Teaching Pragmatic Competence Through Literary Texts at Secondary Level

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Abstract

This dissertation takes on a text-based, materials development methodology in order to explore the manner in which pragmatic competence can be taught to local second language (L2) learners of English through fictional texts of a literary nature. For this to materialise, this study chooses to utilise the characters' direct speech (DS) in John Boyne's (2006) *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas,* a text selected from the 2025 Secondary Education Certificate (SEC) Syllabus for English Literature (Matriculation and Secondary Education Certificate Examinations Board [MATSEC], 2022), as the basis for materials that would be relevant and useful to secondary school learners in Year 9 to Year 11. The reason for exploiting a literary text is due to the presence of representative interaction that operates within a linear and highly contextualised environment, and that can serve as a practical foundation for tasks facilitating the teaching and learning of pragmatic competence. This intends to provide opportunities for L2 learners to make the most of the language-fiction interface where making connections between utterance and context will result in an enriching learning experience. Both the language and literature classrooms can derive benefits from this, rendering the notion of flexibility a key underpinning aspect of the project. The topics in English pragmatics that are of particular relevance to this study are speech acts (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969), cooperation and implicature (Grice, 1975), and politeness (Brown and Levinson, 1987) and impoliteness (Culpeper, 1996). Of equal relevance are the principles outlined by The *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR) (Council of Europe [CoE], 2020) that deems pragmatic competence a fundamental aspect of language proficiency.

Key words: pragmatic competence, English language, literature in the classroom, materials design.

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Table of Contents

List of Figures

List of Acronyms

Acronym	Definition
CEFR	Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
CoE	Council of Europe
CP	Cooperative Principle
DS	Direct speech
FTA	Face threatening act
IL	Interlanguage
ILP	Interlanguage pragmatics
L1	First language
L2	Second language
MATSEC	Matriculation and Secondary Education Certificate Examinations Board
MEDE	Ministry for Education and Employment
SEC	Secondary Education Certificate
SLA	Second language acquisition
TL	Target language

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 The scope of the study

The study of pragmatics goes beyond morphology, syntax and semantics as it is concerned with the interpretation of intended meaning in interaction. This field is distinctive due to its linguistic and sociocultural underpinnings that work in tandem to bring about meaning-making realisations and patterns in language usage. Pragmatic competence is deemed a very important aspect of communicative competence by the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR) (Council of Europe [CoE], 2020), but is often neglected in second language (L2) teaching and learning. In fact, this study's starting point is the universal concern that staple classroom materials such as coursebooks fail to tackle pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic competence, or only introduce it on a superficial level (Bardovi-Harlig, 2017; Tatsuki, 2019). This project-based dissertation attempts to fill that gap by creating practical, flexible and engaging tasks that will invite a re-consideration of the resources that are currently being utilised in the local L2 classroom. It is being proposed that resources that are already being utilised for instructional purposes in the literature classroom (e.g., novels) can be very useful to teach areas such as speech acts, politeness, and cooperation in conversation. In order to render this possible, it was decided that for the purpose of this study, a fictional text of a literary nature be exploited to teach pragmatic competence due to its already-established presence in the curriculum via the 2025 Secondary Education Certificate (SEC) Syllabus for English Literature (Matriculation and Secondary Education Certificate Examinations Board [MATSEC], 2022).

This proposition leads to three pertinent research questions that may be answered by taking on text-driven materials development methodology:

1. In what ways can literary texts facilitate the acquisition of communicative skills?
2. To what extent is pragmatic competence currently being targeted in the national English language curriculum?

3. Are there any potential pitfalls and limitations to using literary texts as a tool in L2 instruction?

The first question is of main concern to this study as it brings about awareness to the different task-types that can be developed to teach pragmatic competence. The second question seeks to briefly analyse the new SEC Syllabus for English Language (MATSEC, 2022) whereby the materials will be set against the principles currently afforded by the syllabus. The third question naturally arises from the materials development process itself where the dissertation considers the potential strengths and limitations of the tasks should they be employed in the classroom.

1.2 Overview

The project report will serve to reflect upon the research questions in a detailed manner. The first chapter will review the literature surrounding three main areas, and this research will be conducted with the aim of gathering quality information that will eventually inform the materials development process. The first section will discuss the theoretical implications of pragmatics as a field in applied linguistics. Here, a working definition of the term will be selected and this will be done in light of communicative competence in L2 teaching and learning. Moreover, the main topics in English pragmatics will then be reviewed, and these include speech acts, cooperation in conversation and implicature, and politeness and impoliteness. In this regard, the most prominent theories as outlined by Austin (1962), Searle (1969), Grice (1975), Brown and Levinson (1987) and Culpeper (1996) will be considered since they will constitute the foundation of the materials. The second section will discuss the fiction-pragmatics interface, taking particular interest in literary texts such as fictional prose narratives and drama. Here, a discussion will ensue on discourse in written fiction and the extent to which dialogue in fictional texts represents real-life language use, while concurrently reflecting on stylistic theory. The third section will comment on some considerations in teaching L2 pragmatics so as to better understand the context in which the materials would be operating. Specific reference will be made to language use in the local context to better define the goals of teaching pragmatics, and this will lead to an exploration of issues such as interlanguage pragmatics (ILP), and the manner in which pragmatic competence develops in bilinguals. Lastly, this section will refer to effective instructional methods as well as considerations in resource development, the latter of which will foreground recent research on the best practices and processes that will be of relevance to the project.

The second chapter will tackle the methodology taken up during the materials design process in order to create two resource packs, one of which comprises the students' tasks, and the other, a corresponding answer key with teacher's notes. Here, a rationale for the chosen text-based methodology will be outlined, followed by the principles that will guide the design process and a discussion on the phases involved during the materials development process. The third chapter will constitute a discussion on the materials developed in great detail by first providing an in-depth analysis of the tasks in the hopes of bringing about connections between theory and practice, thus answering the first research question. The second section will discuss the projections for the materials, notably the curricular implications, whereby the tasks will be discussed in terms of the new SEC Syllabus for English Language (MATSEC, 2022). Moreover, the practical implications of the materials, i.e., their strengths and potential limitations, will be alluded to. The final chapter will conclude by revisiting the research questions and considering the project's success in answering them. The opportunities for further research will be reviewed in order to initiate a wider discussion on research in pragmatics in relation to L2 teaching and learning.

Referencing follows the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (American Psychological Association, 2020).

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Since the aim of this project-based dissertation is to explore the ways in which literary texts could be useful resources in teaching pragmatic competence via the development of materials, the prominent literature surrounding a number of fundamental aspects must be established so as to initiate a well-informed design process. Relevant areas of exploration include pragmatics as a field in applied linguistics, the nature of fictional discourse, and developmental factors as dictated by the local context as well as the corresponding pedagogical implications.

2.1 Foregrounding pragmatics and communicative competence

2.1.1 Introducing pragmatics: dilemmas in delimitation

The advent of pragmatics as a field in itself is synonymous with a recent paradigm shift in linguistic research, where the performativity of language use gained a great deal of interest (Jucker, 2012). This occurred in response to an increasing sense of dissatisfaction with meaning as found in instances of naturally occurring communication being solely ascribed to a system of rules. Ariel (2008) succinctly confirms that “There is a consensus today about the underdeterminacy of grammar, i.e., the fact that our coded messages never exhaust the meaning we intend to convey” (p. 2). Indeed, previous generative trends in linguistics came at the cost of excluding a myriad of features that account for meaning generation in language usage, and were ultimately insufficient in determining how things are done with words.

Ever since Morris’s (1938) original and broad ideation of pragmatics, there has been a real sense of difficulty in pinning down a singular definition of the term. The field’s exponential growth as a result of its interdisciplinary tendencies does not make this task any easier. As per its empirical nature, linguistic research finds a prevalent preoccupation with neatly delimiting its wide-ranging scope in an attempt to capture its precise properties. In the case of pragmatics, most attempts have proven insufficient. In *Defining Pragmatics,* Ariel (2010) coins the term “big-tent pragmatics” (p. 1) to problematise and reflect on the extensive nature of the discipline in question that is "delineated more by a set of topics or problems to be addressed" (p. 16) rather than a set of criteria. In fact, seminal textbooks on pragmatics (see Levinson, 1983; Cutting, 2002; Grundy, 2020) introduce it by synthesising its general characteristics as they emerge from a canonised set of linguistic and philosophical principles.

2.1.2 The case for a perspective view of pragmatics

What is considered to constitute pragmatics is subject to a central ideological dichotomy. The *component* view, found within the Anglo-American tradition, is one that attributes superiority to the "systematic study of meaning" (Huang, 2017, p. 2). In essence, it is concerned with the rule-governed, cognitive-related aspects of utterances. On the other hand, the *perspective* view, found within the Continental European tradition, is one that considers "linguistic phenomena from the point of view of their usage properties and processes" (Verschueren, 1999, p. 1). This broader conceptualisation of pragmatics gives importance to the more practical facets of language use in tandem with the social and cultural aspects of interaction.

The conflictual nature of these approaches is essentially ineffectual, and it would be best to determine which approach will target the educational underpinnings of this project. The inadequacy of the component view is evident because it imposes limitations on what pragmatic competence ought to involve. Rather, it is the perspective view in its broadest sense that can sufficiently account for the totality of discursive phenomena, while avoiding the pervasive problem of delimiting pragmatics. It recognises the interrelatedness and interdependency of the processes implied in communication, therefore ensuring that the aims of teaching pragmatic competence are maximised. In other words, a perspective view means reaching an understanding of the organic aspects of interaction, and here it would be worth taking Morris' (1938) original definition of pragmatics as a starting point for the view in discussion, which states that:

> Since most, if not all, signs have as their interpreters living organisms, it is a sufficiently accurate characterization of pragmatics to say that it deals with the biotic aspects of semiosis, that is, with all the psychological, biological, and sociological phenomena which occur in the functioning of signs. (p. 30)

Verschueren's (1985) extensive conceptualisation of pragmatics embraces Morris' (1938) ideas and takes them a step further. While he is inclined towards seeking the invalidity of the component view in its entirety, he favours the proposition that "pragmatics is a *perspective* on any aspect of language, at any level of structure. The foundation for the coherence of this perspective we should be looking for is the notion of *functionality*" (p. 5). All this is fundamentally a comment on the tangibility of language use in interaction.

