

## Realisation of remorse in EFL teachers: a cross-sectional interlanguage pragmatics study<sup>1</sup>

### Expresión del remordimiento en profesores de inglés: un estudio transversal de pragmática de la interlengua

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#### Abstract

The present cross-sectional study centres on interlanguage pragmatics and seeks to determine the manner in which a group of thirteen Chilean Spanish speaking teachers of English express remorse in English, in comparison with a group of thirteen native speakers of the English language. This comparison pursues to ascertain differences and/ or similarities in terms of linguistic expressions used, grammatical structures, and cultural authenticity. The data was gathered by means of a Discourse Completion Task (DCT) containing fifteen situational prompts that elicit expressions of remorse by both groups of speakers. To establish whether cultural authenticity varies, i.e., if participants would utilise similar responses in similar everyday situations, a three-question questionnaire was attached to some of the situations. The findings show that both groups express remorse quite similarly in terms of linguistic utterances and grammatical structures but vary greatly when it comes to cultural authenticity; many of the speakers of the first group did not use swearing words or expressions in English, but said they would have in a similar and real situation. This study may contribute to a better understanding of how remorse is uttered and one of its results is a coding scheme for the most utilised realisations of remorse.

**Keywords:** contrastive pragmatics, interlanguage pragmatics, remorse, language and culture.

#### Resumen

El presente estudio transversal se centra en la pragmática de la interlengua y busca determinar la forma en que un grupo de trece profesores chilenos de inglés como lengua extranjera expresan el remordimiento en inglés, en comparación con un grupo de trece hablantes nativos. Esta comparación intenta establecer si existen diferencias y/o similitudes en cuanto a las expresiones lingüísticas utilizadas, las estructuras gramaticales y la autenticidad cultural. Los datos se recogieron usando una Tarea de Completación Discursiva con quince situaciones que suscitan expresiones de remordimiento por parte de ambos grupos de hablantes. Para establecer si la autenticidad cultural varía, si los hablantes en este estudio utilizarían respuestas similares en situaciones cotidianas reales, se agregó un cuestionario de tres preguntas a algunas de las situaciones. Los resultados muestran que ambos grupos enuncian el remordimiento de forma bastante similar en cuanto a las expresiones lingüísticas y las estructuras gramaticales utilizadas, pero varían en cuanto a la autenticidad cultural dado que muchos de los hablantes del primer grupo no usaron lenguaje soez en inglés, pero dijeron que lo hubieran hecho en una situación similar o real. Este estudio contribuye a

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una mejor comprensión de cómo se expresa el remordimiento y uno de sus resultados es un esquema de codificación de las expresiones más utilizadas del remordimiento.

**Palabras clave:** pragmática contrastiva, pragmática del interlenguaje, remordimiento, lenguaje y cultura.

## Introduction

This paper contributes to the study of contrastive pragmatics from both a cross-cultural and interlanguage perspective by examining the realisation of remorse uttered by a group of Chilean Spanish speaking EFL teachers in contrast with native speakers of the English language. Remorse has been chosen as the speech act to be scrutinised since it is expected to be culturally bound and difficult to be linguistically expressed; there were no studies on the realisation of remorse from the linguistic point of view. Moreover, this study also introduces a coding scheme for the most used expressions and grammatical structures when remorse is uttered, which the literature was still lacking.

The tradition of interlanguage pragmatics studies has mostly dealt with the internal variation of utterances regarding the responses given by groups of speakers who aim to use a target language (TL) in contrast to groups of speakers whose first language is the target language. However, little is often said about the aspects leading to a speaker's word choices, namely, beliefs/ideology, traditions, experiences, and most importantly culture. For instance, when it comes to expressing emotionally loaded or adverse situations, learners of the target language may use identical expressions or grammatical structures as those who speak the language natively, but they will most definitely tend to use their mother tongue to curse or use bad words (as it is shown in this article). Thus, one can, indeed, expect to find similar correlations between the responses provided by the different groups to be investigated in terms of the expressions or the grammatical structures used, but it is worth paying more attention to differences and finding out where they come from.

This article also contributes to bear in mind that even though native and non-native speakers may not express some ideas, feelings or emotions similarly due to the influence and load of their cultures and/or beliefs, there is a great deal of correspondence in terms of the internal aspects of utterances; even such obscure ones or difficult to linguistically convey as remorse. Hence, the coding scheme was designed after the responses were gathered.

Over and above that, these results enrich the argument on whether labels such as native speaker and/or native-like are still relevant for language teaching in times when English is considered a lingua franca (Crystal, 2012) or it is no longer seen as a possession of native speakers exclusively, but rather an expanding phenomenon and product of our globalised world as Kachru's (1985) World Englishes model posits.

This article starts with a literature review collating the most relevant theoretical constructs dealing with speech act theory, interlanguage and interlanguage pragmatics as well as the procedures to gather the necessary data and continues with the methodology used to assert whether there are differences when remorse is uttered by both groups of participants. The results obtained throughout this study suggest that both groups of participants expressed remorse quite similarly, but they also give room to hold the discussion on how culture is the greatest determinant for the differences found. Furthermore, these results may provide an insight into how labels such as native speaker and native-like should be abandoned for their pedagogical implications (on native speakerism, see Holliday, 2006; Houghton, Rivers & Hashimoto, 2018; Lowe & Pinner, 2016; and Schreiber, 2019). What is more, even notions such as authenticity which represent a core part for

the current study, may also hold a negative load when it comes to teaching English as a foreign language.

