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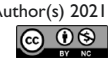

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Classroom learning of English L2 requests: Input and interactional opportunities in French secondary schools

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Abstract

With today's strong focus on communicative competence in second language (L2) classrooms, speech acts like suggestions, requests, refusals, and apologies are often investigated in interlanguage pragmatic (ILP) as well as instructional pragmatics. Even though there is strong evidence in ILP research that purports that L2 learners respond well to pragmatic instruction (Taguchi, 2015), the teaching of L2 pragmatics is not always prioritized in textbooks, teaching programmes or teacher education (Barron, 2016; Savvidou & Economidou-Kogetsidis, 2019) with the consequence that pragmatic learning can only occur incidentally. The present study examines opportunities to acquire L2 requests for 308 English as a foreign language (EFL) learners across 7 years of instruction in French secondary schools, investigating textbooks preferred by teachers, classroom interaction (39 hours), and teacher perspectives (semi-structured interviews with 10 teachers). After a pragmatic analysis of 15 EFL textbooks with a focus on requests, the study examines the incidence of metapragmatic input in 39 hours of teaching in 13 classes at 3 levels, and relates interactional patterns with interview data from the 10 teachers concerned. Findings suggest limited pragmatic input in both textbooks and classroom interaction. By comparing the profiles of teachers who encouraged L2 requests with those who did not, the study offers new explanations for L2 learners' limited pragmatic development which also broadly corroborate previous findings of somewhat limited potential for L2 pragmatic development in obligatory school contexts.

Keywords

English as a foreign language, France, instructional pragmatics, interlanguage pragmatics, L2 requests, language education, textbooks

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I Introduction

Three important developments have marked the course of second (L2) and foreign language (FL) education over the past 50 years or so: the cognitive revolution heralded in second language (L2) studies by Corder (1967) paved the way for the hugely influential communicative approach (Savignon, 1976) and the sociocultural turn (Firth & Wagner, 2007; Wagner & Firth, 1997) that was its logical extension. This interest in language acquisition, interaction, and use which underlies today's focus on communicative competence, considered by some 'the ultimate goal of language teaching' (Usó-Juan, 2008), places pragmatics at centre stage. Indeed over the past twenty years the CEFR (Common European Frame of Reference, Council of Europe, 2001) has brought an action-oriented language pedagogy into the majority of European language classrooms, including a recently reinforced concern for pragmatic learning (CEFR, Council of Europe, 2018).

Long considered the poor cousin of second language studies (Kasper, 1992; Kasper & Rose, 2002), the importance and teachability of L2 pragmatics have been recognized in the past decade (Ishihara, 2010) leading to a strong body of research in both L2 and FL classrooms as well as study abroad contexts, where student learners have direct contact with the target culture over a pre-determined period of time (for an overview, see Taguchi, 2015). However, links between L2 pragmatic research and everyday classroom pedagogy remain elusive (Bardovi-Harlig, 2020; Sykes, 2013), especially in FL contexts outside university settings where much of this research is conducted. For this reason, the present study investigates the teaching of L2 pragmatics in secondary school language classrooms in France, using a cross-sectional design to investigate some 300 pupils at three distinct points in their learning: the start and finish of lower secondary schooling (ages 11 and 15) and the end of upper secondary (age 18). Part of a larger research project (Siddiqa, 2018) which replicated a study of young English as a foreign language (EFL) learners in Taiwan (Rose, 2009), the present article considers the influence of textbooks and teacher attitudes on opportunities for L2 pragmatic development in L2 English requests by young francophone learners. We begin with a review of recent research in instructional pragmatics, before outlining the textbook analysis, classroom filming, and teacher interviews. In Section VI, a detailed investigation of L2 learner requests occurring in classroom interaction reveals the influence of teachers' pedagogical understanding and priorities on opportunities for pragmatic learning.

II Literature review

A relatively young field of inquiry, second language (L2) pragmatics has grown exponentially over the past two decades and now boasts several sub-disciplines, including interlanguage pragmatics (ILP), cross-cultural pragmatics, as well as our focus here: instructional pragmatics (Ishihara, 2010; Sykes, 2020; Taguchi, 2015). In contrast to early L2 pragmatic research which focused on comparisons with first language (L1) norms, and on use rather than acquisition or development of pragmatic skills (Kasper, 1997; Martínez-Flor et al., 2003; Rose & Kasper, 2002), instructional pragmatics addresses questions of teachability and learnability in line with Schmidt's (1993) noticing hypothesis. Studies have examined the effects of different types of instructional

interventions, sometimes in comparison with simple exposure (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001; Rose, 2005); comprehensive overviews by Taguchi (2015), McConachy (2017) and Cohen (2018) provide convincing evidence for the role of instruction in developing L2 pragmatic competence. This competence is clearly amenable to instruction and learners who are given instructional support perform better than uninstructed peers (Bardovi-Harlig & Griffin, 2005; Bardovi-Harlig & Mahan-Taylor, 2003). L2 pragmatic learning can not only be supported in study abroad contexts (Blood, 2018; Glaser, 2017; Hassall, 2013; Hernandez, 2010; Hernandez & Boero, 2018; Nguyen & Le Ho, 2018; Shively, 2011) but also in FL classrooms (Ishihara, 2010; Taguchi, 2015), previously considered less propitious sites for pragmatic development. Taguchi (2018) links the newer FL instructional research to a shift in analytical focus from 'pragmatics-within-individuals' to 'pragmatics in interaction in context,' leading to an interest in conversational analysis (CA) and discursive approaches to investigating naturalistic data. In research on pragmatic instruction on requests and refusals with L1 Arabic learners of English, Al-Gahtani and Roever (2013, 2018) used fine-grained CA to show gradual development in L2 learners' refusals at different proficiency levels with a wider range of interactional and mitigation tools (e.g. solidarity terms, pre-explanations, expressions of regret), although gaps remain even in advanced learners' refusal production. Therefore, there is a general consensus that pragmatics should be included in classroom pedagogy like other L2 skills such as grammar and lexis.