2.1.3 Aligning the perspective view with communicative competence

Verschueren (2017) states that meaning generation is primarily a product of language usage, i.e., it is driven by a series of choices occurring at the level of linguistic structure, communicative strategies, and context. This renders variability, negotiability, and adaptability products of this dynamic (Verschueren, 2009). Mey (2001) is equally preoccupied with "the importance of being a user" and the fact that "pragmatics is interested in the process of producing language and in its producers, not just in the end-product, language" (pp. 4-5). Thomas (1995) takes a similar stance by further defining pragmatics as the study of "meaning in interaction" (p. 22) whereby:

> […] meaning is not something which is inherent in the words alone, nor is it produced by the speaker alone, nor by the hearer alone. Making meaning is a dynamic process, involving the negotiation of meaning between speaker and hearer, the context of utterance (physical, social and linguistic) and the meaning potential of an utterance. (p. 22)

Crystal (1985) also puts forward a comparable conjecture:

> Pragmatics is the study of language from the point of view of users, especially of the choices they make, the constraints they encounter in using language in social interaction and the effects their use of language has on other participants in the act of communication. (p. 240)

Pragmatics according to the aforementioned ideologies is concerned with what Leech (1983) calls "interpersonal rhetoric" (p. 15) where social agents are primarily concerned with maintaining relationships. Here, it is easy to see how communicative competence fits into the concepts previously alluded to. The emphasised centrality of the language user is in agreement with the CEFR (CoE, 2020) that values the teaching and learning of communicative language. While signalling a complete rejection of the generative ideation that competence is "an evaluative term describing skill level" (Foster, 1990, p, 9), the CEFR (CoE, 2020) takes on what Hymes (1967, 1972) considers competence to be, i.e., the application of tacit and systemic knowledge (linguistic and extralinguistic) to appropriate use (comprehension and production). In other words, the state of being competent reflects a degree of sensitivity to the demands of situational and contextual factors, where one would be able to gauge and adapt their language accordingly. All this is very much in line with Leech's (1983) reference to discourse as having goal-oriented and problem-solving properties.

2.1.4 The key principles in English pragmatics

In light of the aforementioned adherence to a perspective view, this dissertation will consider the prominent topics in English pragmatics as they are conventionally outlined in the literature. More importantly, in order to ground them in the pedagogy of L2 learning, the chosen topics are in line with the CEFR's (CoE, 2020) definition of pragmatic competence, which reads as follows:

> […] pragmatic competence is concerned with actual language use in the (co-) construction of text. Pragmatic competence is thus primarily concerned with the user/learner's knowledge of the principles of language use according to which messages are:
>
> a) organised, structured and arranged ('discourse competence');
>
> b) used to perform communicative functions ('functional competence');
>
> c) sequenced according to interactional and transactional schemata ('design competence'). (p. 138)

The CEFR (CoE, 2020) offers insight into what the building blocks of the above sub-competencies involve, and these include a myriad of factors that comprise the formal characteristics of discourse. Such factors include turn-taking strategies, cohesion and coherence, organisation, sequencing, flexibility, a number of microfunctions and macrofunctions, interactional schemata, fluency, and propositional precision. These aspects are heavily informed by the central pragmatic theories, that in their sociological, discursive, philosophical, cognitive or linguistic inclinations, dominate the field. The following sub-sections are non-exhaustive and do not account for what may be considered to be auxiliary components of pragmatics, notably paralinguistic elements.

2.1.4.1 Speech acts

Speech act theory deals with the elements of intentionality and interpretation in an exchange of utterances as driven by an addresser and an addressee, and as implemented in particular contexts and according to particular conditions (Sadock, 2006; O'Keeffe et al., 2011). The proponent of speech act theory, Austin (1962), went against the grain by stating that an utterance need not be semantically truth-conditional, falsifiable or verifiable to reap validity or meaning (Huang, 1998). For this reason, he favours performatives over constatives. However, the success of a performative relies on a set of felicity conditions, primarily proposed by Austin (1962) and later revised by Searle (1969), that dictate situational appropriateness. Otherwise, a 'misfire' (Austin, 1962, p. 16) may materialise. As per his seminal work entitled *How to Do Things with Words* (Austin, 1962), utterances could deploy forces that are either:

a) Locutionary (phonic, phatic and rhetic acts);
b) Illocutionary (functionality of utterances);
c) Perlocutionary (effect on addressee).

Both theorists have drawn up speech act taxonomies, but it is Searle who recognised the "weaknesses in Austin's taxonomy" (Searle, 1979, p. 8) and retained prominence (Huang, 1998). Searle's (1979) taxonomy of illocutionary acts includes the following five elements:

a) Representatives/assertives/constatives: expressing belief and carry truth-value;
b) Directives: prompting an addressee to act upon something;
c) Commissives: representing a speaker's intention;
d) Expressives: expressing attitudes or mental states;

e) Declaratives: demanding immediate action upon the current state of affairs.

2.1.4.2 The Cooperative Principle (CP)

Cooperation is a factor that renders communication successful, and it is synonymous with measures of mitigation and negotiation. Indeed, exchanges may be described as "cooperative efforts" (Grice, 1975, p. 26). The CP was developed by Grice (1975) to outline the notion of cooperation between interlocutors in conversation as is conventionally governed by human rationality. The point of this theory is to reflect the supposed "common purpose" (Grice, 1975, p. 26) held by interlocutors in conversation.

The CP consists of four maxims that must be observed in accordance to the demands of an exchange:

a) Maxim of Quantity
   i. Make your contribution as informative as is required.
   ii. Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.
b) Maxim of Quality
   i. Do not say what you believe is false.
   ii. Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.
c) Maxim of Relation
   i. Be relevant.
d) Maxim of Manner
   i. Avoid obscurity.
   ii. Avoid ambiguity.
   iii. Be brief.
   iv. Be orderly.

(Grice, 1975, pp. 45-46)

If such maxims are not purposely observed, then they can either be flouted or violated, or one may choose to infringe them or opt-out (Grice, 1975). Grice (1975) also refers to the concept of implicature, i.e., what is implied rather than literally expressed, that may be a result of non-observance of the maxims. Essentially, it is a feature of communication that heavily relies on the context.

While Grice's (1975) theory is subject to a number of shortcomings, as pointed out by Cutting (2002) and Leech (1983), others have deemed it foundational for further theoretical development. Sperber and Wilson's (1995) relevance theory is an example. Although it is not as central as Grice's (1975), it offers a different perspective on the nature of cooperation in relation to cognition where interlocutors process or interpret information according to their contexts and efficiently select the necessary information to make sense of meaning. Others, such as Horn (1984, 2012a, 2012b) and Levinson (1987, 1991, 2000), have developed pragmatics models that are synonymous with Neo-Gricean pragmatics.

2.1.4.3 Politeness and impoliteness

Politeness theory is deeply rooted in the social and the cultural. Brown and Levinson's (1987) prominent politeness theory is primarily influenced by Goffman's (1967) notions of "face" and "face-work" that reflect the universal and social conventions surrounding the preservation of self-integrity in verbal or non-verbal communication. Brown and Levinson (1987) build on Goffman's (1967) theory by suggesting that each person has positive face wants, referred to as "the positive consistent self-image or 'personality' (crucially including the desire that this self-image be appreciated and approved of) claimed by interactants" (Goffman, 1967, p. 61). Individuals also have negative face wants, described as "the basic claim to territories, personal preserves, rights to non-distraction, i.e., to freedom of action and freedom from imposition" (p. 61). If the criteria for a person's face wants are not satisfied, then a face threatening act (FTA) is put into action. This can be on record (direct), with or without redressive action, or off record (indirect). Positive or negative politeness strategies are products of redressive action. Figure 1 reflects possible communicative trajectories, depending on an interlocutor's intentions.

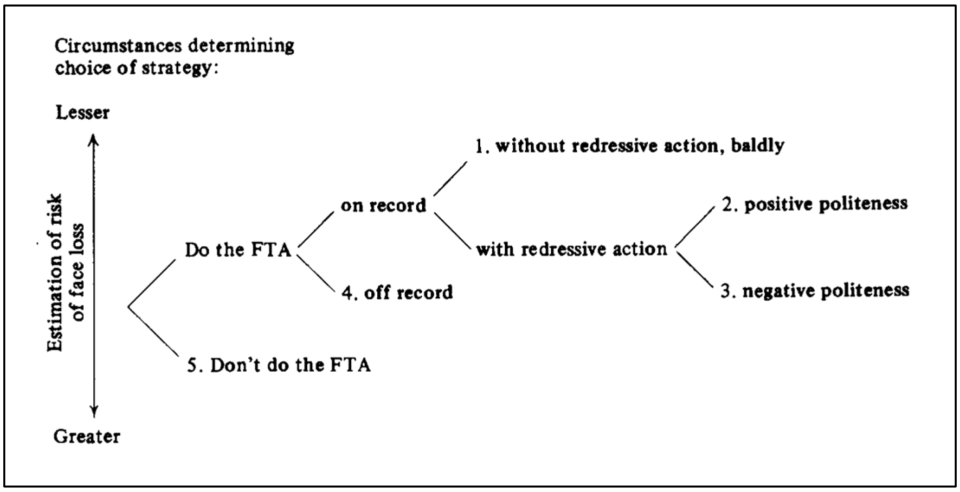

Figure 1: FTA strategies (from Brown and Levinson, 1987, p. 60)

In addition, it is important to note that, according to Brown and Levinson (1987), levels of politeness are relative to the social variables of power, social status and cultural rank.