It is quite relevant at this stage to indicate what is meant by authenticity. Throughout this article we use Lacoste, Leimgruber & Breyer's (2014) definition:

It may be legitimate to present authenticity as an assumedly common enterprise whose social functioning is a driving force of each individual's behaviour and is evaluated according to cultural contexts and mediated by and expressed in language. Conversely, 'inauthenticity' would manifest itself as a failure to display a person's true self in terms of their sociolinguistic individualities and/or to reject conventionalised speech behaviours which are not truly their own. Originally from Greek *authentikós* (*autós*, self), this concept has been taken to mean something that is genuine. (p. 1)

In keeping with this definition, when one says that a language learner's utterance is not 'authentic' it means that what has been said would not reflect the manner in which that speaker would naturally express any given idea in their socio-cultural context; in other words, it would not be genuine. Hence, when it is said that the greatest difference found in this study was in terms of cultural authenticity, this means that the group of Chilean Spanish speaking English as a foreign language teachers would not use curse words, swearing or blasphemy genuinely or naturally.

Finally, the dichotomy between native and non-native ought to be abandoned for pedagogical purposes due to the impact it may have on students' productive skills. This, as differences between both groups are primarily for cultural and ideological reasons rather than lack of knowledge of formal aspects of the language; namely, its phonology, morphology, syntax or semantics.

## Literature Review

### *Remorse*

Feeling remorseful might not be part of one's everyday life but it is an emotion most people can relate to when it comes to self-awareness for having done something wrong or for not having done something whatsoever. This article adheres to the definition of 'guilt' by Ferguson et al., (1999), as cited in (Tilghman-Osborne, Cole, Felton, & Ciesla, 2008) since it is completely in line with the list of synonyms of remorse.

Guilt is an emotion characterised by tension, regret, and remorse about a particular action or inaction. Guilt has a cognitive component in that the negative emotion presupposes one's responsibility for the problematic action or inaction. The attribution of responsibility to one's own behaviour (something that can be changed) is important insofar as it suggests and motivates different behaviours that can make amends for the previous transgression.

In addition, feeling remorseful can easily be confused with other emotions which at first glance may not seem as remorse. The *Thesaurus Online Dictionary of Synonyms* offers the most common entries for remorse such as repentance, guilt, regret, sorrow, self-reproach, and shame. Recognizing synonyms of remorse is quite relevant because it broadens the current study's scope when looking for linguistic expressions that might not look like remorse.

According to the definition cited above, remorse presupposes the speaker is responsible for a problematic action (or inaction) and since it also motivates behaviours that can make amends,

uttering remorse may be closely connected with the doing of actions and thus falls into the spectrum of speech acts.

### *Speech Acts Theory*

In recent years, there has been an increasing interest in researching students' performance in the target language; however, studies on language performance date back to the late 1950's.

Austin (1962) intended to break the common belief at that time that statements could only provide information about the world and, therefore, could only be real or false. His first lectures in the field were gathered and published posthumously in a book called *"How to Do Things with Words"* (1962). In it, Austin aims to provide insights into performative utterances. These kinds of utterances, according to Austin, did not describe nor did they report anything at all, what they did evidence, however, was "the doing of an action" (Austin, 1962, p. 5), i.e., a performative act.

- Example 1

A: *Could you turn on the heater, please? It's freezing in here.*

B: *Sure!*

In Example 1, one would not expect that after A's question/request B's answer were "Yes, I could", but rather the actual action of turning the heater on.

Austin's (1962) contention was that when one utters something one does something; hence, utterances in a conversation carry a force (illocutionary force) that makes the counterpart act, or react, in a certain manner (perlocutionary effect). Uttering remorse is not the mere act of speaking words out; on the contrary, it compels criticism to oneself for having done something wrong or for not having done something, which may potentially make the speakers change their attitude towards certain situations or even learn a lesson, as illustrated in Example 2.

- Example 2

A: *Oh, for fuck's sake! Why didn't I study more for the test. I should've studied more. Next time I'll study all night.*

Austin's aim was to show that utterances could not only be classified as true or false (descriptive fallacy), which drove him to propose a classification for other utterances (speech acts) which referred to the performance of an action.

#### *Taxonomy of Speech Acts*

Austin (1962) distinguished five general classes (speech acts) which he named as follows:

1. Verdictives: as its name implies, these are typified by the giving of a verdict by a jury, arbitrator.
2. Exercitives: this class refers to the exercising of powers, rights, or influences.
3. Comissives: these acts are typified by promising or undertaking a future action; in other words, they commit the speaker to doing something.
4. Behabitives: this class deals with attitudes and social behaviour, for instance when a person apologizes, congratulates, commends or curses.
5. Expositives: this group could fit into the course of an argument or conversation, particularly the manner in which words are used in general. For example, "I reply", "I assume", "I argue". (p. 150)

Austin himself claimed to have been "far from being happy" about this classification (Austin, 1962, p. 150). However, Searle's (1969) classification of speech acts accounted for the gaps Austin (1962) was unable to fill in.

According to Searle (1969), speaking a language is in fact a highly complex manner of behaviour governed by rules. Thus, speaking a language consists of performing speech acts such as giving orders, asking questions and promising, just to name a few; consequently, only if the listener comprehends the speaker's intention can the communication act be called successful or, as they called it, felicitous.

Following Austin's previous classification (1962), Searle (1969) proposed a new one for speech acts. He identified five major classes of speech acts.

1. Assertives or representatives: this kind of statements can be verified as true or false. This is to say, this sort of speech act commits the speaker with the truth of what has been said; some examples of these are verbs such as to assert, to inform, to predict, to report, to claim, etc.

- Example 4

*You're the best teacher I've ever had.*

2. Directives: this kind makes the listener perform a future action. Some examples are verbs such as to request, to instruct, to suggest, to implore, etc.

- Example 5

*Could you tell how to get to the nearest metro station?*

3. Commissives: this kind of speech act commits the speaker to a future action. Examples of this sort of speech acts are verbs such as to promise, to offer, to threaten, etc.

- Example 6

*I'll go to your birthday party, I promise.*

4. Expressives: they express how the speaker feels about a specific situation or the speaker's psychological position about a particular context. Some examples of these speech acts are verbs such as to like, to thank, to congratulate, to complain, etc.

- Example 7

*I'm such an idiot, I've lost my wallet.*

5. Declaratives: this kind of speech act changes the state of a present situation, for example, verbs such as to fire, to declare, to denounce, etc.