There remains debate as to the most effective type of instructional intervention to support L2 pragmatic development, with different studies comparing explicit and implicit teaching (Alcón Soler, 2007; Derakhshan & Eslami, 2020; Tateyama, 2001), and inductive versus deductive approaches (e.g. Martínez-Flor, 2008). Early research suggested an advantage for explicit methods: Koike and Pearson (2005) compared explicit and implicit teaching of L2 Spanish suggestions, for example, while Félix-Brasdefer (2008) investigated lexical and syntactic mitigators in refusals. In both cases explicit instruction resulted in greater, more durable learning gains. However, a recent meta-analysis by Taguchi (2015, p. 11) showed that 'the implicit approach can be just as effective in causing changes in learners' pragmatic systems' by encouraging awareness of form-function-context mappings which can 'lead to learning, with or without direct explanation' (Taguchi, 2015, p. 12).

Two major longstanding challenges to effective L2 pragmatic instruction remain the absence of suitable teaching materials and lack of teacher training (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001; Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 2005). Cohen and Ishihara (2013, p. 13) note that 'pragmatics is often neglected or only marginally treated in L2 curricula' and call for 'further materials development [to] support teachers in preparing learners to understand and use language effectively in context and to express their own voice as they wish in the target community'. Regarding materials development, Sykes (2017) reports on one solution to the problem: the creation of online repositories for sharing and exchanging materials internationally. Despite initial positive results (Cohen & Sykes, 2012; Taguchi & Sykes, 2013), the technology-mediated teaching and learning of L2 pragmatics is made more complex by the necessary inclusion of a 'transnational perspective' involving teachers in a range of different contexts around the world (Sykes, 2017, p. 122). For many FL contexts, however, school teachers often rely on textbooks for reasons of

convenience (Baleghizadeh & Rastin, 2015; Crawford, 2002) and authority (Arva & Medgyes, 2000).

A number of pragmatic analyses of FL textbooks point to certain limitations for the teaching of L2 pragmatics. An early study of 8 leading ESL (English as a second language) and EFL textbooks and teacher's manuals used in US universities, Vellenga (2004) found that only approximately 20% of pages contained pragmatic information, and this constituted neither 'a pragmatically appropriate source of linguistic input nor explicit metapragmatic information' (paragraph 24). A more recent study of 10 EFL textbooks commonly used with non-English majors at B1 level in China found similarly limited pragmatic information (17%), with little metapragmatic input or intralingual variation (Ren & Han, 2016). Several studies of secondary school EFL textbooks have focused on Germany. Limberg (2015) provides a comprehensive overview of the speech act of apologizing, showing areas of difficulty for L2 learners and sketching an ideal instructional progression. He claims textbooks in the past 'have been criticized for their cursory treatment of pragmatic phenomena' showing weaknesses regarding metalinguistic information and sociopragmatic features (see also Barron, 2007; Ogiermann, 2010; Syrbe & Rose, 2016). Barron (2016) provides a thorough pragmatic analysis of an EFL textbook series using Cross-Cultural Speech Act Research Project (CCSARP) coding of requests (Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper, 1989). Findings showed that the range of request strategies and types of modification in textbook examples was limited and failed to address areas of potential negative L1 transfer. For example, 'please' was treated as an illocutionary force indicating device and a mitigator, without discussion of non-standard requests where its misuse upgraded the imposition rather than downgrading or softening it (Barron, 2016, p. 2176). In her conclusion Barron (2016) challenges publishers to remedy the situation for learners – 'we await future developments.' Limberg (2015, p. 16), on the other hand, places the onus on teachers: 'Teachers have to realize and address this properly.'

Indeed, Celce-Murcia (2008) expresses concerns with respect to language teacher preparation in pragmatics. She equates pragmatic knowledge with the sociocultural dimension of communicative competence, highlighting both the relative importance of a 'social or cultural blunder' compared to a simple linguistic error, and the fact that 'second and foreign language teachers typically have far greater awareness and knowledge of linguistic rules than they do of the sociocultural behaviors and expectations that accompany use of the target language' (Celce-Murcia, 2008, p. 46). Teachers' attitudes and beliefs are formed during their own language learning experiences and from training and teaching experience, and affect pedagogical choices in the classroom (Borg, 2009, 2015). Indeed Vellenga (2004) supplemented her textbook analysis with interviews with 4 teachers and concluded 'even professional teachers rarely have the time, inclination, or training to include supplementary pragmatic information in their lessons.'

Savvidou and Economidou-Kogetsidis (2019, p. 41) confirm that: 'unlike L2 grammatical errors that are easily recognizable by non-linguists as the result of one's linguistic deficiency, the source of pragmatic failures is not easily recognized by hearers, and speakers are more harshly judged.' They interviewed 10 Greek and Cypriot teachers of EFL in private schools in Cyprus, and found teachers to lack theoretical knowledge of pragmatics, and although the teachers saw its 'intrinsic value', they claimed to have no time or expertise to address pragmatics within curricular constraints. In another study examining actual classroom practice, Szczepaniak-Kozak and Wąsikiewicz-Firlej (2018)

compared 2 lessons by each of 2 Polish and 2 American teachers of small business English classes in a private school in Poland. They found the Polish teachers used a wider range of request strategies which they imputed to active pedagogy derived from more extensive teacher training and teaching experience. They conclude that 'the routine and limited repertoire of teacher talk causes impoverished language input in the classroom in general' (p. 139) and call for greater teacher awareness of this consequence.

As shown in the above discussion, research in instructional pragmatics and ILP in general has addressed the teachability concern by investigating methods, materials, and teacher education. Studies show that L2 pragmatics can be taught both explicitly and implicitly, but that materials tend neither to be abundantly available nor generally very accurate. The present study seeks to test these findings in an understudied yet very important context, the obligatory secondary school FL classroom. Our investigation includes consideration of teaching materials, classroom practice, and teacher education in a single study, in order to examine the whole context for the development of L2 pragmatic competence among pupils. For this reason, we include a textbook analysis, an investigation of classroom interaction, and an examination of teacher perceptions about L2 pragmatics. Requests were chosen as the main focus of study because of their common occurrence in classroom settings as well as their central position in previous L2 pragmatic research (Achiba, 2003).

Following Searle (1976), this study classifies a request as a directive act which is an attempt 'by the speaker to get the hearer to do something' (p. 11). Since requests usually make the hearer do something for the speaker (as a favour), they may come across as face-threatening and may require attenuation to soften the imposition of the request (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Given the frequency of occurrence of requests in our daily life, it is important to master this important speech act to maintain healthy social relations and to avoid cross-cultural misunderstandings.