Impoliteness theory builds on the aforementioned concepts and also serves to critique a number of Brown and Levinson's (1987) theoretical assumptions. Culpeper (1996), the main proponent of this theory, developed superstrategies that mirror Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness model to highlight the fact that language use can be intentionally unfavourable. Bousfield (2008) supplements Culpeper's (1996) ideas by outlining additional impoliteness strategies, often focusing on more dynamic verbal and non-verbal acts.

2.2 The fiction-pragmatics interface

2.2.1 Introducing discourse in written fiction

Essentially, stories are "fundamental meaning making units in discourse" (Locher and Jucker, 2021, p. 78). This suggests that the generation of meaning as well as its reception flow in multiple directions due to the many actors involved in bringing a literary text to life, notably the author, the reader, the narrator and the characters. Evidently, this means that there is a close affinity between stylistics and pragmatics that, as interpretative areas of study in applied linguistics, work in tandem to draw out meaning from discourse in fictional contexts. Contrary to formalist ideology, Black (2006) states that "while the prototypical situation of discourse is face-to-face interaction, there is no reason to suppose that written texts operate any differently" (p. 3). Here, she is referring to written fiction as units of meaning that operate on more than one level. In this regard, of prime relevance to this dissertation is verbal and non-verbal communication as produced by characters in fictional narratives of a literary nature, which, as stated by Bednarek (2017), is an integral feature. The following sub-section will explore this aspect of written fiction, as well as other relevant features that require a reader's pragmatic analysis and that aid in decoding instances of interaction.

2.2.2 Dialogue in fictional texts: to what extent does it parallel real-life conversation?

Stylistic theories hailing from the area of narratology suggest that one way of representing character talk is through direct speech (DS). Black (2006) states that "only at this level is the discourse of fiction directly mimetic of ordinary language" (p. 54). While this suggests that there are similarities between face-to-face interaction and that found in literary texts, her reference to mimesis also suggests that there are differences. No doubt, there is a sense of artificiality to the act of reading a literary text, no less reading sequences of devised dialogue within it. From a formalist perspective, literary discourse in general deviates from expected configurations and patterns of language, and therefore, defamiliarises the reader (Carter, 1997). Nonetheless, DS is still valuable and serves multiple purposes in what essentially are fictional artefacts. Locher and Jucker (2021) developed a model to illustrate the four core functions of DS, and as illustrated in Figure 2, its roles include that of propelling the plot, character establishment, the communication of contextual information, and appealing to the audience through stylistic features.

Representation of speech exchanges with plot consequences
Enactment of verbal exchanges between characters for plot advancement
Using dialogue to control evaluation and interpretation
Creating immediacy, engagement, emotional involvement
Characterisation
Characterisation of characters through ways of speaking, appearance and action
Presentation of narrative context
Addition of narrative details such as locations, names of characters, background information (off-stage action)
Presentation of realistic verbal context for main action
Stylistic function and audience appeal
Poetic uses of language, such as figures of speech, rhyme, metre
Humour, irony
Language style to appeal to specific audiences

Figure 2: The roles of dialogue in fiction (from Locher and Jucker, 2021, p. 128)

It is true that DS attempts to give written fiction an air of verisimilitude and that "[it] may aspire to a special kind of authenticity, in representing a kind of language which a reader can recognise" (Leech and Short, 2007, p. 129). It is unlikely that fictional speech will ever equal real-life conversation that, in essence, can be described as lacking in structure. In fact, Leech and Short (2007) state that the properties of real-life speech such as hesitation, repetition, filler words, intonation, stress and interruption, do not represent an ideal delivery due to the pressures of impromptu speech. Conversely, dialogue in novels does not represent such features primarily because they would impede, rather than support, a sense of coherence in written form. However, despite the syntactic precision of DS in written fiction, it gives a convincing illusion of real conversation. Leech and Short (2007) refer to this as "normal non-fluency" (p. 130) because it is a feature that readers expect to encounter in novels.

While this dissertation gives precedence to the intradiegetic aspects of written fiction, it is imperative to note that DS does not exist in isolation; there are other narrative cues that heavily influence its interpretation and help the reader make connections. As per Genette's (1972/1980) and Simpson's (1993) theories of narratology, narrative voice is one such factor. The narrative stance utilised in a prose text, i.e., whether it is the homodiegetic or heterodiegetic first-person narrator, or the disembodied third-person narrator, can affect a person's pragmatic analysis of the general discourse of literary texts (Black, 2006). In essence, the type of narrative control held by the narrator, the focalisation adopted, as well as the interplay between the narrator and the characters play a major stylistic and pragmatic role.

Short (1996) refers to the element of "situationality" (p. 222) in literary texts, and this refers to the clues that readers gather from the context. He states that "By observing the speech acts which people perform, we can infer things about them and their relations with others" (p. 195). Not only does this establish characterisation, but it also reflects the fact that the reader, who brings a set of expectations and schema to a novel, is an actor of equal importance. Locher and Jucker (2021) explain that literary texts establish characterisation and that a pragmatic analysis of DS can aid the reader in identifying a character's qualities as they interact with others. From a constructivist perspective, particular implicit cues such as conversational structure, adherence or non-adherence to conversational maxims, accent and dialect, or paralinguistic features would be indicative of social status, gender, age, class, and so on. In essence, such cues "will draw on analogies to real life, i.e., exploiting the indexicality of linguistic features in a particular context, as well as on knowledge gained through previous exposure to narrative genres and their character repertoire […]" (Locher and Jucker, 2021, pp. 101-102). As already alluded to, cues need not be directly enunciated by the character, but they can be indicated by the narrator or other characters in the story. The extradiegetic recipients of communicative acts occurring on an intradiegetic level carry significance because, as reiterated by Locher and Jucker (2021), the sender of information, the communicative act, and the recipient are what constitute a work of fiction. This is illustrated in Figure 3.

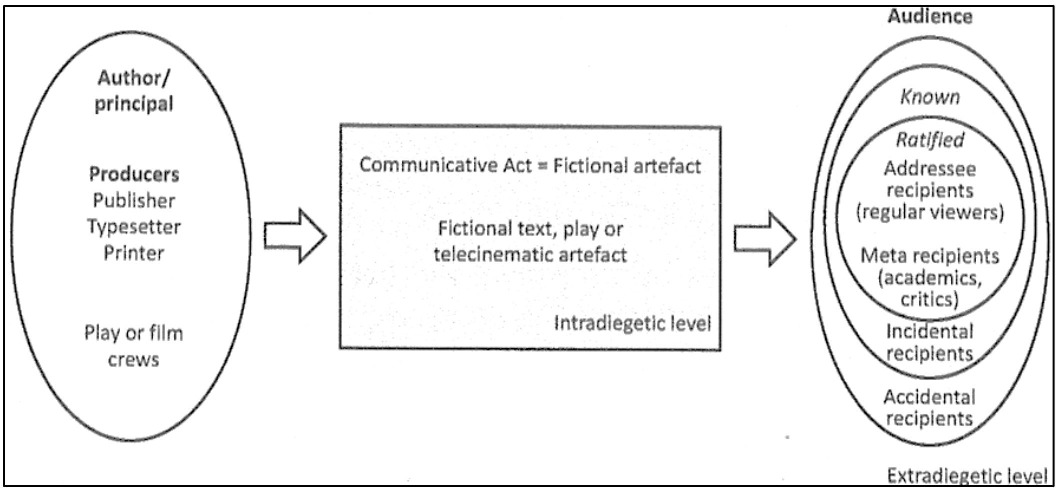

Figure 3: A model for communication in fiction (from Locher and Jucker, 2021, p. 52)

A body of literature put forward by Culpeper (2001) states that a pragmatic analysis of dramatic dialogue could specifically prove useful in exploring characterisation. Notably, an analysis of Shakespearean discourse can tell a reader a lot about one's social position in relation to other characters. Culpeper's (2001) analysis of excerpts from Shakespeare's *The Taming of the Shrew* (1594/2010) and *Richard III* (1597/2009) show evidence of the implicit cues in the discourse that serve to sway the audience in particular directions. Culpeper (2001) refers to elements such as social markers, terms of address, lexis, conversational structure, key words, syntactic features, double perspectives through dramatic irony, as well as paralinguistic features in order to facilitate a better understanding on how dramatic discourse gives way to pragmatic analysis. Other valuable features include the nature of turn-taking and other politeness elements that often evokes one's control over another character. Of course, such features also apply to dialogue as found in narratives.

2.2.3 The interpersonal aspects of dialogue in fiction: the case for literary texts as an educational resource

The literariness of fictional prose texts means that their use as an educational resource can prove controversial since its discourse can be seen as distinct from language as utilised in day-to-day life. In fact, in "The Logical Status of Fictional Discourse", Searle (1975) finds a dichotomy between the two. However, the educational value of a pragmatic analysis of any fictional text lies in the richness and complexity of its dialogic structures. Firstly, it would bring out the wider communicative potential between fictional artefact and recipient, thanks to the silent “fictional contract” (Locher and Jucker, 2021, p. 226) that is established. More importantly, since fiction “is rich in depicted communication” (Locher and Jucker, 2021, p. 225), it brings forth the interpersonal aspects of dialogue. To tie this with previous observations relating to the practicality of pragmatics, Leech (2008) refers to utterances as performed by characters in written fiction as pertaining to a goal-oriented framework that “investigate[s] the nature and formal structure of language in use” (p. 86). His observations prove that the goal-oriented nature of dialogue in literary texts always carries value and implies a degree of skill in achieving two- or multi-way communication.

Indeed, while stories are a pervasive part of daily life, pragmatic awareness can enrich one’s experiences with a fictional text as well as communicative instances outside it. Perhaps it is Locher and Jucker (2021) who successfully outline the functional aspects derived from a pragmatic analysis of discourse in fictional texts:

> In our daily lives, we constantly encounter familiar situations, or frames, that create frameworks of expected behaviour and communicative patterns, such as service encounters or doctor-patient interactions. In some cases, our knowledge of such frames may be based partly or even entirely on fictional examples, e.g., police interrogations. Such frames are also regularly exploited for effect as shortcuts in fiction. This means that – because of the fictional contract – fictional renditions can be less precise, less complete (in the case of frames) and less ‘true to reality’, and still achieve effects. (p. 225).