- Example 8

*You're fired!*

Acknowledging 'Remorse' as the doing of an action and, thus, considering this classification, remorse is both an assertive and expressive speech act; the former if the speaker truly means to be remorseful and the latter if the speaker orally expresses his/her psychological position in a context where he/she may feel remorseful, as in Example 9.

- Example 9

*I'm so fucking stupid! I'm really upset!*

*I need to apologize as soon as possible. I shouldn't have said that.*

After the view on how pragmatics dealt with the study of people's comprehension and production of language in context, the need to study the usage of the language in social contexts by learners of a second language gave birth to a new tradition of studies called interlanguage and interlanguage pragmatics.

*Interlanguage and Interlanguage Pragmatics*

Selinker (1972) introduced the term ‘interlanguage’ (henceforth IL) to account for a latent psychological language structure, which is independent from both the L1 and TL; in other words, according to Selinker, IL is an independent language system which not only systematically differs from the L1 and the TL in terms of syntax, morphology and phonology, but also at lexical, pragmatic, and discourse levels of the language. As IL is, according to Selinker (1972), an independent language system which differs from the L1 and the TL in several aspects, the necessity to study this system in use gave way to the study of interlanguage pragmatics. Interlanguage pragmatics (henceforth ILP) also known as second language pragmatics is the study of non-native speakers’ use and acquisition of the TL pragmatic knowledge (Kasper, 1996), particularly the manner in which second language learners understand and perform linguistic acts in different social contexts in the TL.

Kasper and Blum-Kulka (1993) pointed out that the “subject of interlanguage pragmatics figures as a socio-linguistic, psycholinguistic, or simply linguistic enterprise” (p. 3). They viewed ILP as the study of people’s comprehension and production of linguistic action in context in a language which is different from their L1.

Studies on IL and ILP have drawn a great deal of interest from both the fields of Linguistics and Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language, (Aufa, 2014; Farnia, Sohrabie & Abdul, 2014; Blum-Kulka, 1987; Blum-Kulka, & Olshtain, 1984; Çiğdem & Seyed, 2010; Park, 2011; Toledo, 2018; Toledo, Campos & Figueroa, 2019; among a great number of others) due to their emphases on learners’ production or realisation of certain speech acts, namely, suggestions, requests and apologies, gratitude, greetings, etc. in a language people are targeting to learn. However, no attempt to explore ‘remorse’ as a speech act has ever been done; perhaps, due to the latent difficulty of observing remorse being uttered or due to its enormous cultural load.

*Language and Culture*

Among the several directions ILP studies may take, i.e. politeness strategies, conversational implicatures, turn taking, discourse markers and others, special attention has generally only focused on the internal variations between the productions of second language learners in contrast to native speakers of the target language when uttering different speech acts, leaving aside the role of culture in the speakers’ choices. This focus on internal comparison of learners of a second language and native speakers of the English language represents an important part of the core of this paper –i.e. differences and/ or similarities in terms of linguistic expressions used and grammatical structures. However, this study also seeks to determine the manner in which culture influences both groups’ choices of expressions used when uttering remorse. In relation to this, Goddard (2006) asserted that “the field of pragmatics as a whole still suffers from a remarkable degree of culture blindness” (p. 2). Thus, the present study not only focuses on the internal variation in terms of expressions used or grammatical structures but also on the cultural impact of the words chosen (referred in this study as “*authenticity*”).

Despite the fact that little or no attention were paid to cultural differences, Goddard’s (1996) documentation of some Malay rules of speaking and their link with Malay cultural values, and Wierzbicka’s (1999, 2002, 2003) studies on cultural values and cultural scripts have taken into account language learners’ background. These studies have contributed to bear in mind how different utterances may vary depending on the ideology and/ or culture of the speakers and the

impact these differences could provoke. Hence, throughout this study, it has been borne in mind the role of cultural values when uttering certain speech acts.

### *Discourse Completion Tasks (DCT)*

As a means of gathering the necessary information to account for the phenomena of the realisation of remorse linguistically, the current study employed a DCT instrument which contains fifteen different scenarios where takers had to provide an answer, as authentic as possible, expressing remorse.

It is important to mention that the first approach of this study was to explore remorse from a contrastive pragmatics point of view, no instruments for gathering the most common linguistics expressions of remorse existed prior. Therefore, the DCTs used in this study were designed, piloted and validated with the purpose of collecting the necessary data.

In order to tackle the issue of cultural blindness stated by Goddard (2006), some of the DCTs were accompanied by a three-question questionnaire in which the participants had to account for the answers they have provided in contrast to real-life experiences they could have had at one point in their life. It is relevant to highlight that using DCT alone to obtain the necessary data cannot completely account for all the phenomena present in a natural real-life setting, such as the addresser/ addressee's attitudes towards the situation and nonverbal features. These components of a real-life situation are absolutely relevant to fully grasp the manner in which remorse is naturally expressed.

## **Methodology**

### *Participants*

Two groups took part in this study, allowing the process of collecting the necessary data to determine whether there existed differences and/ or similarities when expressing remorse linguistically. The first group was composed of thirteen native speakers of the English language who teach English as a foreign language. What is more, the responses given by these informants allowed the proposal of a coding scheme for the most frequent expressions used when feeling remorseful. Consequently, these frequent expressions were later compared to those given by the second group.

The second group consisted of thirteen Chilean Spanish-speaking EFL teachers, for all of whom Spanish is their L1 and are currently teaching English as a foreign language. These participants were chosen due to their similar and high level of proficiency in English. When it comes to proficiency, there is still no clear consensus on what it actually refers to. For Carter & Nunan (2001) proficiency is the ability to use the second language for communicative purposes. For Richards, Platt & Platt (1992) proficiency refers to the range of abilities with which a language learner can use a language, this is to say, how well a language learner can read, write, speak, or understand language. Proficiency may be measured using a proficiency test.