III Research questions

The questions this article investigates are the following:

1. How are L2 English requests treated in textbooks used in secondary school EFL classes in France?
    a. Are requests presented explicitly and/or do they occur implicitly or incidentally in French secondary textbooks?
    b. What type of requests are presented: what levels of directness are shown and what kind of metapragmatic input is provided?
2. What opportunities for L2 English requests arise in secondary school classes?
    a. What kind of requests occur in English in classroom settings?
    b. What support do teachers offer to encourage pupils to make requests?
3. What are teachers' beliefs and objectives with respect to textbooks and L2 pragmatic instruction?
    a. How are these beliefs expressed in video-stimulated recall interviews?
    b. How do they affect opportunities to make L2 requests in classroom interaction?

Table 1. Teacher profiles.

Name	Level	Age (years)	Experience (years)	Language profile
Alice	1	41–44	15–20	French
Birgit	1	35–40	0–5	Norwegian
Candice	1	31–34	6–10	French
Danièle	1 + 2	25–30	0–5	French
Eva	1 + 2	35–40	6–10	French
Fanny	2	31–34	6–10	French, 1 year teaching assistant UK
Giselle	3	51+	21–24	French, 2 years' teaching USA
Hélène	3	35–40	6–10	French
Irène	3 + 3	45–50	21–24	American
Julie	3	45–50	6–10	Italian, UK residence

IV Method

Part of a larger investigation of L2 requests among EFL classroom learners in France (Siddiqa, 2018), the present study employed a cross-sectional design including teachers and learners at three levels of secondary education, and examined textbooks, classroom practice, and teacher attitudes and beliefs in relation to pragmatic instruction. Informed consent was obtained from pupils, parents, teachers, and schools, and data were collected over a five-month period towards the end of the school year.

1 Participants

The learners were 308 pupils in 13 intact EFL classes in 10 state secondary schools in an urban region of France. Five classes were at first year of lower secondary (Level 1; 131 pupils aged 11–12 years), three in the final year of lower secondary (Level 2; 73 pupils aged 14–15 years) and five in their final year of upper secondary school (Level 3; 104 pupils aged 17–18 years). In a demographic questionnaire, most learners reported 4–6 years of English at primary school with an L2 experience generally limited to the classroom: while two thirds of intermediate and advanced learners reported occasionally watching films or series in English, no pupil at any level had spent more than four weeks in English immersion, less than one quarter of participants read in English for pleasure, and only 15% reported an English-speaking parent.

Details of the 10 teachers are given in Table 1. In France, teacher education starts at graduate level, with the majority of teachers taking an undergraduate degree in the target language (English studies), followed by competitive teacher entrance exams which test literary and cultural knowledge, written and oral proficiency, and mastery of the institutional framework governing secondary education. Teaching follows prescribed national programmes based on the CEFR and leading to national exams at the end of lower and upper secondary school cycles, and teachers receive in-service training and inspections by a nationally appointed local inspectorate. Pedagogical practice tends to focus on whole-class, teacher-led activities with an emphasis on accuracy. Table 1 shows that the

more experienced teachers in our study generally taught upper levels, as is often the case in French secondary education.

2 Materials

Four instruments were designed to elicit data:

- survey of textbook use administered online;
- a background questionnaire for teachers covering age, gender, teacher training, experience and attitudes;
- a set of questions to guide semi-structured video-stimulated recall interviews with respect to classroom activities, textbooks, and L2 pragmatics (see Appendix 1 in supplementary material).
- Classroom filming.

3 Procedures

Data on textbooks were collected via an online textbook survey involving 15 teachers in the authors' network from local lower ($n = 8$) and upper secondary schools ($n = 7$). This survey included 6 of the 10 teachers in our study, and served to identify 15 textbooks most frequently used in French secondary education. It also revealed that lower secondary teachers were more likely to use them regularly. These 15 textbooks were analysed for pragmatic information.

All 10 teachers in the study completed the background questionnaire and were asked to allow filming of lessons where there was the most interaction. Three one-hour sessions were videorecorded for each class over a period of approximately three weeks. All were videotaped and transcribed in order to identify and analyse any examples of L2 requests by teachers or learners, occurring either incidentally or as part of a planned activity. Additional learner data was collected via two controlled oral production tasks (i.e., cartoon oral production task, role plays) which are analysed in Siddiqa (2018). Following classroom filming, each teacher completed the background questionnaire followed by a 30–40 minute semi-structured interview with the first author to probe attitudes to textbooks and teaching pragmatics, and including video-stimulated recall with extracts from class films. Data were transcribed (Jefferson, 1984) for thematic analysis (Hadley, 2017).

V Analysis and discussion

This section begins with a pragmatic analysis of the textbooks used in our secondary EFL context, before discussing classroom activities, and finally linking examples of classroom L2 requests to the teacher profiles developed from interview data.

1 Textbooks

To answer our first research question concerning the type and frequency of textbook requests, the 15 textbooks commonly used in our French secondary school context were collected for a detailed page-by-page analysis to find metapragmatic input related to L2

Table 2. Requests featured in secondary school textbooks by level and type (percentages in parentheses).

Title	Activities with requests			
	Total number of activities	Focus on requests	Incidental	Total
Level 1:				
New Enjoy English	203	12 (6%)	16 (8%)	28 (14%)
Welcome	274	3 (1%)	19 (7%)	22 (8%)
Connect Anglais	332	3 (1%)	5 (2%)	8 (2%)
New Step In	197	10 (5%)	9 (5%)	19 (10%)
Making friends	293	15 (5%)	16 (5%)	31 (11%)
Total	1299	43 (3%)	65 (5%)	108 (8%)
Level 2:				
Enjoy English	145	5 (3%)	5 (3%)	10 (7%)
Step In	199	3 (2%)	5 (3%)	8 (4%)
Join the team Anglais	238	3 (1%)	9 (4%)	12 (5%)
Welcome	186	2 (1%)	12 (6%)	14 (8%)
Connect Anglais	194	3 (2%)	9 (5%)	12 (6%)
Total	962	16 (2%)	40 (4%)	56 (6%)
Level 3:				
Meeting Point	485	2 (1%)	11 (2%)	13 (3%)
New Missions	374	1 (0%)	6 (2%)	7 (2%)
Full impact Anglais	341	3 (1%)	2 (1%)	5 (1%)
Password English	330	1 (0%)	5 (2%)	6 (2%)
Project	190	1 (1%)	10 (5%)	11 (6%)
Total	1720	8 (1%)	34 (2%)	42 (2%)

requests (Barron, 2016; Usó-Juan, 2008; Vellenga, 2004). For this purpose, we examined all activities, that is, all independent tasks in every chapter containing topic descriptions and explanations, numbered practice exercises and reading passages, audio transcripts, and grammar explanations. Two types of metapragmatic information were identified: (1) activities with a focus on requests either in the form of grammar presentation (e.g. use of 'can') or production activities (e.g. writing a letter to a friend to ask a favour), and (2) activities featuring incidental requests which were not central to the activity. The activities were coded by the first author, and 20% coded by the second author with an interrater reliability of 97.7% (Cohen's kappa = .95). Table 2 below displays the list of textbooks cited by our teachers with the total number of activities, followed by tallies and percentages for both types of request treatment.