Essentially, a pragmatic analysis of fictional texts can help a learner to learn *about* languages, where deliberate reflection comprises an integral part of gaining an understanding of language functions and meaning (McCarthy and Carter, 1994). The interpersonal nature of language, as proposed by Halliday (1978), is suggestive of the fact that language is first and foremost tied to the social and the cultural, and that a text is inherently linked to a context. Such contexts in fictional texts can be related to utterances, culture or reference (Fowler, 1996). Carter (1997) is greatly in favour of merging language and literature in language education, and if implemented in a proper manner, it may aid a student’s response to a text, especially in the pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic realms, and those pertaining to literary appreciation. Ishihara (2010) is also in favour of utilising L2 data from the media that is representative of typical language use. To tie this to materials development and pragmatic competence, Tatsuki (2019) states that “To exploit the film, novel, or play, it is important to let the texts themselves suggest the focus of study—a sequence, structure, and context for the pragmatic tasks and activities—as the work unfolds” (p. 330).

2.3 Considerations in teaching L2 pragmatics

2.3.1 Acknowledging the local context: the goals of teaching L2 pragmatics

In order to design resources for the relevant target audience, i.e., Maltese learners of English in Year 9 to Year 11, it is important to review the status of the local bilingual context. This will aid in accounting for the factors that may affect the instructional goals of the current project.

The Maltese educational system adopts an additive bilingual model whereby it assumes that Maltese is the “initial linguistic position of children” (Ministry for Education and Employment [MEDE], 2015, p. 38) and that English is an L2 for the vast majority (MEDE, 2015). However, Malta is said to be sociolinguistically complex, where the majority of the population is considered to be bilingual to varying extents, and where a single pattern of language usage is not common to all. As reiterated by Vella (2018), language usage on the island is dominated by a number of attitudinal and ideological factors, despite attempts at establishing diglossia in a multitude of domains. This presents a pervasive difficulty in setting clear boundaries between the two languages (MEDE, 2015; Vella, 2018). Given the situation, it is better to consider language use in Malta as consisting a continuum rather than a dichotomy, as described in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Language use continuum in Malta (from Vella, 2013, p. 13)

Of course, this non-linearity means that a number of ostensible issues present themselves, potentially deterring educators from dealing with pragmatics altogether. Firstly, it is difficult to determine what pragmatic knowledge learners bring to the classroom and what gaps need to be filled, especially since they would have most likely already mastered another language system. Apart from first language (L1) interference, another concern would include the fact that the pragmatic features of the Maltese English variety differ from what is considered to be nativespeakerism (Cremona et al., 2017), i.e., the language that is systematically represented in classroom material such as coursebooks. A third concern would be that of the rise of multiculturalism, meaning that other languages may potentially enter the repertoire of local learners. Such concerns co-exist with a lack of materials and a potential lack of teacher knowledge/training on pragmatic competence itself (Bardovi-Harlig, 2017).

Therefore, what would local teachers aim to teach in the instance of writing materials that target L2 pragmatics? Indeed, the pedagogical implications of this situation are not too complex. In fact, the diverse nature of language use in the classroom is to be considered as an opportunity to widen the scope to teaching pragmatics, both in the linguistic and the socio-cultural sense. Bardovi-Harlig and Mahan-Taylor (2003) state that the aim of pragmatic instruction should be that of bringing about awareness to a range of devices that may be employed in target language (TL) interaction rather than conforming to one norm, thus increasing consciousness of the TL and its speakers. They continue to assert that instruction should help the learners to preserve their own cultural identities while encouraging them to utilise the TL and gain agency over the force of their utterances. The salience of teaching pragmatics is implicitly foregrounded here. A lack of pragmatic competence has different consequences to having a lack of grammatical competence because the said consequences could have a more social or personal effect. Such issues will be further explored in the subsequent subsections.

2.3.2 The pedagogical implications of teaching L2 pragmatics and considerations in materials design

2.3.2.1 ILP, the development of L2 pragmatic competence in bilinguals, and the issue of nativespeakerism

Interlanguage (IL) is a major consideration in second language acquisition (SLA), and it gains particular relevance when writing materials for bilingual learners. Studies in IL take into account the factors that may influence the L2 developmental trajectory. This phenomenon, first brought about by Selinker (1972), constitutes the positive or negative transfer of L1 knowledge during L2 learning processes which may later fossilise as part of one's language repertoire. This also concerns the developmental trajectory of pragmatics. As postulated by Brunni and Jantunen (2015):

> Pragmatic success is influenced by, for example, the learner's mother tongue, transfer, and the learner's status in the conversation. Learners can, for example, transfer the language use rules of their native language and home culture to the target language and culture, which can manifest itself as over- or under-politeness or in different practices of who is allowed to address whom and start a conversation. (p. 385)

Studies in ILP are still sparse and are quite descriptive in nature, and while it is clear that positive and negative L1 pragmatic transfer occurs on several levels, it is not yet clear under which conditions this takes place (Kasper and Schmidt, 1996). This is because rather than focusing on the processes of L2 pragmatic development, such studies focus on the attainment of learning targets (Kasper and Rose, 2002). Nonetheless, there exist a number of theories in relation to how L2 pragmatic competence develops. Kasper and Rose (2002) state that the theories can be divided in two groups, i.e., individual-psychological and social practice theories. The theories pertaining to the latter group, including sociocultural theory and language socialisation, put forward the strongest frameworks and explanations that account for ILP and what would work in the L2 classroom.

Although there is no empirical data that serves to identify the exact stages of development of pragmatic competence, it is assumed that cognitive development occurs due to the mechanisms responsible for other areas of language learning (Kasper and Schmidt, 1996). Nonetheless, the aim of being aware of potential developmental factors in L2 pragmatics is to attempt to understand what knowledge the learners bring to the classroom and what to expect from them. What is certain is that older L2 learners do not enter the classroom with a childlike naivety when it comes to social norms and language use (Bialystok, 1993). While the child's task would be "to accumulate the representations of speech acts", older learners would have to "develop executive control over the already available knowledge representations" (Kasper and Schmidt, 1996, p. 157). Kasper and Schmidt (1996) state that since pragmatic knowledge is more abstract, a reliance on pragmalinguistic or L1 knowledge would be insufficient in decoding utterances, meaning that an augmented level of awareness and understanding will be required. This is why Schmidt's (1993) noticing hypothesis would be of value here.

The development of pragmatic competence in bilinguals is described as distinctive by Kecskes (2015) because L2 learners usually have the resources at hand to produce pragmatically correct language and yet, still fail to do so. Kecskes (2015) believes that this deficit stems from a lack of socialisation and concurrent language acquisition. He states that, learners will only learn the L2 norms and conventions by taking note of them through interaction with the socio-cultural contexts of the language, rather than adopting standard, formulaic chunks of language. This suggests that a complete restructuring of a learner's already-existing L1 base must be modified by developing more awareness and reflection on language use (Kecskes, 2003). Bialystok (1993) also states that pragmatic errors in adults usually stem from a lack of development in the domain of sociopragmatic competence due to the inability to make the correct choices. In this regard, there exist multiple factors that are said to impact this during the L2 learning process. For instance, in the case of speech acts, these include input factors, learner factors (e.g., inference, transfer, generalisation and transfer of training), learning factors and learned factors (Schmidt and Richards, 1980). Some studies have also explored the correlation between grammatical competence and pragmatic competence, and while some have found direct correlation between the two (see Barron, 2003), others have considered them independent (see Bardovi-Harlig, 1999; Schmidt, 1983). However, in order to draw conclusions, more research is required on this.

There is no doubt that studies in ILP have largely focused on the manner in which non-native speakers' pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic knowledge approximates that of native speakers (Kasper and Schmidt, 1996). Similar to Bardovi-Harlig and Mahan-Taylor's (2003) previous conjectures, Thomas (1983) states that imposing native speaker norms on non-native speakers can have unfavourable effects as this would impose control or cultural ideologies on the L2 learner. She states that there is evidence that socio-cultural variables greatly impact a bilingual's sociopragmatic competence, even if the learner's pragmalinguistic knowledge is relatively advanced. Here, the factors of motivation and a person's willingness to alter the base L1 pragmatic norms become important because it means that a significant shift in a learner's cognitive processes is required.

2.3.2.2 Effective instructional methods

When teaching pragmatics, it is important to consider which methods would be the most efficient and effective. Kasper and Schmidt (1996) state that it is evident that implicit instruction through, for instance, a predominantly communicative approach, can have a role in teaching pragmatic competence. In this regard, pair and groupwork can make way for valuable learning experiences. However, Porter (1986) believes that in this way learners would be missing out on valuable sociolinguistic input. Therefore, a degree of explicit instruction would be a pre-requisite to adequately teach pragmatic competence. In this regard, consciousness-raising (as per the aforementioned noticing hypothesis) and practice would be necessary components. In fact, Ishihara (2010) states that:

> an explicit approach with a provision of analysis of language and context has been found to be generally more effective than implicit teaching in experimental studies. The explicit teaching of pragmatics is in line with an awareness-raising approach, which has been widely used in the current teaching of L2 pragmatics. (p. 113)

Ishihara (2010) suggests possible ways of implementing this approach. Some strategies involve "identifying and practicing the use of strategies for a speech act", "analyzing and practicing the use of discourse organization", "identifying and using a range of cultural norms in the L2 culture", "analyzing language and context to identify the goal and intention of the speaker", and "assessing the speaker's attainment of the goal and the listener's interpretation" (Ishihara, 2010, pp. 113-114). Structured input, comprehension-based intervention, judgement tasks, and opportunities for practice have proven to be the most effective (Takahashi, 2001). All this implies that meaningful instruction, ideally taking the form of inductive learning (see Glaser, 2013), is a need, even though there is some evidence that incidental learning of pragmatics does occur in the classroom (Taguchi, 2011).

