considered cohesion (see example):
(35) *LUQ: it seems to me / Ø it is not very fun that → study [/] study here (CHIMB1)
These errors were common in Chinese, Japanese and heterogeneous group students.

Deictic and anaphoric

This section contains 37 errors (18 in A2 and 19 in B1) that affected the deictic and anaphoric relationships constructed using demonstratives, pronouns or adverbs, and which are not considered strictly grammatical. Some example contexts are shown below.
(36) [Compares hamburger and paella]
*AIS: yes that is much faster than that ('this') (ENGWA2)
(37) *THO: I know a girl who takes a course at a language school too /// and also a course here... (…) I think it's better than that (GERMA2)
(It is not clear what 'that' refers to)
(38) *FRA: I cool (...) the meat (...) I cook the potatoes and I cut it (GERWB1_1)
(It is not clear if she refers to 'the meat' or 'the potatoes')
(39) *ROS: there are two boys /// and one of them has two fingers up
('one of them) (GERWB1_2)
(40) [Talks about a type of Dutch crepes]
*MAR: but not (…) like American pancakes? They are (…) a bit smaller ('these' or 'those') (DUTWA2_2)
(41) *EVE: sometimes (…) I say things (…) that don't make sense at the moment
('at that moment') (DUTWB1)
(42) *ADC: we converted them ('convinced') that (…) we can sleep here
('there') (POLMB1)
(43) *YTO: and in the end a boy looked for the restaurant (JAPWB1_3)
('one of the boys')
The most frequent error (28 cases) affected the expression of deixis through demonstratives (using the form this instead of *that* in the expression of a temporal reference far from the present moment). The problems concentrated on the German, Dutch, Polish, Japanese and English students. Two other errors were caused by using the same demonstrative to refer to something that had just been mentioned in the speech, contrasting it with another element (for which a native speaker would vary the demonstrative: I like that more than that, 'this'). Two other errors were due to the use of a personal pronoun instead of the demonstrative (they are (…) more minor, 'these'), or the other way around (there are two boys /// and one of them has two fingers up). Both cases can create misunderstandings in the message. Ambiguous meanings can also be caused by the absence of personal pronouns (a friend, 'one of the friends') or their incorrect choice (I cold (…) the meat (…) and (…) I cook the potatoes. I cut it, 'the', 'the meat', or 'the', 'the potatoes'?), although the intended meaning can be assumed from knowledge of the world.

Repetitions

The errors included here seem more related to the discursive level because they are not ungrammatical but rather characteristic of an overly expressive style alien to communicative precision. The occasional errors amounted to only 5 cases (2 in A2 and 3 in B1). Here are some examples:

(44) *ROS: I study English because I already studied English at school (GERWB1_2)

(45) *JAN: After lunch Mr. (…) likes his food (ENGWB1_1)

Repetitions of lexical items may reveal certain syntactic deficits, such as the absence of anaphoric pronouns or demonstratives:

(46) *STE: he has studied / English / &pua [/] for a long time /

*ENT: hhh {%act: assent} ///

*STE: ¬ and → / they do not speak / English / much and they do not &en [/] &en [/] understand English ('they don't understand it') (DUTMA2)

However, it is also possible that lexemes were repeated due to the lack of a lexical item and in general, the lack of variety in the speaker's vocabulary (see example):

(47) *AYA: [<] <I cook> in France /

*ENT: hhh {%act: assent} ///

*AYA: ¬ Japanese cuisine /// (JAPWA2)

('I cook Japanese dishes in France' or 'Japanese recipes')

However, the learner who encounters a lexical difficulty usually resorts to communicative strategies of paraphrasing, and especially gestures, borrowings or restructuring the message. Precisely, the strategy of abandoning the statement is more frequent in the spoken language than the repetition of elements, which seems more common in the students' texts. This would explain that errors due to repetition were not abundant in this oral corpus.

Changes between present and past

Errors due to changes between present and past tense at the pragmatic-discursive level produced ambiguity in the message or went beyond the scope of the simple sentence, since they affected verbs that appeared in the present tense concerning previous statements introduced in the past (or vice versa). The effect produced is an unexpected change in the temporal perspective. It is true that in some contexts, the assignment is doubtful concerning the grammatical or discursive level, but in any case, the error count is not affected. On the other hand, these errors can also be considered related to textual coherence, as indicated by Ali *et al*. (2016). However, it has been preferred to include them in the cohesion section.