This analysis reveals a low incidence of L2 requests in textbooks, particularly explicit treatment of requests, and decreasing with age/proficiency level. In order to further characterize the textbook requests and compare them with the requests produced by learners, we used an adaptation of the CCSARP framework (Siddiqa, 2018; Blum-Kulka et al., 1989) to classify request strategies: direct (e.g. 'Repeat please'), conventionally indirect (e.g. 'Can you repeat please?'), and nonconventionally indirect requests (e.g. 'Sorry?' as a hint to ask someone to repeat). Table 3 displays the number of such requests alongside

Table 3. Distribution of request strategies identified in L2 textbooks at all levels.

	All activities with requests	Exercises on requests	Total number of requests	Request strategy distribution					
				Direct		Conventionally indirect		Non-conventionally indirect	
Level 1	108	10	242	139	57%	87	36%	6	2%
Level 2	56	0	106	67	63%	37	35%	2	2%
Level 3	42	3	77	54	70%	16	21%	4	5%

the distribution of these requests by strategy at each level. Again, the first author did the initial coding and 20% were re-coded by the second author (interrater agreement of 88%, 97%, and 84% with Cohen's kappa of .76, .94, .13 in direct, conventionally indirect and, nonconventionally indirect requests respectively.)

These results differ slightly from comparable analyses in other countries. Barron's (2016) analysis of German secondary school EFL textbooks revealed that only direct and conventionally indirect requests were found in the textbooks, with no examples of non-conventionally indirect request at any level. Moreover, only three out of nine subcategories of direct and indirect requests (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989) were presented showing limitations of the range of strategies to which students are exposed via textbooks. Usó-Juan (2008) found an overwhelming preponderance of conventionally indirect strategies in English for tourism textbooks used in Spain, with only one example of a direct request and no nonconventionally indirect requests in five different books. Moreover, these studies also found limited sociopragmatic information in the textbooks and teachers' manuals as assessed by the metapragmatic input provided. The differences in our dataset may be due to the relatively small number of examples identified in quite large corpora, or indeed to the different target readerships for particular textbooks.

Concerning the type of input related to L2 requests in our dataset, as noted earlier, activities containing metapragmatic information on requests was limited overall (see Table 2) and mostly depended on the teachers to make the given request input salient for learners. However, 12 such activities were identified in which explicit metapragmatic input was provided either in the form of explanation of modal verbs (see Extract 1), or provision of sample expressions for making specific requests (see Extract 2).

Extract 1

Can/can't

On peut utiliser can ou can't pour parler de ce qui est [Can and can't are used to talk about what it is].

possible/permis [possible/allowed]	impossible/interdit [impossible/ forbidden]
You **can** park here.	You **can't** turn left here!
Pupils **can** have lunch at school.	Pupils **can't** eat in class!
Can I have a biscuit?	No, you **can't**!

New Enjoy (level 1, p. 154)

Extract 2

> ***Impliquez-vous dans l'échange.*** [Engage in interaction]
> *Demandez poliment de répéter ou de préciser.* [Ask politely for repetition or explanation]
> I didn't catch what you said, could you please repeat your question? / Would you mind repeating your question?
> I'm not sure I understand what you mean, could you explain, please?
>
> Password (level 3, p. 151)

Like Usó-Juan (2008), we found little or no contextual information regarding the effect of social factors such as the degree of imposition or the status of addressees on the choice of strategies or modifiers for making appropriate L2 requests. The only sociopragmatic variation in one instance was introduced at level 2 (see Extract 3) in the form of the difference between the use of 'can' and 'could', where 'could' was presented as a politer substitute for 'can'.

Extract 3

> **[Potential uses of *could/couldn't*]**
> *Parler d'une chose possible/impossible au preterit* [To talk about something that is possible/impossible using the simple past]
> It was dark so I **couldn't** see his face.
> *Parler d'une possibilité atténuée* [To talk about a remote possibility]
> We **could** have a bushfire.
> *Faire une demande plus poli* [To make a more polite request]
> **Could** you open the window please?
>
> Enjoy English (level 2, p. 154)

These data suggest the limited treatment of instructional pragmatics in the French secondary school EFL curriculum: while requests, as we have seen, are an important speech act in the FL classroom, few examples and even less explicit metapragmatic input on English requests is provided in the most commonly used textbooks. Perhaps not surprisingly, there was no correlation between the type of request strategy most commonly featured in textbooks, direct requests, and learners' preferred strategies elicited via our production tasks, which was conventionally indirect (Siddiqa, 2018).

In the following section we turn from input available to learners for pragmatic development in textbooks to output opportunities in the language class itself.

2 Classroom films

Table 4 displays an overview of all classes filmed for our analysis with a description of number of pupils, preferred textbooks, and the number of activities conducted during film recordings. We also include our assessment of each teacher's attitude to using textbooks, based on views expressed during interviews. As noted in Section IV, three regular lessons (50–60 minutes) were recorded with each class. In these lessons, teachers used

Table 4. Overview of class films by pupils, textbooks, teacher attitudes and activities.