2.3.2.3 The resource development processes and components

It is true that while the benefits of teaching pragmatics have been recognised, textbook writers have failed to fully address it (Tatsuki, 2019). This means that well-formulated, supplementary material is to be produced by educators in order to fill this gap. Multiple benefits come with this, namely that of tailoring the material to the specific needs of the immediate classroom context (Howard and Major, 2004).

Tatsuki (2019) appraises Tomlinson and Mashura's (2018) recommendations on how to plan resources for teaching L2 pragmatics, namely their six-step approach to creating teaching materials that have authentic texts (i.e., as being representative of the TL community and its communicative norms) as their basis, and by promoting a task-based, discovery-learning approach. Their framework recommends that the following task-types take place sequentially:

1. Activation of schemata prior to being exposed to the text;
2. Encountering the text for the first time and noticing its intended effects;
3. Encouraging a personal response to the text;
4. Guided production where the learners emulate the text's effects;
5. Guided analysis where the learners compare their work to the sample text;
6. Guided practice where the learners apply what has been learned.

Similarly, Martínez-Flor and Usó-Juan (2006) propose a framework that consists of the following stages: researching, reflecting, receiving, reasoning, rehearsing, and revising. Here, the first two stages involve noticing pragmatic concepts, the next two stages reflect explicit instruction, and the final two stages refer to opportunities for practice in communicative contexts. Of equal importance are the principles proposed by Ishihara (2010). Firstly, the aims of teaching L2 pragmatics should be plainly stated in order to make way for contextualisation. Moreover, the materials should involve language that is authentic or represents authenticity, as in the case of literary discourse. It is also imperative that the tasks guide the learners to notice socio-cultural phenomena, i.e., verbal and non-verbal behaviour, in interaction, thus augmenting their awareness. Here, Ishihara (2010) recommends that self-directed learning through samples of speech is at the forefront. Next, the learners should be given opportunities to practice the appropriate communicative strategies in context by focusing on both the interactional and linguistic aspects of communication. Self-evaluation should be an integral part of this process. In tandem, educators must provide cultural information and convey the reasons for the execution of particular norms in order to facilitate informed choices. Lastly, metapragmatic information would prove useful in supporting learners to make use of the correct pragmatic strategies.

2.4 Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to gather all the relevant background research that would be valuable to the process of writing materials related to teaching pragmatic competence through fictional texts. Firstly, an in-depth consideration of the perspective view of pragmatics foregrounds a focus on pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic competence alike, aspects that are valued by the CEFR (CoE, 2020). Moreover, the appraisal of fictional texts in terms of their stylistic-pragmatic merits has proven their validity as educational resources that have the potential to teach L2 communicative competence. Lastly, research in ILP has shed light on the developmental characteristics of L2 learners as well as a number of pedagogical factors that arise out of them.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Rationale

The aim of choosing a materials development approach for the purpose of this study was to answer the main research question of this dissertation, i.e., in what ways can literary texts facilitate the acquisition of communicative skills? More specifically, creating the materials was an exploratory and reflective exercise into how pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic competence can be taught through fictional texts. The data required to achieve this was the DS located in the children's novel *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* (2006) by John Boyne. This made taking on a systematic, 'text-driven approach' (Tomlinson, 2013, p. 99) to materials development possible, the merits of which will be discussed at a later stage. Moreover, the materials design process was based on a number of pre-determined principles that are synonymous with the communicative approach to L2 teaching and learning. The materials themselves comprise a students' resource pack with tasks pertaining to each chapter of the aforementioned novel, and a companion pack containing an answer key and teacher's notes. The materials have been designed with the ultimate aim of being practical, meaning that all tasks could be taken on from Year 9 to Year 11 in local secondary schools choosing to tackle Boyne's (2006) text.

3.2 Research design

3.2.1 Some preliminary considerations

Prior to taking into account the materials design process itself as well as any underpinning principles, it would be worth looking at the bigger picture by exploring important external influences. As seen in Figure 5, Nunan (1989) considers a number of factors that all point towards the very essence of the tasks.

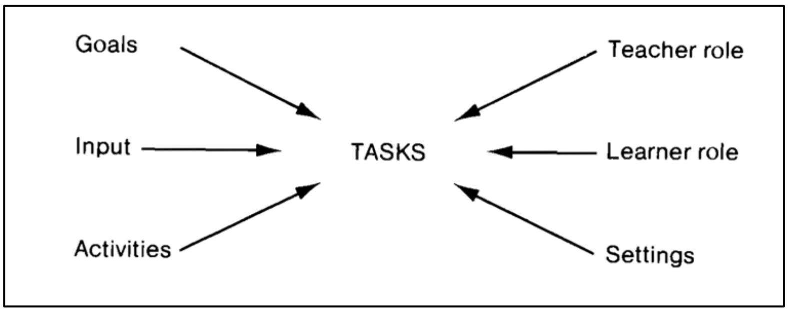

Figure 5: A framework for analysing communicative tasks (from Nunan, 1989, p. 48)

Goals refer to the “vague general intentions” (Nunan, 1989, p. 48) of a task. A teacher or materials writer will ask themselves why they would let learners engage in a number of tasks, with possible reasons being related to communication, cognition, affect, behaviour, or a combination of these. Input refers to “the point of departure” (Nunan, 1989, p. 53) for the tasks. Here, the text as well as the tasks’ activities must possess a degree of authenticity rather than solely serving a pedagogic function, therefore helping learners to notice and utilise real-world language. Furthermore, activities must include opportunities for controlled practice and freer production in a communicative context while focusing on developing fluency and accuracy.

Activity types must also be classroom-centred, where interactive language use is possible. Here, teachers or materials writers would have to ask themselves what tasks can stimulate communication. The learners’ role would be to act as communicative agents and to negotiate language, and in order to make this possible, the teacher’s role would be that of simply facilitating learning. This discovery approach makes way for independent learning. The classroom arrangement is also a factor to consider; it must be determined whether the materials promote individual work, group work, pair work, or a combination. The latter two are considered most important as they support the L2 environment. The following sub-section will follow-up on Nunan’s (1989) six factors by taking into account a number of principles that drove the materials development process.

3.2.2 Guiding principles

Tomlinson (2011) believes that materials development should be driven by principles that are backed by SLA research. Together with his own observations on the subject, Tomlinson (2011) manages to synthesise these well-researched principles into a number of points that will be summarised below. These principles, together with Ishihara's (2010) more pragmatics-oriented principles as outlined in the previous chapter, were considered appropriate due to their comprehensive and highly relevant nature.

- The materials should achieve a sense of originality.
- The materials must be devised in a way that reduce the affective filter, allowing learners to feel comfortable and increase confidence.
- The learners must perceive the materials to be purposeful and of use.
- The materials should take on a discovery approach and promote self-directed learning.
- The learners need to be developmentally, psychologically and linguistically ready to take on the materials.
- The materials should consist of or represent comprehensible, authentic, rich and varied input that stimulates a response from the learners.
- The materials must draw attention to the linguistic properties of the chosen input, allowing learners to notice how the L2 is used.
- In order to achieve automaticity, the materials must offer multiple opportunities to practice the L2 in a communicative environment.
- The materials must account for the fact that the benefits of acquisition are delayed, suggesting the need for scaffolding and graded tasks, recycling of language functions and frequent exposure.
- The materials should consider the fact that different learners have different learning styles and different affective attitudes, and must therefore offer variety and choice.
- The materials must involve the learners intellectually, aesthetically and emotionally, promoting different levels of cognitive processing.
- The learners be provided with opportunities for outcome feedback.

- The materials must help the learners to gain cultural awareness and sensitivity to real language use.
- The materials should provide circumstances similar to those in which the learners will be producing language in the real-world.
- The materials must ensure learner readiness.

In addition to these principles, Tomlinson (2013) also outlines other principles that materials evaluation processes would favour, and these include flexibility, validity, reliability, motivation, the achievement of short- and long-term learning goals, assisting teachers, and matching administrative requirements such as a syllabus. All these elements were considered indispensable and the materials development process did its utmost to incorporate them.

3.2.3 The overarching materials design framework

The materials writing process was led by Jolly and Bolitho's (2011) framework, and it was adapted to meet the needs of this study. Its stages are illustrated in Figure 6.

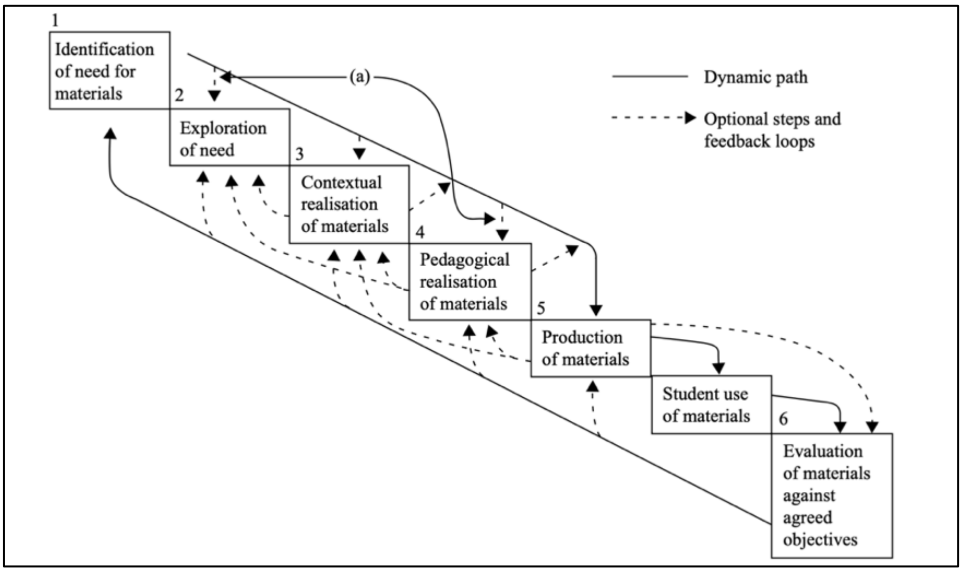

Figure 6: A teacher's path through the production of new or adapted materials (from Jolly and Bolitho, 2011, p. 113)

Jolly and Bolitho's (2011) framework was adapted in two ways. Primarily, not all stages were of relevance to this study. In fact, the final phases were not directly included in the design process because the nature and scope of this study did not require them in the framework's conventional sense. Secondly, the framework concurrently incorporated aspects of Tomlinson's (2013) flexible, text-driven approach towards materials development. This seminal framework was crucial to the materials writing process especially since it was decided that the materials be led by a fictional text of a literary nature, the reasons for which have been alluded to in the previous chapter. Tomlinson's (2013) framework includes the following aspects:

1. text collection
2. text selection
3. text experience
4. readiness activities
5. experiential activities
6. intake response activities
7. development activities
8. input response activities. (pp. 100-105)

3.2.4 The materials design process

The following stages will present the manner in which the aforementioned frameworks were simultaneously implemented in order to facilitate the materials development process.