Following this criterion, 17 errors were marked (8 in A2 and 9 in B1). Some relevant examples are the following:

(48) *AIS: it's complete and so they go to a pizzeria but it's closed (…) and in the end, they went to Burger King (ENGWA2)

(49) *JIY: they decide to go there but (…) they couldn't enter this restaurant because it's (…) closed /// that's why a boy who was in front of this restaurant… (KORWB1)

(50) [Tells an anecdote]

*ROS: the man I gave (…) the passport and he // ah! young young man // he speaks (…) like a young man and // ah! but it doesn't matter // and he gave me a (…) pass for the older ones? (GERWB1_2)

The errors are justified by the spontaneity of speech (in which there is greater formal relaxation and less concentration), and the simplification would explain the uses of the present –which is the most used tense in oral expression even among native speakers–. Indeed, the interviewer himself occasionally made this mistake:

(51) *ENT: [<] <before> / he asked /

*EVE: oh! he asked for +

*ENT: ¬ advice / because he doesn't know what to eat, right? (DUTWB1)

In these cases, once the *preterite* is used in the introductory sentences of the narrative time frame, that tense already seems to be implicit in the discourse. However, the frequency of this error in learners is not comparable to that of natives, since in the control group, when the speaker related an anecdote or took the narrative test, there were no changes in verbal tense once the narrative time frame was established in the present or past. Thus, these errors also reveal grammatical deficits related to conjugation or the use of the past. Omisakin *et al* (2024) comment that these errors are recorded mainly in Japanese learners. However, with the data presented here, it is impossible to evaluate the degree of influence of the student's L1 in this aspect. As regards their communicative impact, most of the errors do not confuse the interpretation of the message. Only one ambiguity was recorded in the context indicated below.

(52) *JHA: the first → day of class / I had a teacher who → [/] who spoke very well /// and → [/] but then I also have a teacher who does not → make any effort to communicate well // for you know? [/] for Erasmus students (FREWA2)

The student did not make it clear whether he was speaking in general about a current situation at that time or was referring to his first day of class and made an unjustified change to the present tense. In this case, the agreement of tenses is needed: he spoke ('spoke') very well (…) then I had a teacher who did not make any effort…

Conclusions on Cohesion Errors

The cohesion errors in speech showed the following trends:

▪ Individual heterogeneity in the mastery of cohesive resources occurred without a significant influence of the L1, yet issues were noted in specific groups:

▪ Chinese students make inferior use of markers and conjunctions.

▪ More errors in deictics and anaphorics among Germans, Poles, Dutch, and Japanese.

▪ Positive evolution in the usage of discourse markers, but not so much in deixis and anaphora, temporal coherence, or the absence of lexical reiterations.

3.1.2. Coherence

The section on discourse coherence includes errors that produced:

▪ Ambiguities in the message and lack of univocal references.

▪ Unnecessary digressions regarding the main idea.

▪ Inconsistencies in meaning.

According to this criterion, 45 errors were marked (plus one ambiguous one), distributed as follows: 29 (plus one ambiguous one) in A2 and 16 in B1. Although the decrease in inaccuracies would be associated with the progress of level, this is because a significant set of coherence errors appear due to a lack of linguistic mastery of structures such as concordance or the nuances of certain quantifiers, which produce incongruent statements if they are poorly constructed, as explained below. Here are some contexts (you need to consult the full transcripts to understand them):

(53) *FIN: I don't normally eat the menu of the day /// (…) but sometimes when I don't have food and I don't have time to cook it (…) I don't buy it /// (ENGMB1)

(It's unclear what he means: 'the menu'? 'a sandwich'?... A negation doesn't seem logical either: 'I buy it [the menu]')

(54) [The teacher asks what a student can do to improve his English]

*FRA: he always talked about it in Spain. (GERWA2)

(It's unclear who he means: foreign or English students?)

(55) *FRA: it seems that he is in a restaurant and talks to a waiter about what he wants to eat (…)

*ENT: [<] <he asks> / for advice, right?