	Classes (hours)	Pupils (*n*)	Textbook	Teacher attitude towards textbooks	Total classroom activities in three lessons	Activities planned to teach L2 pragmatics
Level 1:						
Alice	3	24	New Enjoy	positive	8	0
Birgit	3	28	New Enjoy	positive	10	0
Candice	3	23	none	negative	9	0
Danièle	2	27	New Enjoy	positive	7	1
Eva	3	29	New Enjoy	positive	12	0
Total	14	131			46	1
Level 2:						
Danièle	3	26	none	negative	3	0
Eva	3	23	none	negative	5	0
Fanny	3	24	New Enjoy, New Step In, New Bridges	neutral	5	0
Total	9	73			13	0
Level 3:						
Giselle	3	22	Missions	positive	6	0
Hélène	4	19	Password English	neutral	5	0
Irène	3	21	On Target, Bridges	neutral	3	0
Irène	3	16	Meeting Point, Full Impact	neutral	4	0
Julie	3	26	Meeting Point, Missions	negative	4	0
Total	16	104			22	0
Overall:						
	39	308			81	1

numerous types of classroom activities including guessing games, picture descriptions, reading comprehension, and learner presentations. As shown in Table 4, activities were shorter and more frequent at level 1, lasting on average between 15 and 20 minutes, and focused mostly on vocabulary, grammar, with a little focus on pronunciation and culture. At level 2, activities lasted longer, hence fewer activities, and there was more emphasis on culture, while level 3 showed an emphasis on grammar and vocabulary. Pragmatics was tackled as part of a planned activity only once, at level 1.

Other than planned input, some spontaneous examples of metapragmatic input on requests were found where teachers provided scaffolding or encouraged pupils to make correct requests in English. A typical example of such an input is shown in Extract 4 where a teacher elicits learner repair.

Extract 4

1 Teacher: Okay what fairy tale did you know Alice
2 Alice: *J'ai pas compris*

3	Teacher:	I ((gesturing to elicit English)) (2.0) ((shakes her head and signs no with hands))
4		(1.4 seconds) *t'as pas compris* (.) I
5	Pupil:	Oh I I don't know
6	Teacher:	Wait (.) okay Julie ((to Alice)) she's helping you
7	Julie:	I don't know
8	Teacher:	((to Alice)) Can you repeat
9	Alice:	((showing discomfort in her voice)) *J'ai pas entendu* miss
10	Julie:	I don't [know]
11	**Teacher:**	**[Say] Can you**
12	**Alice:**	((to Julie)) **Can you uh repeat** ((the teacher nods))
13	Julie:	Uh I don't know

(Danièle, level 1)

In this excerpt one learner is unable to respond to the teacher's open question (line 1) and cannot offer a repair in L2, and another learner tries to help by providing an appropriate response 'I don't know' (line 5) which the first learner does not catch (line 9). The teacher models the repair request she has taught the class, 'can you repeat?' (lines 8, 11) and succeeds in eliciting repetition by the learner of her classmate's suggestion ('I don't know', line 10). This request is scaffolded by the teacher and collaboratively constructed by the two learners. This kind of exchange is an instance of metapragmatic input since the whole routine is instigated and closed by the teacher. Requests for an addressee to repeat were most common in our dataset, as befits an instructional context with a predominance of whole-class, teacher-fronted activities (Siddiqa, 2018).

The frequency of this type of exchanges in the 13 filmed classes is shown in Table 5. At level 1, there were on average 4 requests per hour, at level 2 only 2, and at level 3 only 2.5. Spontaneous learner requests are distinguished from instances initiated by the teacher, with the latter considered as metapragmatic input (as in Extract 6).

The request tallies in Table 5 allow a three-way division of the group of 10 teachers. Three practitioners, Danièle, Eva and Irène, actively promoted learner request behaviour both by permitting at least 10 spontaneous interventions as well as offering metapragmatic input. Three other teachers, Birgit, Candice, and Giselle either provided metapragmatic input or frequent opportunities for spontaneous requests, while the remaining four teachers, Alice, Fanny, Hélène, and Julie neither encouraged many learner requests nor provided input on this speech act. Table 5 also gives the average score for each class on a cloze test used to check proficiency (Siddiqa, 2018) and shows that the classes with most metapragmatic input were those where pupils performed less well on this test. In what follows we seek to investigate what distinguishes teachers who allowed and exploited pragmatic episodes from their peers who did not, by examining these sequences in detail and relating them to teacher profiles developed from survey and interview data.

3 L2 requests in classroom interaction: Teacher profiles

To establish profiles of the teachers in our study, questionnaires and interview transcripts were analysed both in terms of responses to our specific questions concerning textbooks, their teaching philosophy, and views of pragmatics, and also using grounded theory to

Table 5. Summary of teacher input on learner requests with cloze test scores per class.

Teacher	Spontaneous learner requests	Spontaneous teacher input	Learner proficiency (Max = 80)	
			Mean score per class	Standard deviation per class
Level 1:				
Alice	3	0	7.176	4.186
Birgit	27	0	8.392	6.373
Candice	3	1	4.428	4.051
Danièle	27	5	4.653	2.544
Eva	2	0	14.03	9.387
Total	62	4	8.153	6.998
Level 2:				
Danièle	2	0	18.115	15.229
Eva	10	1	14.038	9.387
Fanny	7	0	14.952	10.141
Total	19	1	15.753	11.96
Level 3:				
Giselle	1	1	52.307	22.178
Hélène	7	0	66.888	7.0612
Irène	12	1	37.176	17.791
Irène	11	1	24.769	12.826
Julie	6	0	50.947	15.984
Total	37	3	45.13	20.69

allow other themes to arise from an emic perspective (Hadley, 2017). Since there is an overlap in lower secondary teachers, with two participants working at levels 1 and 2, we examine these teachers together before moving on to upper secondary (level 3) teachers.

a Classes at levels 1 and 2 with and without L2 requests. In the lower secondary classes, metapragmatic input was provided by Candice, Danièle, and Eva, while spontaneous learner requests were frequent in the classes of Birgit, Danièle and Eva. In Alice and Fanny's classes there was no teacher input and fewer learner requests. Little difference in age or experience is apparent across this divide, though Alice was the oldest and the only teacher not to receive initial training in action-oriented or task-based methodology. Similarly, variation in attitude towards textbooks did not correlate with willingness to teach pragmatics (Table 4). Classes without request input were characterized by a predominance of teacher-centred activities, often with some disturbance due to restive pupil behaviour, limited learner participation, and use of L1. Alice and Fanny generally used direct requests in English ('sit down', 'turn around') and in interviews considered the observed lessons to be typical of their teaching.