<u>Stage 1: Identification</u>

The first stage in materials development involves identifying a need or problem that ought to be addressed via the creation of suitable materials. Prior to undertaking the materials writing process itself, conducting a needs analysis was not required, as the purpose of creating the tasks served as an attempt to fill two universal gaps common to coursebooks and second language curricula, i.e., the non-existence, inaccuracy, or superficiality of tasks tackling pragmatics which would lead to a lack of competence in key communicative areas for L2 learners of English (Bardovi-Harlig, 2017; Tatsuki, 2019).

Stage 2: Exploration

The second stage is synonymous with exploring the need or problematic area by consulting the relevant theories. This consisted of reviewing the key principles in English pragmatics and related studies, notably Austin's (1962) and Searle's (1969) contributions to speech act theory, Brown and Levinson's (1987) and Culpeper's (1996) politeness and impoliteness theories, and Grice's (1975) theory on cooperation in conversation and implicature. Reviewing the relevant theories ensured accordance with the CEFR's (2020) conceptualisation of pragmatic competence, including its three sub-competences and any other corresponding communicative strategies.

Stage 3: Contextual realisation

This stage consists of choosing the right context for the target learners, making sure that the materials fit their needs and translate into relevant content. For this to occur, a process akin to what Tomlinson (2013) refers to as text selection took place. This preliminary text collection stage refers to identifying a number of texts that offer "the potential for engagement" (Tomlinson, 2013, p. 100), i.e., texts that are meaningful and that may provide opportunities for positive interaction between the learner and the text. The point of this exercise was to gather a list of texts that could potentially match the material writer's targets, and in this case, be exploited to teach pragmatic competence. Here, the set prose and drama texts listed in the 2025 SEC Syllabus for English Literature (MATSEC, 2022) have been considered for their potential exploitation. This was carried out via an analysis of the characters' discourse in interaction in terms of the aforementioned pragmatic principles.

The 2025 SEC Syllabus for English Literature (MATSEC, 2022) was consulted for one fundamental reason, i.e., that of retaining a sense of authenticity in the classroom. Here, the term "authenticity" refers to the physical familiarity of the text. Collie and Slater (1987) appraise literary texts as authentic resources and they are described as initiating meaningful learning, better contextualisation, and easy integration in language and/or literature lessons.

Contextual realisation also includes Tomlinson's (2013) text selection phase whereby one particular text is identified as having the potential to achieve the following criteria to some extent:

- cognitive and affective engagement
- relevance to the learners' lives
- the learners' ability to attain a broad cognitive ideation of the text
- stimulation of personal response
- achievability
- the learners' ability to emotionally engage with the text and their level of maturity to do so
- contribution to personal development
- exposure to a range of genres and/or text types

It may be argued that since Boyne's (2006) *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* was selected from a syllabus, it has already been screened for similar criteria by syllabus-writers for the national English Literature examination. Therefore, the aforementioned criteria would have automatically been satisfied. However, a pertinent reason for the choice of text over other prose or drama texts was the fulfilment of the eighth criterion in its entirety, where the text was identified as having a plethora of opportunities for learners to deal with utterances that carry pragmatic value and to produce language through various channels.

Stage 4: Pedagogical realisation

This stage involves phases of planning the material, writing it, and redrafting it as necessary. To start with, Tomlinson's (2013) ideation of text experience was adopted here, where the materials writer is said to engage with the text on a deeper level while simultaneously devising the relevant tasks, choosing appropriate instructions, and ensuring the presence of a variety of task typologies. This cyclical process of drafting and redrafting the materials ensures that the learners will experience the text and tasks exactly as the materials writer intended.

Here, it may be worth noting that the next five aspects from Tomlinson's (2013) framework were of great relevance. The materials design process ensured that to certain degrees and where appropriate, readiness activities, experiential activities, intake response activities, development activities, and input response activities were included in the task components. However, this materials design process found it apt to take a similar, yet more pragmatics-focused approach to devising tasks. Cohen and Ishihara (2013) state that frameworks in materials design relating to pragmatics commonly follow the following phases:

- raising awareness of the learners to the linguistic form and sociocultural norms of the target culture;
- providing language-focused (i.e., pragmalinguistic) practice;
- engaging learners in producing interactional output;
- providing meta-pragmatic opportunities for learners to reflect on their own language use and the possible consequences of the language use in the target community. (p. 124)

Where appropriate, these four phases together with other principles pertaining to task grading and task typologies (as per Nunan, 1989) constituted the organisational aspects of the materials.

In tandem, the materials writing process also considered other practical aspects by simultaneously building an answer key with the answers to tasks that can be objectively assessed, as well as possible answers to tasks that are more subjective in nature and/or can be measured against set criteria. Additionally, the insertion of various teacher's notes after most tasks was carried out so as to offer extra support to teachers. This was especially necessary due to lack of research on local secondary school teachers' knowledge of pragmatics and how to teach it. The notes comprise of what, according to Cunningsworth (1995), teachers' books accompanying coursebooks typically offer, and these include aspects such as:

- giving a preliminary overview of the materials' principles, aims, selection and grading of content, the rationale for the methodology used, and the manner in which the tasks constructed relate to one another;
- providing practical guidance on how to use the materials;
- providing of linguistic and, if necessary, cultural information;
- promoting a better understanding of the communicative mode of teaching.

<u>Stage 5: Physical production</u>

This stage refers to the appearance and aesthetic qualities of the materials. The resources were produced as minimally designed Microsoft Word documents. Their simplicity was deliberate so as to reflect the versatile and flexible nature of the materials that were ultimately created to serve as a repository for teachers.

<u>Stages 6 and 7: Use in the classroom and evaluation</u>

These stages are typically synonymous with piloting the materials in the classroom and making observations on how they were received by the learners, thus evaluating their validity, reliability, and effectiveness. This would indicate whether the identified language need or problem was met. While the scope of this study did not directly involve these final steps, some task components had been informally tried and tested with other works of fiction, such as drama texts and short stories, during the researcher's teaching practicum. After noting their success, it was decided that they would be subsequently included in the resource pack and adapted to *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* (Boyne, 2006).

3.3 Conclusion

The methodology adopted for the purpose of this project fused two main approaches to materials development that operated on different levels. Jolly and Bolitho's (2011) framework is rooted in the practicality and functionality of the materials design on a procedural level, while Tomlinson's (2013) is more content-oriented. These frameworks worked well together, rendering the materials development process systematic and structured, and this means that the projections for this methodological approach are favourable. Apart from having a framework to work with, it was also valuable to consider the wider context that the materials will be potentially operating in. Nunan's (1989) external variables as well as Tomlinson's (2011) set of guiding principles were deemed indispensable in this regard.

Chapter 4: Discussion

The following subsections aim to tackle two areas. The first subsection will explore the reasoning behind the materials by using the three main topics in English pragmatics to guide an analysis of a select number of tasks. This will attempt to answer the first research question, i.e., in what ways can literary texts facilitate the acquisition of communicative skills? The second subsection will discuss the materials' projections in curricular and practical terms while considering the remaining two research questions, i.e., to what extent is pragmatic competence currently being targeted in the national English Language curriculum, and are there any potential pitfalls and limitations to using literary texts as a tool in second L2 instruction? The following subsections will be making direct reference to the tasks and teacher's notes developed for the purpose of this project, as well as the character's DS in *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* (Boyne, 2006).

4.1 An in-depth analysis of the tasks

4.1.1 Speech acts: form-function patterns in language use

The point of introducing speech acts as a core element of the materials was to match the CEFR's (CoE, 2020) definition of pragmatic competence that includes the performance of language functions. Indeed, speech acts can be defined as "the action performed when an utterance is produced" (Cutting, 2002, p. 16) that can be analysed on three different levels as per Austin's (1962) and Searle's (1969) theories. It was considered crucial to implement tasks dealing with speech acts in order to help learners note patterns in language usage. This is synonymous with usage-based theory, where L2 learners of a language are said to build schema and make connections between people, situations and communicative acts. This theory suggests that language learning must be input-driven, therefore exposing learners to "meaningful form-function relations" (Pérez-Paredes et al., 2020, p. 4). Moreover, since SLA research suggests that the pragmalinguistic formulations of speech acts differ from one language to another, they must be taught explicitly to L2 learners so as to rectify any irregularities that arise out of a learner's interlanguage (Attardo and Pickering, 2021).