Bearing in mind what it is understood by proficiency, all thirteen participants from the group of Chilean Spanish speaking English as foreign language teachers have mastered the English language in similar aspects, being this reflected on the levels C1 and C2, according to the Common European Framework of Reference (Council of Europe, 2020); measured through different standardised international tests. Therefore, they could provide a response which was expected to

differ in terms of word choice, grammatical tense and cultural authenticity but that was still grammatically correct.

It is worth mentioning at this point that both groups of participants were the researcher's colleagues and/or acquaintances who voluntarily agreed to collaborate with this study. They were all given a consent letter beforehand explaining what the current study sought to achieve, and their contribution and role in it.

*Instruments: DCT.*

Adapted by Blum-Kulka in 1982 for investigating speech acts, DCTs are questionnaires which contain a set of briefly described situations designed to elicit a particular speech act. Participants read the given situation and respond to the prompt in writing (Varghese & Billmyer, 1996).

In the field of IL, DCTs have been used mainly for assessing pragmatic competence; that is to say, data is collected by means of comparing the strategies used by the takers to produce an appropriate speech act for any given situation to that of native speakers. According to Kanik (2012) "the major reason for the use of elicitation tasks is that collecting data with elicitation tasks such as DCT brings ease while naturally occurring data is hard to gather" (p.87).

The DCT used in this study are composed of 15 real life situations in which both groups have to express remorse linguistically.

This is a sample of the DCT used in this study.

1. – You have failed university for not studying enough. You regret not studying harder.  
You think/say

*DCT considerations.*

Using DCTs as a data gathering instrument may present some potential disadvantages since the contextual situations have been manipulated to the extent of the researcher's preferences to obtain the necessary data; thus, responses may not reflect natural speech and the data collected using DCTs could bias the results of the investigation. According to Ogiermann (2009) it should be taken into consideration that these instruments yield experimental elicited, written data, which cannot be expected to completely reflect natural speech.

The current DCT only deal with the functional aspects of the ILP; that is to say, the syntactic and semantic components of the speech. However, prosodic features, namely, one's tone of voice, intonation, pitch, etc. and kinesic features such as gestures, facial expressions, posture, body language, etc., are completely lost. What is more, utterances have intentions and attitudes which are generally accompanied by paralinguistic features. Pala & Svoboda (as cited in Prucha, 1983) call these features the internal pragmatics of an utterance. In agreement with these authors, "the internal pragmatics of the utterance comprises the phenomena arising from the speaker's attitudes to the proposition he produces" (p. 24). Attitudes do not belong to the realm of semantics but to that of pragmatics; therefore, studying them separately could only give us hints of the repertoire of lexical expressions an individual possesses and would not account for the manner in which one might react when facing a situation of remorse.

To address these limitations a questionnaire was developed. This questionnaire is composed of three questions in which DCTs takers had to account for the answers they have provided in contrast to real-life experiences they could have had at one point in their life.



*Qualitative questionnaire*

The necessity to account for those elements that go beyond words themselves, such as speakers' attitudes, facial expressions, body posture, etc. made the development of an instrument which could elicit participants' answers and their experiences quite imperative. Furthermore, according to Ashworth's (2000) paper on the different qualitative methods to be used when researching social interaction, qualitative techniques (such as the current questionnaire used to account for authenticity) are particularly and even "uniquely appropriate to the study of students' experiences" (p. 91).

Ashworth (2000) believes that the more genuine the topic of interest is, namely, experiences (such as feeling remorseful) or relationships, the more likely a qualitative research is the most appropriate one. Therefore, taking into consideration how the role of a DCT may bias the participants' answers in terms of cultural authenticity, a three-question questionnaire was used to fulfill this need. Let us remember that a DCT only presents prefabricated situations which might not necessarily reflect real-everyday ones.

Notwithstanding the crucial role of DCT to reliably collect the necessary data for assessing takers' pragmatic competence, Cohen (2004) as cited in (Kanik, 2012) states that "while any enhancement may make the task more authentic, we must remember it is still a task attempting to simulate reality" (p. 317). Therefore, by using DCT along with the three-question questionnaire attached to some of the prompts, the researcher is able to obtain some hints about their pragmatic competence and the reasons behind the participants' chosen responses as well.

The qualitative questions for cultural "authenticity" are a) "Why have you chosen that answer?" and b) "Would you use the same answer in a similar situation in real life? If not, how would you say it?" In other words, it is expected that participants' answers might lack cultural authenticity as i) the DCT used in the current research present situations which cannot be expected to have been experienced by every interviewee and ii) it is expected that the responses given by the group of Chilean Spanish speaking EFL teachers lack cultural authenticity precisely for being uttered in a language different from their mother tongue.

On the other hand, when it comes to the participants' attitudes towards the situations presented in the DCTs, firstly, let us recall Austin's (1962) premise on the core of speech acts studies. He claimed that "the uttering of the sentence is, or is a part of, the doing of an action" (p. 5), hence, every speech act that is uttered must have an intention and, therefore, must necessarily be accompanied by several paralinguistic properties such as tone of voice, intonation, body language, etc. Thus, in order to ensure the authenticity of both groups' answers in terms of kinesic features, i.e. communication through body movements such as body language and facial expressions, a third question c) "Are there any other features that would accompany your answer, namely tone of voice, body position, gestures; in other words, all those features which cannot be seen, those one uses when expressing remorse?" was added to provide some hints into what attitude the interviewees would take when facing a situation in which they might feel remorseful.

To sum up, using DCTs alone to obtain data about the manner in which speakers utter remorse cannot completely account for all the phenomena present in a natural situation. If one seeks to fully understand how this speech act is uttered by both groups, naturally and culturally accurate DCTs have to, necessarily, be enhanced by means of a qualitative tool; hence, the development of the three-question questionnaire to clear up all the limitations that have been listed before.

### *Gathering the data*

Firstly, in order to obtain the most utilised expressions of remorse, the DCTs for this study were applied to the group of native speakers of the English language; ergo, one could have an insight into the different manners this group expressed remorse linguistically. Consequently, the most frequent speech acts used for the realisation of remorse could be identified and listed.