Birgit and Eva both used a warm-up routine involving learner-learner questions, and Birgit observed: 'I ask the students to ask questions in English [so] there is quite a lot of

speaking even though it's not necessarily the main activity of the lesson.' She expressed reluctance to plan open-ended pair and group activities, claiming that alternatives to highly structured activities were not possible since learners at this level 'didn't have enough vocabulary or the structures to produce anything by themselves' so 'it's difficult to do otherwise' (Birgit). Regarding the pairwork observed Birgit commented 'they didn't talk in English together [. . .] I think it's too ambitious. They can't, they won't do it.' However, spontaneous learner requests were frequent in her classes, although she allowed rather than exploited these instances, as in Extract 5, where several learners collaborate to produce an L2 request.

Extract 5

1 Teacher: . . . go around in the forest (1.0) what do you do (1.4) ((to a pupil who is raising his hand)) Adam
2 Pupil A ((or Adam)): ((hesitates)) can I ((laughs while holding a rolled up paper in his hand))
3 Pupil B ((trying to help)): Can I go to the
4 Pupil C: Can I go to the bin (.) *ben c'est bon*
(1.0)
5 Teacher: Sorry
6 Pupil D: Can I go to
7 Pupil E: Can I [go to the bin]
8 Pupil D: [Can I go to the] bin ((pupil A just smiles))
(2.0)
9 Teacher ((walks towards pupil A)): Uh Adam no no no (.) now concentrate on the work (0.5) okay (3.0) concentrate on the work
(Birgit, level 1)

This example is interesting since it speaks to one theory which we entertained during the design of this study, that is, that in spite of the potential limitations of textbook activities and different teacher priorities, learners themselves might create opportunities for pragmatic development. This seemed especially likely in the area of L2 requests due to the very nature of power dynamics and social relations in the secondary school classroom: the teacher holds authority through her institutional role and greater L2 proficiency, and requests constitute one of a small number of permitted speech acts: in French classrooms at this level learners are expected to raise their hands for permission to speak or move around the classroom. Here we see a small group of learners encouraging one to resist getting down to work by asking permission to throw out a piece of paper. The teacher shuts down the exchange without validating the efforts of these learners to produce an appropriate L2 request – 'Adam no no no' (line 9). This episode is an unusual instance of a meaningful utterance produced collaboratively and appropriately yet not identified as a learning opportunity, perhaps due to the teacher's view described earlier that these learners lacked the proficiency to 'produce anything by themselves.'

In lower secondary classes which did provide metapragmatic input, both Candice and Danièle used a good deal of French to provide instructions. Candice delivered highly structured and largely teacher-fronted lessons, and used both direct and indirect requests

in her lessons. L2 request-related input occurred in one of her classes in the form of her instruction to use the expression 'repeat please' during a role play activity where one learner had to draw a monster based on another learner's description of the monster. Eva used more English in her classes at both levels, explaining that 'I try not to speak French as much as I can' and this was not an observer effect ('it's not because you were there'). She had learners repeat expressions 'not only to correct pronunciation but to just make them participate and speak.' In a similar episode, Eva made a learner translate her French request to English, responding to the French utterance *Je peux effacer le tableau?* with 'Yes please, can I clean the board.'

In contrast, Danièle organized more pair and group activities at level 2. She was careful to have learners reformulate their L1 questions in English, as shown in Extract 6 above. Danièle commented: '[when] they say "*est-que vous pouvez dire*" [can you say] I just snap my fingers and they know they have to say "Miss can you give the English for __".' She added that level 1 learners found this practice appropriate and 'fun' while level 2 pupils were more resistant ('they think it's fake'). We return in Section VI to this negative perception by learners and teachers of the appropriateness of using English beyond actual teaching and learning content when a common L1 (French) is readily available and of course used throughout the rest of the school day.

Besides the spontaneous L2 request input mentioned above, Danièle offered the only planned activity in our dataset at level 1 involving requests during a grammar lesson on the simple past. The teacher set up a chain activity whereby learners provided a response to a gapfill-exercise and nominated a classmate using a request structure ('Juliette, can you do number 2?') to complete the next blank. Some 10 requests were made during this activity, and some are shown below.

Extract 6

1 Teacher: Write the correction (3.0) and don't forget the question mark (1.4) do you have your workbook (0.8) it's in your pocket (.) write your question (.) exercise six (.) page ninety one (3.2) Mary
((several pupils raise hands to be picked by Mary))
2 Mary: Uh **Evan can I: (1.2) uh (1.1) can you (0.8) number two**
3 Evan: Uh (.) because I walked to school
4 Teacher: very good very good pronunciation (0.6) uh: ((writes on the board)) *c'est* because (1.0) ((clears her throat)) (2.5) uh Evan
(5.0)
5 Evan: **Uh (2.2)** ((laughs hesitatingly and looks around for the next interested participant))
6 Teacher: You choose (.) you are the boss
7 Evan: **Can you: three uh Julie**

(Danièle, level 1)

This transcript suggests that this interrogative form, involving both a modal auxiliary and inversion is well beyond these learners' current productive competence (indeed it corresponds to the fourth of six levels of the L2 English development sequence for questions developed by Lightbown and Spada (2013)). Hesitation is apparent in Mary's first

request (line 2), while in Evan's request (lines 5, 7) the main verb 'do' is missing, and even the necessary vocabulary ('three', line 7) is not readily available.

What is striking however is Danièle's persistence in scaffolding her learners each time a communicative need arises, as Extract 7 illustrates.

Extract 7

1 Teacher ((to a pupil who is raising his hand)): Max, you finished (.) Alicia
2 Alicia: Uh *est-ce que je peux avoir un mouchoir*
3 Teacher: uh (0.5) can I
4 Alicia: **Can I the *mouchoir* (tissue)**
5 Teacher: Have
6 Alicia: have the *mouchoir* (tissue)
7 Teacher: do you remember (0.5) it's a paper but it's a different type of paper (0.4) a ((*signals to her nose*))
8 Some pupils: *Mouch-mouch* ((laughter))
9 Teacher: A tissue
10 Another pupil: Uh okay
11 Teacher ((writes the word 'tissue' on the board)): Alicia (.) can you ask the question in English
12 Alicia: Teacher I can (0.5) I
(1.0)
13 Teacher: Can I ((explains using her hands))
(1.4)
14 Alicia: I
((Lisa, sitting next to Alicia, hands her a tissue paper))
15 Teacher: Thanks Lisa

Danièle's attitude to her learners' potential for participating in interaction in English is quite different from that expressed by Birgit above. She organized informal activities too, such as celebrating a learner's birthday and letting pupils mingle with each other and talk freely over the cake. At one event during one of the filmed sessions, learners made some indirect requests in English (e.g. 'I'm hungry' as a request to get a piece of cake) lending weight to this teacher's concern both to scaffold L2 production in classroom interaction and also provide opportunities for learners to speak spontaneously.

b Requests in classes at level 3. At level three metapragmatic input by teacher and spontaneous learner requests occurred frequently in three of the five classes taught by two of the four teachers in the study; thus we compare Giselle and Irène, in whose classes examples arose, with Hélène and Julie, where they didn't. At this level there was a clear difference in experience between the two pairs: Giselle and Irène each had over 20 years' teaching experience, and both were seasoned teacher educators (Table 1). Similarly in terms of attitude to textbooks, these two expressed positive or neutral views, whereas Hélène and Julie were neutral and negative (Table 4).