Since speech acts often involve a great deal of inferencing, a task that is sometimes difficult for native speakers of English, it seemed apt to include tasks that serve to exercise the learners' interpretative skills. Task 1 (A) aims to draw attention to the illocutionary force of utterances produced in a lengthy and dynamic exchange between Mother and Bruno. The first chapter is rife with speech acts carrying multiple functions, and the task requires a rigorous re-reading of the text. The first part of the task requires the learners to make utterance-character relations. Then, they are to match each utterance to its apparent function. As suggested by the task's teacher's note, it can be taken further by asking the learners to read into the intended meaning of certain utterances as well as their perlocutionary force. This would bring attention to the fact that although an utterance may have a particular form, it may not always serve the form's function, leading to an indirect utterance. For instance, "Oh you'll make other friends" is a representative (assertion) that, in context, may also be read as a directive (dismissal) or a commissive (promise). Additionally, "Maybe you should go upstairs and help Maria with your packing" is a directive (suggestion) that may be also read as a more forceful representative (assertion), especially since it follows the utterance "But that's enough questions for now". This draws attention to the fact that the insertion of a mitigative softener appearing to save Bruno's negative face from imposition paired with a modal may not necessarily serve the function of suggesting. Indeed, given the overarching context, such utterances are more likely to have been intended to initiate a perlocutionary force whereby Bruno stops protesting, thus relieving Mother of irritation. However, Mother's illocutionary force is ineffective, and this is evident through a mismatch in adjacency pairs which are indicative of Bruno's unwillingness to cooperate or inability to read into Mother's intended meaning. This task serves to reflect on literal meaning and the truth value that the grammatical properties of a syntactic unit hold, as well as their potential irrelevance when utterances are performed in context (Grundy, 2020).

A number of tasks are concerned with identifying the individual strategies that make up units of language that serve specific functions. In this regard, one area that was of relevance were complaints as found in Chapter 6, where Bruno decides to confront Father about his discomfort with their living situation. In Task 6 (A1), the learners are presented with the components and sequence of a typical complaint adapted from Blum-Kluka and Olshtain (1984), and they are to find the utterances from Bruno's complaint that correspond with such components. Here, the learners are mostly identifying utterances that carry the illocutionary force of representatives, commissives and directives that hope to bring about the perlocutionary force of a change in living situation. This task is set to prepare the learners for the subsequent productive task where, with support, the learners must utilise the appropriate language to complain to the Fury and recognise the importance of mitigation measures in cases where heightened social distance means that less direct and forceful modes of communication (e.g., unpalatable questions) must be employed. This incidentally links speech acts to the pragmatic principles of cooperation and politeness since a great deal of hedging would be involved. The implementation of honorifics in the "useful language" section increases awareness of the child's perspective when interacting with a powerful adult. This task was deemed necessary as "When complaining, L2 learners who lack pragmatic competence in their second language may appear rude, impolite, or aggressive, particularly if they are speaking to someone with higher status" (Hillard, 2017, p. 5).

Similarly, it was also possible to design tasks that tackle request strategies that are equally problematic areas in SLA, since request realisation patterns are proven to differ across cultures (Blum-Kluka and Olshtain, 1984). Again, the learners are required to go through Bruno's and Maria's exchange in Chapter 13 and match the relevant utterances to the request strategy components in Task 11 (A1) that were adapted from Blum-Kluka and Olshtain (1984). Since requests are inherently FTAs, the employment of mitigation is often a necessity (Brown and Levinson, 1987). Attention is drawn to how an increased number of supportive moves, notably by uttering numerous "syntactic downgraders" (Blum-Kluka and Olshtain, 1984, p. 204) in the form of directives (interrogatives) prior to the core request, makes it less direct. Linked to this surplus is the notion of cooperation — a clash between the maxims of quantity and quality arises, contributing towards the production of an indirect request. On a literary level, this task draws attention to a thematic consideration, notably that of Bruno's apprehension to cross boundaries throughout the story. As the novel progresses, apologies become of great importance to the theme of friendship, and in Chapter 15, Bruno apologises to Shmuel for denying their friendship to Lieutenant Kotler in order to selfishly safeguard himself. In Task 13 (D) the learners are presented with a noticing task where they are required to identify utterances and match them to the components of a typical apology adapted from Cohen and Olshtain (1981). The learners are required to recognise the expressives in the dialogue, e.g., "I'm so sorry", and they must also draw upon their schematic knowledge to come up with their own utterances for the latter three stages of Bruno's apology. A subsequent extension task, as recommended in the teacher's notes, prompts the learners to reflect on intensifiers and their function in apologies.

A more demanding task with respect to felicity conditions and speech acts pertains to Chapter 18. Reference is made to an exchange between Bruno and Shmuel where Shmuel expresses his dismay at the recent occurrence of his father going missing. Bruno offers to help but only makes the offer out of politeness with the intention of satisfying a felicity condition (sincerity), especially since his social standing would enable him to help Shmuel. Task 16 (A2) requires the learners to reimagine the dialogue where Bruno makes excuses to help his friend, thus allowing the learners to reproduce non-cooperative utterances in an imagined conversation. On another note, Task 16 (A3) brings about awareness to communicative strategies that serve to down-play speech acts in order to save Bruno's negative face from imposition. A combination of directives such as "So I won't see you again", and hedging devices as in "I suppose I'll see you tomorrow to say goodbye then", are intended to make Bruno feel guilty for leaving.

4.1.2 Goal-oriented communication: cooperation and conversational implicature

Cooperation and implicature are important aspects of the novel because they have great literary implications. The characters' indirectness and lack of cooperation serves to stifle the story and attempts to protect the main character and the reader from the horrors offered by the context. On the level of communicative competence, the CEFR (CoE, 2020) specifically values discourse competence involving organised interpersonal interaction that is goal-oriented in nature, such as turn-taking strategies and propositional precision. Designing tasks around Grice's (1975) CP seemed valuable in aiding learners to develop these competences, and additionally, "arriving at meaning via the maxims involves effort, and so increases engagement with the text" (Black, 2006, p. 27). While the reader is in the privileged position of *voyeur* and is privy to the overarching context, one is likely to understand any implicatures before the characters do, but for L2 learners this may not be automatic (Black, 2006; Attardo and Pickering, 2021).

Throughout the novel, non-cooperation is employed to bring out the element of sibling rivalry, and these interactions are usually paired with impoliteness strategies. In Chapter 3 there are a number of uncooperative elements to the dialogue between Bruno and Gretel who purposefully fail to observe several maxims in order to spite one another. As seen in exchanges where DS is paired with an extradiegetic narrator, the reader is in a privileged position to note the dynamics of uncooperative instances in interaction that are "analogous to real-life interactions" (Black, 2006, p. 27).

Example: Bruno opts-out

> "Bruno, will you please explain to me what you meant by that last remark?" asked Gretel.
> "There's a forest over there," said Bruno, ignoring her.
>
> (Boyne, 2006, p. 27)

Task 3 (C1) requires the learners to identify uncooperative instances akin to the above and to subsequently participate in a role-play task whereby they will be able to create a more cooperative exchange. In Task 3 (C2) to (C4), the learners are then required to reflect upon the features of their exchange that made it more cooperative and to also reflect upon the appropriacy of instances of non-cooperation in Bruno and Gretel's exchange, given their relationship. Concurrently, it also draws attention to conversation conventions such as turn-taking strategies, sequencing, and representative speech acts.

Other tasks sought to target different aspects of cooperation. Task 4 (A) tackles the expression of certainty and uncertainty in interaction which is key to maintaining cooperation via observation of the conversational maxims. The concept of epistemic hedging is of relevance here as the learners are being exposed to forms that are synonymous with "assertion, tentativeness, commitment, detachment, and other crucial aspects of *interpersonal meaning*" (McCarthy, 1991, p. 85). In Chapter 4, Bruno and his sister Gretel are using language to make speculations about their new surroundings. The task was designed to draw attention to the pragmalinguistic strategies employed for mitigation purposes, notably lexical items such as "perhaps", "might", and "think", and to help learners decide which utterances approximate certainty and uncertainty, and to what extent, using a rating scale.

Task 4 (B1) and (B2) allow the learners to use the relevant structures in context and reflect on how they used language to express certainty and uncertainty. Here they would be exercising the CEFR's (CoE, 2020) idea of propositional precision, i.e., being able to express oneself using linguistic modality with relative accuracy. Since L2 learners often find difficulty in deciphering implicatures regardless of proficiency, Padilla-Cruz (2013) states that "instruction in L2 pragmatics should contribute to the development of learners' epistemic vigilance towards communication, but more importantly, to the flaws and mistakes that can affect their comprehension and eventually hinder understanding" (p. 112).

Implicature also constitutes a major concern. Chapter 8 comprises a heated argument between Mother, Father, Grandmother and Grandfather. Here, Grandmother's anti-nationalistic views are brought to the surface via the implementation of implicature strategies, and it is done for several reasons. Firstly, she chooses to use an indirect mode of communication to bring out her anger and disappointment in her son. She chooses to avoid direct verbal confrontation by initiating sarcasm, e.g., "A patriot indeed!" and the use of metaphor, e.g., "I was merely the blank wall to whom you addressed your words" to vent frustration at her perceived lack of credibility by her male counterparts, thus flouting the maxim of quality. This makes the distance between the literal meaning of her utterances and the intended meaning to be substantial. The bigger the distance, the harder it is for L2 learners to make inferences (Taguchi and Yamaguchi, 2019). Secondly, implicature may have been used as a buffer to protect Bruno and Gretel from the atrocities of the Holocaust. Task 8 (B) allows the learners to infer the meaning behind Grandmother's utterances and to pick up on the off-record impoliteness meta-strategies she takes up. The learners are invited to reflect upon the literary implications of this via the teacher's note, and Task 8 (C) requires the learners to consider the adults' success in utilising indirect language. The notion of implicature and cooperation in this chapter are taken further via a role-play task in Task 8 (D) that links it to other pragmatic aspects of language use, notably the severity of mitigation measures that can be used to recreate a more/less heated dialogue. As suggested in the teacher's note, peer-assessment would enable learners to experience different ways of producing language. It was also possible to include an additional productive component in Task 8 (E), i.e., writing a letter about the events that occurred that night from Bruno's perspective, allowing the learners to draw on all the aforementioned pragmatic principles and to connect language use to the evocation of emotion.