Secondly, the same DCTs were applied to the group of Chilean Spanish-Speaking EFL teachers. Once they completed the task, the manner in which they expressed remorse linguistically was determined. From their answers, the most frequent expressions were identified and listed, too.

### *Data analysis*

Firstly, a mixed method approach was the most appropriate as the written responses were both qualitatively and quantitatively analysed. Variables such as frequency of words and expressions and frequency of tenses by both groups were analysed considering the number of times they were used.

Secondly, both the frequency of words and expressions and frequency of tenses were compared between the group of native speakers of English and the group of Chilean EFL teachers. Thus, the researcher may infer the different speech acts for the realisation of remorse used by both groups. By grammatically analysing how the group of Chilean EFL teachers expressed remorse linguistically in comparison with the group of native speakers of the English language, the degree of variation and to what extent these expressions were similar or different was determined.

Next, frequency of words and expressions and frequency of tenses used were statistically analysed. In other words, once the most common words and expression, as well as the most common tenses employed by both groups were counted, classified, compared and contrasted. By doing this, it has been illustrated how remorse is expressed differently or similarly depending on the cultural background of the speakers and it has been determined to what extent they differ in terms of linguistic expressions, grammatical structures, and cultural authenticity.

Thirdly, in term of the qualitative analysis, bearing in mind the considerations and limitations of DCT, the participants had to answer three questions in order to determine whether their responses provided matched a similar response in a different, and yet, similar situation in reality; for the purpose of ascertaining the role of speakers' cultural background in the responses given.

Finally, the answers provided by participants in the three-question questionnaire were analysed and the grouped by considering their similarities in terms of what they said they would do with regard to paralinguistic features of spoken communication and cultural authenticity, this is to say, these answers were set bearing in mind participants previous experiences.

## **Results**

### *Main findings*

The current study's main contribution is to offer an insight into how remorse is uttered in terms of the most common speech act realisations of it as well as the most frequent grammatical tenses used. Both the most frequent realisations and grammatical tenses utilised when uttering remorse have

been represented by means of a coding scheme. By and large, it has also been considered how culture assumes a major role for people's word choice.

From the answers gathered, the most frequent speech acts realisations of remorse utilised by the group of native speakers of the English language were coded into five different categories: 1) self-reproach, 2) curse words, swearing or blasphemy, 3) complete resignation, and 4) feeling sorry, feeling sadness, sympathy, or disappointment. Conversely, as remorse means "a great sorrow and a feeling of guilt for having done wrong"; plus, as the current study deals mainly with people's emotions which can vary from individual to individual, tolerance towards certain scenarios was expected. For this reason, a fifth speech act was added to this coding scheme, 5) no remorse whatsoever.

### *Classification of realisations of remorse*

The most employed speech act realisations for remorse found in this study are listed below. It is important to mention that each realisation of remorse was given a code (in brackets) which helped the analysis and classification of the data gathered; E.G. S1, where *S* stands for *Speech Act*.

**1. Self-reproach (S1A/B):** this speech act can be defined as all the expressions which explicitly direct the criticism at oneself. These expressions were divided into two parts: A) interrogative sentence to oneself (S1A), and B) a negative comment to oneself (S1B).

- Example 1

- a) Why did I tell her those things? / What should I do now? / What the hell am I going to do now? / What was I thinking?

- b) I'm so stupid/ I was an idiot for not listening / I'm completely fucked / This is all my fault.

**2. Curse words, swearing or blasphemy (S2):** this speech act deals with all the words or expressions that are not polite and which show that a person is angry.

- Example 2

- a) Oh for fuck's sake/ Oh bloody hell/ Oh shit/ Arseholes, absolute arseholes/ Oh shit, why the hell didn't I just...

**3. Complete resignation (S3):** this speech act was used when the speaker endured a sad feeling of accepting something that one does not like or cannot easily change.

- Example 3

- a) Maybe this is for the better/ I'm screwed/ Missed my chance/ Well, there's always next time.

**4. Feeling sorry, feeling sadness, sympathy, or disappointment (S4):** this speech act was used especially when something unpleasant had happened or been done to the speaker.

- Example 4

a) I'm really sorry, I shouldn't have shouted like that/ Hey! I didn't mean it like that! / I feel awful now/ I'm really sorry for what I said.

**5. No remorse (S5):** this speech act was used when the speaker felt the scenario was more bearable than others.

- Example 5

a) It was a very good learning experience for me and I do not regret that it happened/ There are more important things in life to feel regret over/ Waiting doesn't matter if the end goal is the same/ Bugger, but not end of the world.

The speech acts for the realisation of remorse previously mentioned account for the manner in which speakers express remorse linguistically. However, the length of the utterances varied depending on the speaker and the scenario. The utterances ranged from a one-word answer to complete sentences. As the range of the expressions varied, it also meant that these speech acts could be combined to make a more complex stream of sentences to express remorse, as in Example

- Example 6

**Oh crap! (S2) What am I going to do? (S1B) This is all my fault (S1A). I should have paid more attention to the time (S1A). I'm going to have to go to the airline desk and ask them to put me on another flight (S3).** I am afraid of how much that's going to cost. **What an idiot I am! (S1A)**

As the most frequent expressions when feeling remorseful had already been identified and listed in the categories above, it was critical to narrow the answers down and to start analysing them in terms of grammatical structures to determine whether there existed any concordances and/or discordances between the groups.

### *Classification of grammatical structures*

When expressing remorse linguistically, some of the most common tenses used were:

**a) Past tense modals**

**I) Should have**

- Example 7

If they want to cheat (...) I **should have** known that. / I really **shouldn't have** said that. I hope I can make it up to him. / I **should've** invested that money elsewhere.

**II) Could have**

- Example 8

‘Oh shit why didn’t I just take the plunge? I **could have** always pulled out afterwards if I’d have changed my mind. / I’m so annoyed with myself! It would’ve been really good if I **could’ve** gone this term.