*FRA: Ah! Yes /// asks him/her for advice on eating chicken (GERWB1_1)

(He/she repeats the interviewer's words without fully understanding the message)

(56) *JAS: I have been in Madrid since September... (FINWA2)

(He/she is in Madrid at the moment, but he/she uses a past tense to refer to this fact)

(57) *AYA: there are some classmates (JAPWA2)

(It is not clear whether he/she is referring to men, women or both)

[He/she talks about how Spaniards go out to party more than Japanese people]

(58) *MAN: but here (…) every day (…) and he/she sleeps a little (JAPWB1_1)

(Here poco is more appropriate, because of its negative nuance, 'scarce', instead of un poco, 'algo'; it does not seem that the speaker knows the difference)

In a set of 28 errors, the student did not seem to know the difference between poco/un poco, which It changes the nuance of the utterance and produces inconsistencies in the linguistic context (however, only in a few cases is the error serious because the meaning is confusing). Two other errors (and one ambiguous) related to gender agreement caused inconsistencies regarding the sex of the masculine or feminine referent so that it was not clear whether the speaker was referring to a man or a woman. Other errors that produced ambiguous utterances were related to the expression of time (I have been in Madrid since September...) or the limited use of connectors or anaphoric references (he always spoke with it). It is expected that these types of errors will disappear as linguistic mastery improves. In another 4 contexts, it is simply not known what the speaker wants to express.

However, many of these coherence errors were due to a lack of concentration on the oral expression, and only a tiny part was problematic regarding the interpretation of the message.

3.2. Pragmatic errors

This section studies aspects related to so-called interlinguistic pragmatics, although due to the design of the study, the data are scarce on this point. Only five errors associated with pragmatic competence were marked, which according to Bachman's model (1998) can affect:

▪ Illocutionary sub competence (knowledge of the resources to express a communicative act; e.g., a request): errors due to the incorrect choice of functional exponents to express a speech act.

▪ Sociolinguistic sub competence (the ability to use language appropriately to the communicative situation): e.g., errors due to inadequacy to the formal or informal register.

Along with these points, errors due to the speaker's knowledge of the world or his cultural beliefs, which form the sociocultural competence, are usually considered.

Regarding the register, the data from this corpus are not the most appropriate to know the degree to which the student masters the diaphasic varieties, since the situation in which the interview took place was informal so that the language samples reflect only colloquialisms (e.g., uncle) or markers of closeness with the speaker (informal address or conversational markers such as ¿*You know*?). The two errors marked only appeared in the vignette test, in which the student was asked to formulate a request and a proposal:

(59) *ENT: and if you are this character / how do you say / to the waiter?

*SOR: hey // waiter / hhh {%act: laugh} give me the bill? (ENGWB1_2)

('takes me')

(60) *ENT: what would you say to the &a [/] friend / in this cartoon? if you were / this character / hhh {%act: ENT points at the man in the picture} ...

*LAU: yes /// # does he want to go to [/] another / restaurant or ? ('want') (HUNWA2)

The last example is ambiguous because the inadequacy could also be due to the confusion between two forms of the verbal paradigm (1st or 2nd person).

Regarding the choice of functional exponents, two errors were recorded:

(61) *ROS: you can [/] you [/] you / ask / to [/] the English // &ah &pue [/] can you / &ah take my notes ? // ah! yes yes yes / possible // and / that's it

('okay' or 'agreed') (GERWB1_2)

(62) *ENT: if you are this character / how can you tell your → friend / that → / you are going to the burger joint

*AYA: hhh {%act: question} /// what &des [/] what does he say?

*ENT: hhh {%act: assent} ///

*AYA: come / hhh {%act: laugh} ///

*ENT: let's go to the burger joint for example... let's go to the burger joint?

(The expression of the proposal is not clear) (JAPWA2)

Finally, a cultural error was observed in the narrative test with the vignettes. In the last drawing, a German speaker interpreted that the character was ordering a shot, as is sometimes done after dessert in reputable restaurants, instead of thanking the waiter for the food and asking for the bill:

(63) *ENT: hhh {%act: assent} /// and at the end he asks for something, right? he makes a <gesture> //

*THO: [<] <&eh yes> I think <it's a> [/]

*ENT: ¬ [<] <with the hand> ...

*THO: ¬ yes a shot &mm ...

*ENT: <&eh> ...

*THO: [<] <&eh> / ah!