In the filmed lessons Hélène adopted a task-based approach with pair work and group work followed by class presentations as a strategy 'to help the students speak on the text and not just fill in grades or papers'. Her explicit objective was to encourage discussion

and debate: 'I try as much as possible not to have a one-way classroom like just a teacher asking questions and the student answering back' and to use English throughout. In one class she instructed: 'No French no French. If you disagree, you disagree in English,' and indeed interactions in her class featured a good deal of disagreement. Even though she emphasized speaking in English in her classes, she raised a common question shared by other teachers about teaching pragmatics:

> I don't really know how to teach pragmatics. I mean how you would, you know, find some activities for teaching it? I guess we take for granted that it will come in the way with the things we do in class.

For Julie, who taught the other level 3 class where no metapragmatic input was recorded, attention to pragmatics was considered at best a distraction from exam preparation, and at worst, equated with inaccurate language use and low pedagogical expectations:

> The exam still requires them to be able to talk about Shakespeare and literature with literary terms and to analyse something in detail . . . pragmatics enables to be able to survive but I think that this is detrimental to the accuracy of the language. So sometimes he managed to ask for ice-cream but even if couldn't speak the language you can say 'ice-cream' to buy it, actually I'm not sure this is enough for especially high school students of English.

Julie's focus for this final year class was exclusively on preparation for the baccalaureate exams and her lessons provided techniques for analysing literary texts in terms of broad themes laid down in national FL curricula. Pupils' requests to the teacher mostly occurred in French and no attempt was made to ask them to reformulate in English.

Concerning the level 3 teachers whose classes did feature metapragmatic input, Giselle, like Julie, was concerned with exam preparation, using authentic materials to practice analysing literary and cultural examples according to the set themes. Her teaching philosophy focused on learner interaction: 'what they read or what they hear, everything in the classroom is a pretext to make them talk [. . .] the more they talk, the better it is.' The request input occurring in her class, Extract 8, is similar to Extract 4 above where the teacher attempts to elicit a short repair sequence, in this case while going over answers to a listening comprehension exercise.

Extract 8

1 Teacher: Okay what's the second question (11.4 seconds) *vous vous souvenez de la question* (0.8) nobody
(1.2)
2 A pupil to teacher: uh *on remet*
3 Teacher: ((nods and walks towards the board then stops and looks back signalling the pupil to repeat in English))
4 **The pupil: Can you**
(1.6)
5 **Teacher: Can you play it again**
6 The pupil: Yes
(Giselle, level 3)

Irène, an American trained in France, placed great emphasis on repetition as a pedagogical technique, modelling 'the same things over and over again until hopefully the weakest pupils can at least participate and repeat and get the meaning of somethings that have been already said in class.' For this teacher, the pupils 'are conditioned to be very passive learners. They expect the teacher to teach rather than asking their own questions that might really interest them.' Irène uses English most of the time, correcting pronunciation and grammar frequently. Extract 9 shows this teacher's strategy of having one pupil repeat another's utterance (line 4), and provides explicit metapragmatic information (line 5).

Extract 9

1 Teacher ((to Ben who is raising his hand)): Ben
2 **Ben: uh: I can I can take your: your w/ book please**
3 Teacher: >yeah but you don't need the book< (0.3) >the book is not absolutely necessary< we're (.) we're we're going to (0.5) **so INDEED Ben the question is can I**
4 **Ben: can I**
5 **Teacher: or may I if you are polite** (0.3) but in any case uh what we are going to do is to try to make sure that we understand (0.4) ONE HUNDRED percent of the answer (.)

The other example in Irène's teaching comes from an episode at the end of a lesson. As in Extract 7 at level 1, Extract 10 shows an extended scaffolding sequence where the teacher provides input on personal pronouns (*his*, *your*, *our*) and copula–pronoun inversion before giving permission for students to leave their bags in her classroom:

Extract 10

1 Clément (to teacher at the end of a class): Hi
2 Teacher: Hello
3 **Clément: Hello if possible**
4 **Teacher: It is (0.3) is it possible**
5 **Clément: Is it possible to uh: put uh: (0.4) your bag**
6 **Teacher: No (.) no (.) no (.) hi/ his bag and your bag is**
(0.8)
7 Pupil B: Uh *je sais pas*
8 Clément: *C'est pas* your
(0.6)
9 Teacher: OUR
10 Clément: Our
11 Teacher: Bags
12 Clément: Bags
13 Teacher: Now REPEAT (0.4) uh [Clément]
14 Clément: [it's it] is [possible]
15 Teacher: [IS IT] is it
16 **Clément: is it possible (1.3) to put o/ [bags]**
17 **Teacher: [bags]**
18 **Clément: Bags**
19 **Teacher: In the class**
20 **Clément: In the class**

(Irène, level 3)

This example illustrates Irène's assertion in interview regarding the difficulty of eliciting L2 production from rather passive learners, showing that she does indeed 'always try to flip that coin to get them to ask questions' although 'it's not an easy thing.'

VI Discussion and conclusions

We begin Section VI with a summary of the main findings. In response to the first research question concerning the treatment of L2 English in secondary school EFL textbooks in France, we found that input was rather limited: examples occurred in only a small fraction of textbook activities, they were more likely to feature requests than focus explicitly on them, and their frequency decreased with the proficiency level targeted. More than half of all requests in French textbooks were direct requests, unlike previous studies of German or Spanish materials discussed earlier, and also unlike the requests actually produced by the French learners, who made proportionally fewer direct requests with increasing age/proficiency (Siddiqa, 2018). Metalinguistic input was limited, particularly with respect to sociopragmatic dimensions, and often centred on the use of lexicogrammatical elements such as particular modal verbs rather than the teaching of pragmatics. Our study confirms that the metapragmatic input is not only not sufficient but also is not pragmatically authentic for making polite L2 requests (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Brown & Levinson, 1987), being direct in majority of the cases, with little modification to attenuate the imposition of the request.