These modal verbs are used to express one’s present feeling about a past decision or a past action; these modal verbs are also known as *modals of lost opportunities*.

#### b) Past tenses interrogative

##### I) Past simple

- Example 9

Well, that was stupid. **Why did I** have to invest everything? What do I do now? / **Why didn’t I** do something before? I thought she was the one and I’ve absolutely fucked it. That’s it, I’m going to die alone

#### *Paralinguistic features of spoken communication*

When it comes to analysing all the responses gathered using the qualitative instrument, these varied so vastly that no conclusion could be drawn regarding paralinguistic features of communication. Some of the answers that could provide some hints into the kind of body language, facial gestures or tone of voice used when expressing remorse linguistically are listed below:

- Maybe a head tilt and a sad face followed by a shrug.
- Maybe crying while feeling very hurt.
- Maybe I’ll cry.
- I am not sure, maybe just be quiet and thoughtful.
- Maybe, shrugging of shoulders, hands on my pockets, staring into space.
- Maybe a change in my tone of voice (a bit high pitched, angry or even a bit sarcastic), and some hand waving (if my hands and arms were not hurt, of course).
- Maybe talking to myself.

Even when there are some common expressions of remorse, they were not sufficiently evident to determine a pattern that one could associate to the feeling of remorse; what is more, most of these responses referred to the possibility of adding paralinguistic features as to “maybe”.

#### *Cultural authenticity*

Even though these two groups of speakers uttered remorse in a quite similar manner, considering the internal analysis of the responses given, there is an important variation in the second speech act (S2) used for the realisation of remorse. As the results will show in the following section, native speakers of the English language tended to curse a lot more than the group of Chilean-Spanish speaking EFL teachers. What is more, when this second group was asked whether they would use a similar answer in reality, they suggested using curse words but did not, in fact, use them when completing the DCT. Some of the answers provided by this group were:

- Yes, I would. I would include a few swear words as well.
- I also said FUCK you and shit

- Yes. I would also say. “Oh fuck this shit, fucking Murphey.”
- I’d probably curse big time.
- Pretty much the same, but with some curse words included, I guess.
- I might use something shorter and more self-critical (“You asshole”).
- I think I will probably shout curse words.

The answers above could provide some evidence of how when faced with emotionally loaded or rather adverse situations, the use of curse words or blasphemy may spontaneously arise, or speakers would tend to use their L1 to do so, shedding some light into this phenomenon.

### *Cross-cultural results*

The cross-cultural analysis yielded that regardless of the wide range of expressions used, both groups deployed the same sort of speech acts and grammatical structures when feeling remorseful. The results in Figure 1 are presented as the number of times each speech act was used by each speaker in the fifteen different DCTs.

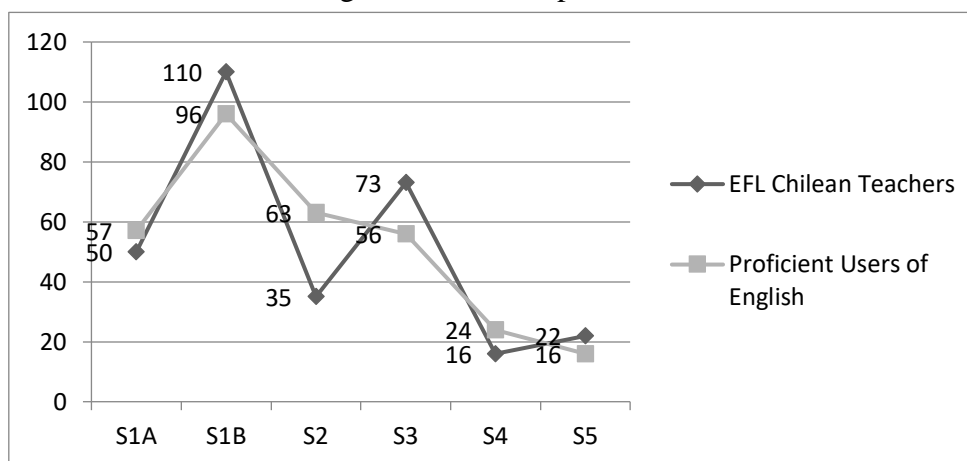
The results are shown by means of:

1. A line bar (Fig. 1) which illustrates the number of times each speech act realisation was used to compare and contrast the manner in which both groups expressed remorse similarly or differently.

Fig. 1 shows that the most frequent speech acts by both groups were the self-reproach as in negative comments to oneself (S1B). However, the degree of variation is quite slight and, therefore, no conclusion can be drawn regarding differences between these two groups. Conversely, the greatest degree of variation is found in the second speech act: curse words, swearing or blasphemy (S2), indicating that native speakers of the English language tend to use more of this vocabulary when faced with adverse situations.

Finally, Fig. 1 also illustrates how both groups of speakers used the fourth speech act for the realisation of remorse: Feeling sorry, sadness, sympathy, or disappointment (S4) and the fifth: no remorse (S5) to a lesser degree when it came to express remorse linguistically but to a quite similarly degree in terms of the number of instances.