*ENT: well / he [/] asks him <to pay, right?>

*THO: [<] <ah! yes yes the bill> the <bill yes yes> /// (GERMA2)

Although the speaker misinterprets the story, the error does not fail to show his knowledge of patterns of behaviour in our culture.

The limited data in this corpus do not allow us to delve deeper into the progress in the acquisition of the pragmatic component, or at least to understand how an awareness of what is appropriate to each context develops (Mestre-Mestre, 2013). Optimal results in these points could confirm the degree to which it is possible to teach the pragmatic aspects. Nevertheless, the students had no difficulties in expressing the speech acts in the narrative test of the cartoons, and the only notable point was the tendency to simplify the functional exponents;

for example, using the present or imperative (*come on, let's go to the burger joint, instead of why don't we go...?; give me the bill, instead of could you bring me the bill?*), or asking a question (*what do you think of Burger King?*).

3.3. Other pragmatic-discursive errors

Here, we collect the errors that James (1998) includes in another sublevel within the discursive errors, which he calls receptive errors. These deviations can arise from a problem of understanding the linguistic component (misunderstanding), processing the intentionality or implicit connotations of the statement (misprocessing), or interpreting the message due to the knowledge of the world that the speaker has (misinterpreting). For example, four comprehension errors were recorded when the speakers did not understand the interviewer's question and their answer deviated from it:

(64) *ENT: Do you think that → / the timetables in Spain / differ from those in your country?
*LIU: hhh {%act: assent} // yes /// very different /// xxx food → / &mm / doesn't have &m [/] &mm / much mode [/] &eh &va [/] vario / mode /// (CHIWA2_1)

(65) *ENT: Do you think it's good to eat early or eat a little later like in Spain? Or what do you like more?
*LIU: yes /// it depends = ah! a single = (…) I like soup better (CHIWA2_1)

(66) [The interviewer asks if he knows where paella is typical from]
*ENT: it is eaten all over Spain / but it is from a particular region →…
*DAN: yes there are many (…) types yes (CHIWB1)

(67) *ENT: the food of now / of currently / <of the century>
*DAN: [<] <yes> ///
*ENT: ¬ twenty-one / is / for you // for [/] in your opinion // better / than / before / in the twentieth century / for example? your parents / do they <eat better>
*DAN: [<] <yes> ///
*ENT: ¬ than → you / or not?
*DAN: &mm / depends ///
*ENT: <depends> ///
*DAN: [<] <depends> / yes /// &ah / do you want → [/] do you want to say / food in China?
*ENT: <for example> ///
*DAN: [<] <yes> ?
*ENT: hhh {%act: assent} ///
*DAN: for me → / hhh {%act: click} food from China is better (CHIWB1)

All errors of this type appeared in the Chinese group, which could show the pragmatic difficulties of these students concerning the English language (although the results cannot be generalised given such a small number of participants). Receptive errors could also be considered due to the incorrect understanding of any of the tests in the cartoons. Although they are rare, they are omitted here because they go beyond the scope of the present analysis.[1]

4. Conclusions

After analysing the errors at this level, the following points can be concluded:

▪ The mastery of discursive cohesion showed significant individual variability from one student to another, and the linguistic origin of each student did not seem as decisive. However, the Chinese group showed poorer cohesion.

▪ The inconsistencies in the oral discourse were mainly due to linguistic factors (agreements or nuances between quantifiers), and only a tiny part of the inaccuracies caused comprehension problems.

▪ The casual nature of the oral interview resulted in a low number of pragmatic errors, indicating the need for a more rigorous examination to investigate them.

▪ Only the Chinese group had comprehension mistakes and misconceptions, indicating the pupils' greater difficulty. These conclusions cannot be fully generalised given the limited number of participants for each mother tongue and the reduction of the study focus to two levels (A2 and B1), which does not contribute anything to the knowledge of the acquisition of pragmatic-discursive competence at higher levels. Nevertheless, trends that would be beneficial to confirm with data from more students, mother tongues and levels, and more specific experimental tests have been explored.

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هوامش البحث

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[1] For example, in the story about two friends looking for a restaurant to eat at, four students mistook the boy with a tie in the last vignette for a passerby who was passing by. This mistake could have been motivated by the drawing in the test itself.