Our second research question concerned interactional opportunities, specifically for making L2 English requests in secondary school classes. We particularly wanted to know what kind of support teachers offered pupils to make requests in English. Here again our results show a very low incidence of request behaviour, with an average of only 2 requests in English per 50-minute EFL lesson. While more learner requests were observed at level 1, there was also a great deal of variation across teachers in their willingness to elicit or support L2 English requests by their pupils. This variation is explained in the analysis of beliefs and objectives with respect to textbooks and L2 pragmatic instruction which was the object of our third research question. First, with respect to teacher beliefs expressed in video-stimulated recall interview, our results highlighted an interesting paradox concerning the place of pragmatics in instructional programmes. Several lower secondary teachers (levels 1 and 2) believed their learners lacked the L2 proficiency required to interact spontaneously, and that it was 'too soon' to address pragmatic competence. The majority of upper secondary teachers (level 3), on the other hand, felt pragmatics lay outside their core concerns in an examination-driven syllabus and should be addressed earlier if at all. While most teachers claimed to espouse the action-oriented or task-based approaches encouraged in official programmes based on the CEFR, it was apparent both from classroom films and teacher interviews that the intrinsic value of meaning-focused interaction and the instructional goal of fostering communicative competence in L2 was not a given for all the teachers in our study. Many teachers habitually switched to L1 French for classroom management and for most interaction not directly related to lesson content, and even for instructions to launch different teaching activities. Several teachers also cited low proficiency and motivation among learners as reasons for limiting learner-learner interaction in favour of teacher-fronted work at the board.

The third research question on teachers' beliefs and objectives with respect to textbooks and L2 pragmatic instruction concerned the effect of teacher attitudes on opportunities to make L2 requests in class. Our analysis of the metapragmatic input which teachers provided to their pupils shows how differences in teaching objectives and strategies among our 10 teachers appear to have contributed to the presence or absence of request sequences. In classes where no English metapragmatic input related to requests was provided (Alice, Fanny, Hélène and Julie), the teachers generally thought their learners were not able to complete this speech act in the target language, or that it was not useful for them to do so. At levels 1 and 2 these teachers often taught very structured teacher-centred and teacher-controlled lessons and thought their pupils were not proficient enough to speak spontaneously; at level 3 they questioned the relevance of pragmatics to curricular goals and their own ability to teach it. A second subset of teachers (Birgit, Candice, and Giselle) provided impromptu metapragmatic input on request routines without deviating from planned activities. Here learners had a brief opportunity to reformulate an L1 request in the target language in a meaning-focused episode where their goal was to obtain permission for something (e.g. clean the board or hear an audio recording once more). However, the majority of L2 requests during classroom interaction occurred in our films of only three teachers, Danièle at level 1, Eva at level 2, and Irène at level 3. As we saw in Section V, these teachers had different levels of experience and showed similar variation in their views of textbooks, teaching philosophy, and choice of classroom activities to the other practitioners. All, however, were teaching classes which had on average lower proficiency than others at that level, suggesting pragmatic instruction may perhaps be considered more relevant with such learners.

In the case of Danièle and Irène, three additional features seem to separate the L2 request sequences in these teachers' classes from the others. First was their willingness to exploit any opportunity for meaningful negotiation in the target language, whether learners needed to borrow a tissue or leave belongings in the classroom. Second, they both persevered in scaffolding rather complex interactions where initial learner formulations were either entirely in L1, or very far from targetlike, and where the appropriate utterance required structures which appeared far beyond the learners' current competence. The teachers were skilled in immediately choosing an appropriate target, pausing to allow learners time to attempt this target, and then providing ongoing scaffolding until an acceptable request was produced or repeated. Finally, both teachers used English beyond the actual content of planned lessons after the start and before the end of lessons: Danièle organized little birthday celebrations and Irène negotiated practical arrangements after class, in each case actively creating more opportunities for pragmatic input and output in English.

This study serves to confirm, in the French secondary school context, previous findings concerning the limited pragmatic input available in textbooks. We show that teachers cannot rely on textbooks, in spite of supposed close links with the CEFR, and argue that without instructional input learners are unlikely to develop L2 pragmatic competence (Bardovi-Harlig & Mahan-Taylor, 2003; Taguchi, 2015). In extending the purview of our investigation to classroom practice and teacher variables, we demonstrate how the problem of reliance on textbooks which lack representative language and discourse models can be compounded by an exam-driven syllabus which leaves little room for dealing

with other linguistic challenges, and, in some cases, teachers' reluctance to teach this dimension of the target language

The primary limitation of our study is that it focuses on one speech act only, L2 English requests and on sources of metapragmatic input in classroom settings, that is, via textbooks and teachers. It thus offers reasons for learners' limited pragmatic development only with respect to request production (Siddiqa, 2018). We also acknowledge a potential effect of the observer's paradox, since all classes were filmed by the first author, although teachers claimed that they forgot about the camera after the first few minutes of recording. Future research should explore other speech acts such as agreements and disagreements which frequently occur in classroom setting as compared to other speech acts particularly at upper secondary level where students have more interactional opportunities in class.

We conclude that the limited ILP development observed in our larger study (Author, 2018) is linked to limited learning opportunities, either in textbooks or in terms of teacher priorities, confirming previous results in other teaching contexts. Our findings lend weight to calls to bridge the gap between research and classroom pedagogy (Bardovi-Harlig, 2020; Sykes, 2013), and highlight the need to support teachers in focusing on this importance aspect of communicative competence. We believe that the inclusion of pragmatics in formal examinations along with other communicative competence skills might encourage teachers to create more opportunities to learn ILP in class. The contribution of this article is to use data on teacher perspectives on ILP teaching and learning in combination with classroom interaction data in order to identify relevant attitudes and teaching styles which correlate with greater willingness to engage with L2 requests. These findings should serve to inform both material developers and ongoing pre-service and continuing teacher education in order to find ways to better integrate pragmatics in the FL classrooms.

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Supplemental material

Supplemental material for this article is available online.

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