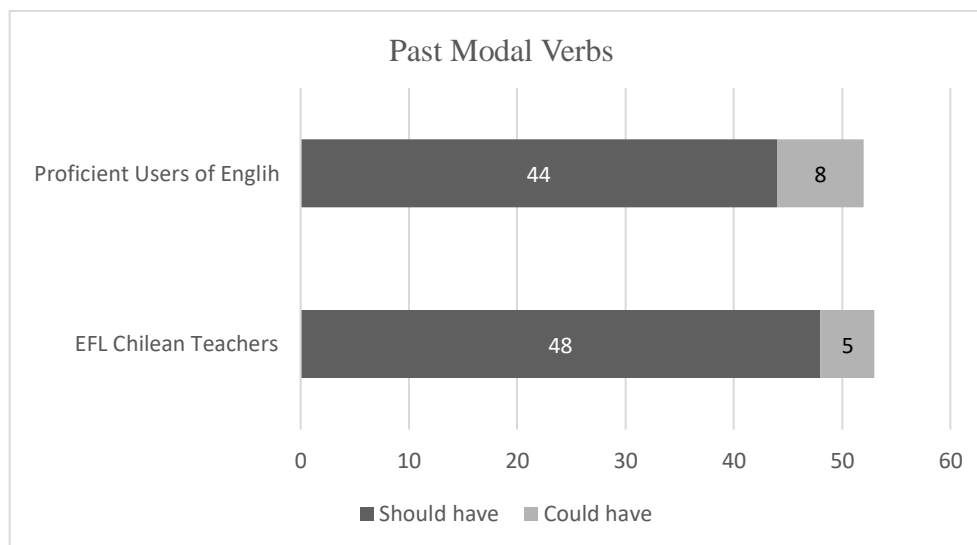
Figure 1. Results Speech Acts



Note. Differences regarding the number of times each realisation of speech acts for remorse was used by both groups of speakers (Source: Lara, 2019).

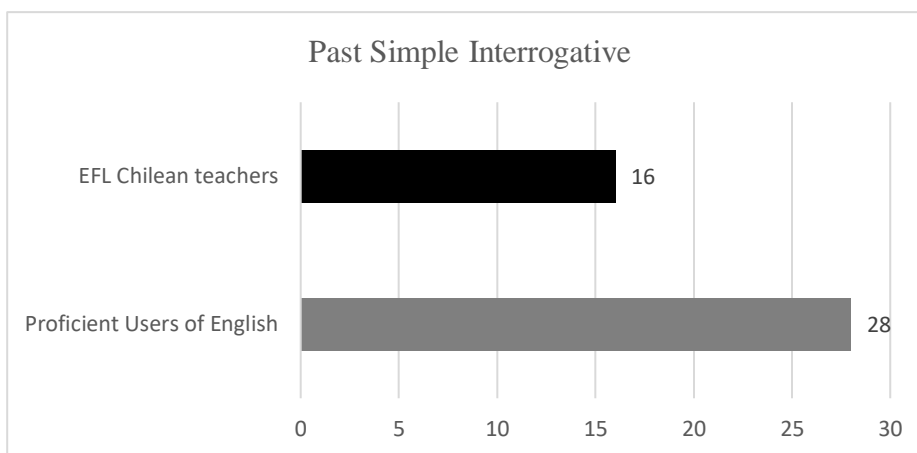
- Two bar charts (Figs. 2 & 3) display the number of times the most common grammatical structures were found. Firstly, both groups used almost the same number of instances of past modal verbs. Thus, it can be concluded that when a speaker utters remorse they are more likely to make use of past modal verbs. Secondly, the past simple interrogative tense was also commonly utilised by both groups of speakers, but to a much lesser degree than past modal verbs.

Figure 2. Past modal verbs



Note. Differences regarding the number of times Past Modal Verbs were used by both groups (Source: Lara, 2019).

Figure 3. Past simple interrogative



Note. Differences regarding the number of times Past Simple Interrogative was used by both groups (Source: Lara, 2019).

3. Table 1 contains the coding scheme for the most frequent expressions and grammatical structures used when feeling remorseful. This coding scheme has been designed taking into consideration the data gathered throughout this study. However, it is imperative to highlight that, even though five different speech acts realisations were identified for remorse, the most frequent utterances were only found in two of these speech acts: 1) self-reproach as a question to oneself (S1A) and as a negative comment directed to oneself (S1B) and 2) when using curse words, swearing or blasphemy (S2).



Table 1. Coding Scheme for Remorse

Speech act	Definition	Grammatical structure used	Expressions used	Examples
S1A	expressions which <u>explicitly direct the criticism at oneself as an interrogative sentence.</u>	Past simple interrogative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why did I...</li> <li>• Why didn't I...</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why did I wait so long?</li> <li>• Why did I invest everything on this?</li> <li>• Why did I do this?</li> <li>• Why didn't I realized the time before going into the duty free?</li> <li>• Why didn't I listen when he warned me?</li> <li>• Why didn't I do something not to be late again?</li> </ul>
S1B	expressions which <u>explicitly direct the criticism at oneself as a negative comment.</u>	Past modal verbs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I should have...</li> <li>• I should've...</li> <li>• I should not have</li> <li>• I shouldn't have</li> <li>• I could have...</li> <li>• I could've...</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I should have signed without thinking too much.</li> <li>• I should've made up my mind faster.</li> <li>• I should not have told my friend such a thing.</li> <li>• I really shouldn't have said that.</li> <li>• I could have stopped all this from happening, idiot!</li> <li>• I could've done something to stop it.</li> </ul>
S2	words or expressions that are <u>not polite</u> and which show that a person is angry	Varied grammatical structures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fuck...</li> <li>• Fucking...</li> <li>• For fuck's sake...</li> <li>• Shit...</li> <li>• Idiot...</li> <li>• Stupid...</li> <li>• Damn...</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fuck, I'll have to start over again.</li> <li>• I'm so fucking stupid!</li> <li>• Oh for fuck's sake, why did I do that/think that was a good idea</li> <li>• Shit, I'm an idiot.</li> <li>• What a bloody idiot!</li> <li>• Well, that was stupid.</li> <li>• Damn, that sucks.</li> </ul>

Note. Coding Scheme for the most common realisations for remorse, grammatical structures & expressions used when uttering remorse. (Source: Lara, 2019)

## Discussion and Conclusion

This study intended to shed some light into the phenomena of interlanguage pragmatics when a cultural load is present; in this case, the realisation of remorse. A wide variety of ILP studies have contributed to a better understanding of the manner in which some speech acts are uttered, namely, apology, requests, suggestions, gratitude among others. However, this article sought to explore a rather more difficult to grasp speech act: remorse. Furthermore, the current study deals with the cultural reasons behind the speakers' responses when remorse was uttered.

The results showed that the two groups did actually express remorse similarly in terms of linguistic expressions and grammatical structures; however, their responses differed regarding cultural authenticity, especially when it came to using curse words, swearing or blasphemy. All five speech act realisations which explained how remorse is uttered were found in both groups. The most common grammatical structures did not vary to a great extent either.

Bearing everything in mind, the group of Chilean-Spanish speaking EFL teachers expressed remorse extremely similarly to the group of native speakers of the English language in this sense. However, the second speech act for the realisation of remorse, the use of curse words, swearing or blasphemy, varied to a quite important extent. The group of native speakers of the English language utilised this realisation of remorse 63 different times whereas the group of Chilean Spanish-speaking EFL teachers only made use of this speech act 35 times. Moreover, even if this group did in fact curse or use blasphemy in some cases they stated that they would "include a few swear words or that they would probably curse big time" and this provided some hints into the manner one curses or uses blasphemy in a situation where it is expected to express remorse linguistically.

This evidences that people tend to use their L1 when using curse words, swearing or blasphemy in situations that are more emotionally loaded or rather difficult to deal with. This result is in line with studies such as those of Pavlenko (2002, 2005) and Wierzbicka (1999,2002, 2003).

After the differences and similarities were established, a coding scheme for the most frequent speech acts, grammatical structures and expressions for the realisation of remorse was proposed. Notwithstanding the tremendous contribution and enterprise in trying to account for the phenomena of the realisation of remorse, it is absolutely imperative to highlight that the current coding scheme had never been proposed before; therefore, this represents a first attempt.

Authors like Pavlenko (2002, 2005) and Wierzbicka (1999, 2002, 2003) have extensively discussed language and emotions in a second language. Pavlenko argues that the first language is the one of personal involvement whereas the second one is the one of distance and detachment, hence, the language of lesser emotional hold on the individual, i.e. speakers are less likely to express their feelings in a second language since it is through the first language that emotions arise. Pavlenko (2002) also provides a myriad of personal instances in which she made use of their first language to express emotionally bound situations such as crying, connection to one's childhood, her own political baggage of a repressive upbringing in Croatia, etc. Throughout this study, it has been possible to determine that when Chilean EFL teachers were faced with a situation in which they had to express remorse they suggested using curse words but did not use them in fact; evidencing Pavlenko's (2002) contention that one's L1 is the language of personal involvement.

As for the implications for future ILP research, it is of immense importance to keep in mind the role culture, experiences, participants' L1 and contextual background in general may play in view of the responses provided by the groups under comparison, and not just the mere and superficial differentiation of internal variation of utterances; namely: grammatical structures.

Furthermore, it is also critical to explore those speech acts which may be more difficult to grasp linguistically, especially those linked with one's emotions.

### *Language and Culture*

Each one of us was born and has been brought up within a culture, a culture with a historical, social and political load, which ultimately defines our own identity; in other words, one inherits a cultural package.

This cultural load will identify our membership to different groups of people; one generally shares some mutual characteristics with these people, namely social class, religion and political beliefs, interests, etc. For example, the manner in which people from Latin America apologize, request or offer things in Spanish may vary in comparison with the way Chileans do (even when these groups of people share the same L1) due to the immense impact of their socio-cultural knowledge. For instance, the manner in which Colombian Spanish speakers apologise by saying "que pena contigo/ con usted" (which translates "what a pity/shame with you") may be misinterpreted as an insult by Chilean Spanish speakers. Hence, they may sound over polite or completely rude at times as they lack this contextual knowledge. By and large, it is through language that one shows the connection with some discourse communities. In this respect, Kramsch (1998) states:

People who identify themselves as members of a social group (family, neighbourhood, professional or ethnic affiliation, nation) acquire common ways of viewing the world through their interaction with other members of the same group (...). Common attitudes, beliefs, and values are reflected in the way members of the group use language. (p.6)

Wierzbicka (2003), on her part, introduces several examples (taken from her 1997 cross-cultural memoirs) of how different communication can be when culture and background knowledge are not shared. She described it as follows:

I had to start learning new "cultural scripts" to live by, and in the process I became aware of the old "cultural scripts" which had governed my life hitherto. I also became aware, in the process, of the reality of "cultural scripts" and their importance to the way one lives one's life, to the image one projects, and even to one's personal identity. (p. X)

When comparing students' or teachers' utterances in context to native speakers of a TL (as the current research) both their beliefs and cultural background should, therefore, be taken into account. Moreover, when one compares two, or more languages one cannot expect identical networks or relationships. One might expect to find certain correspondences. (Wierzbicka, 2003)

Furthermore, Strevens (1987) disregards the idea of TL all together, especially English, as something students should aspire to since, according to him, English cannot be offered or received as a possession of native speakers exclusively nor should students try to speak as a person from the US or the UK because English varies from place to place. Moreover, by disregarding learners' utterances in English only because they do not fit in what has been called 'native like' is to disregard learners' cultural background and discourse community.

For Kramsch (1998) culture takes a historical perspective. According to her, cultural ways have been passed on in speech and writing from one generation to the next, thus, they are often taken for natural behaviour.

This diachronic view of culture focuses on the way in which a social group represents itself and others through its material production over time- its technological achievements, its monuments, its works of art, its popular culture- that punctuate the development of its historical identity. (Kramsch, 1998, p.7)

The variation of speech acts depending on the culture might also impair communication. Among the several cross-cultural impediments to communication, Strevens (1987) mentions the context where ideology outweighs everyday reality. This is to say, religion and political beliefs might vary from culture to culture or “where personal components play a role” namely (i) the loudness of voice, (ii) turn-taking, (iii) simultaneity of speaking, (iv) eye contact, (v) head levels, (vi) facing, abasing, prostrating and (vii) posture, contact. (p. 72)

All in all, when one expresses ideas, one shows the manner in which one sees the world, this is to say, one expresses a group of beliefs that are strictly connected and rooted to one’s cultural background in all its dimensions; consequently, it seems virtually impossible to subtract one’s cultural background when making choices of the kind of words to use to convey ideas and/or feeling such as remorse and a wide spectrum of emotions which are embedded to one’s experiences and community.

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