Task 11 (B1) is a prominent task on cooperation, implicature and politeness. The episodes occurring in Chapter 13 signal a turning point in the novel, and the utterances produced are by far the most difficult to decipher. Since the rather lengthy conversation between Father and Kotler requires a great deal of inferencing from the reader, a multiple-choice task manages to tackle a wide range of cooperative aspects. Primarily, the task brings about metapragmatic awareness of Father's implicatures and Kotler's non-observance of the maxims. Father's implicature is brought about via the employment of several off-record strategies such as speech acts that constitute declaratives (interrogatives), e.g., "So your father would be ... in his forties, I expect?" and representatives (assertions) such as "Strange that he chose not to stay in the Fatherland". On the other hand, Kotler's discomfort brings about a struggle to produce cooperative language by, for instance, opting-out of the conversation by not responding at all, using hedging devices to initiate obscurity, e.g., "I suppose so … I don't really know", or violating the maxim of quality by initiating a directive (interrogative), e.g., "I beg your pardon, Herr Commandant?" Implicature and softeners result in mock politeness due to social distance factors, and any attempts at saving each other's face is essentially ingenuine. The teacher's note is intended to make the learners reflect on why the characters choose to cooperate in this way.

After having dealt with several tasks that address cooperation, Task 13 (C), a more advanced productive task, allows the learners to manipulate language in interaction. In Chapter 15, Bruno violates the maxim of quality and considers opting out of the conversation to evade questions from Kotler about his friendship with Shmuel. This task requires the learners to reimagine the conversation by manipulating language in order to tell the truth, i.e., to adhere to the maxims. This task allows learners to creatively engage with the text while again prompting metapragmatic awareness. The final task, Task 17 (A), is also advanced in nature as it ties pragmatics to the stylistic underpinnings of language choice. The teacher's note specifically draws attention to the surplus of implicatures that serve to foreshadow the most harrowing event in the novel. While this task may need to be graded further depending on the learners, it carries value in that it concurrently encourages interpretation on a pragmatic and literary level.

4.1.3 Observing politeness and impoliteness in interaction

This subsection will continue to expand on the politeness and impoliteness strategies found in the interactional aspects of the novel. Politeness has sociocultural implications, and it is employed to maintain "social equilibrium" (Leech, 1983, p. 82). Interestingly, while politeness strategies tend to differ from one language to another, the nature and intonation of politeness markers utilised in Maltese are similar to those used in English (Cremona et al., 2017). However, there still seems to be a gap in the frequency of the use of politeness strategies between the two languages, with English typically yielding more, since negative and positive politeness dominate language use (Cremona et. al., 2017). Therefore, lack of mitigation from local speakers of English to those in other cultures might come across as offensive. Attardo and Pickering (2021) state that SLA research has proven that pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic competence do not develop concurrently, the latter of which requires more exposure to the target language culture and also constitutes a lack of representation in instructional materials for L2 learners of English.

It was previously mentioned that the first chapter presents turmoil in the novel via a troublesome exchange between Bruno and Mother. Task 1 (B) chooses to draw on Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness superstrategies by linking it to directness and empathy. While some of Mother's utterances count as indirect speech acts, others are on record FTAs, such as "Bruno, that's enough". The grid in Task 1 (B1) requires the learners to note the use of hedging to soften threats and mitigate cooperation, and to choose those that are least imposing if Mother were to utter them. In Task (B2), the learners are then prompted to use the chosen utterances to recreate the dialogue in Chapter 1, thus practising the use of hedging with support and in context.

Task 7 (A) relates requests to politeness and impoliteness, and it requires the learners to notice how within the same context, politeness strategies can differ from one character to another. It draws attention to the fact that Bruno's request is polite because Kotler holds a favourable relationship with the family, even though Bruno dislikes him. Kotler's impolite attention grabber via the implied name-calling and request to Pavel, brings out his antisemitic views and constitutes an attempt to elevate his own face in front of the children. This is set against the hedging techniques employed by Bruno, such as "I wondered" and "perhaps" that ultimately serve to soften his request. In addition, in Task 7 (B), the learners are also required to find evidence that Kotler enjoys belittling Bruno despite his obvious aversion to it. Apart from the use of derogatory language and tendencies to exclude Bruno via obscure language while in conversation with Gretel, Kotler ruffles Bruno's hair against his will. Culpeper (1996) and Bousfield (2008) would consider the invasion of one's space as well as exclusion to be positive impoliteness strategies. The productive component in Task 7 (C) once again links language use to the evocation of emotion.

In Chapter 11, of particular relevance is compliment-giving. First, Task 9 (A1) serves to shed light on the character dynamics brought about by implicature at the start of the chapter, which manifests itself through a prosodic emphasis via the italicised "her", creating a sense of suspicion around Eva's character. Later on, Eva's politeness strategies are juxtaposed against the Fury's perplexing language, and the learners are invited to determine which utterances yielded a positive response from Gretel and Bruno in Task 9 (A2) and the possible reasons for the characters' language choices in Task 9 (A4) on the basis of gender. Eva's child-directed speech takes the form of compliment-giving, therefore allowing her to interact with younger interlocutors effectively. The teacher's note prompts the learners to reflect on the appropriacy of Eva's utterances given the context and to also consider compliments as inappropriate when employed in different circumstances, i.e., adult-to-adult interaction (particularly where social distance is heightened). Indeed, compliments are essentially FTAs because accepting a compliment requires an addressee to lose positive face out of modesty and may be considered as a sign of envy from the addresser's part (Brown and Levinson, 1987).

The relationship between Gretel and Bruno is given further room in Chapter 14. This chapter constitutes a conversation whereby Bruno inadvertently supplies excess information about his friendship with Shmuel. Politeness, specifically mock politeness, is used as a strategy to initiate non-cooperation with the intention of drawing attention away from the issue at hand. Task 12 (A2) highlights this by allowing the learners to locate mock politeness in the relevant exchange and to note its purpose. Additionally, Task 12 (A3) points the learners' attention to a multitude of impoliteness strategies, derived from Culpeper's (2011) taxonomy, that are taken up by the interlocutors. Task 12 (A4) is a productive task that, while not inherently pragmatic in nature, brings together all the communicative strategies employed by the characters concerned while making way for metapragmatic awareness.

Attention is drawn to a subsidiary element of politeness, i.e., modes of address. It was decided to include this as part of Task 13 because a short exchange between Mother and Kotler carries implications for the plot and prepares learners for the events in Task 15. Task 13 (B) requires learners to reflect on the appropriateness of Mother's mode of address (endearments) given the presumed heightened social distance between the parties concerned (see Leech, 1999). The teacher's note suggests that learners reflect on whether they would use similar register in a number of hypothetical situations, giving reasons. Task 15 deals with on record FTAs without redress directed towards Father and brought about by Mother's complaints. First, the learners are prompted to carefully identify the possible purposes of her utterances. Then, they are encouraged to reflect on the severity of her utterances, and are asked to find the linguistic and prosodic elements of her speech that make it more forceful. Father's response to her FTAs is also taken into consideration in a subsequent task in order to bring out the effectiveness of the complaints.

This in-depth analysis serves to highlight the fact that the pragmatic principles and fictional dialogue are complimentary, and that the two can contribute towards the design of tasks that are grounded in SLA theory. The following subsection will analyse the tasks in relation to the macro level considerations in L2 teaching and learning.

4.2 Projections: curricular considerations and practical implications

4.2.1 Curricular considerations: the new SEC Syllabus for English Language (2025)

Before considering the practical implications of the materials, it would first be worth delving into where they stand vis-à-vis the 2025 SEC Syllabus for English Language (MATSEC, 2022) that takes up a learning outcomes approach. This attempts to answer the second research question. On some level, the new syllabus seems to be showing signs that it is taking into account pragmatic competence compared to more dated versions of the syllabus. The assessment criteria that are drawn out of the general learning outcomes show evidence that it has become somewhat sensitive to pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic competence, as per the following sample of can-do statements:

- I can follow nuances of language and determine the speaker's meaning.
- I can infer meaning when following a conversation/presentation/dramatic performance.
- I can determine the speaker's intention and attitude.
- I can engage in a discussion by following the rules of turn management.

(MATSEC, 2022, pp. 15-21)

Assessment samples as well as marking criteria also display familiarity with pragmatic competence as promoted by the CEFR (CoE, 2020). Despite this improvement, a sense of ambiguity suggests that pragmatic competence still does not seem to constitute a central concern of the syllabus, meaning that politeness, cooperation and speech acts may not be tackled in much detail or might be completely neglected from Year 9 to Year 11. Perhaps more targeted criteria are necessary in this regard in order to ensure that comprehensive and reliable resources focused on pragmatic competence become part of teachers' repertoire.

4.2.2 Practical implications: the strengths and limitations of adopting a text-based methodology for materials development

The strengths of the chosen text-based methodology lie in its opportunities for integration in either the language and/or literature classrooms for those schools that choose *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* (Boyne, 2006) as a set text for English Literature from Year 9 to Year 11. Nunan (1987) states that teachers often find issues with integrating supplementary materials in the classroom, but a text-based approach is one that may prove convenient in this regard. Nonetheless, as with any other methodology, a text-based approach can be subject to a number of weaknesses in the classroom, namely the fact that learners might not be willing to engage with the novel for a long period of time, they might not like the story, or they could find difficulty in remembering details from one lesson to the next (McGrath, 2002). This brings this dissertation closer to answering another research question regarding the potential pitfalls and limitations to using literary texts as a tool in L2 instruction.

Since the materials developed for the purpose of this dissertation were designed to make way for teacher autonomy and flexibility, they are not necessarily intended to comprise an entire course in pragmatics. The tasks are generic in nature, and can be tweaked to the needs of the learners by adding, omitting, adapting, substituting or supplementing task components if needed. This makes for more realistic materials that recognise classroom variables and constraints. Nonetheless, if a teacher wishes to take on the entirety of the materials, then it is being recommended that a minimum of three to a maximum of five task components per term be implemented, simultaneously allowing them to achieve a variety of learning outcomes. These tasks therefore stand testament to the fact that pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic competence can be taught in a low-key, integrated manner. What is more is the fact that some task components have been informally tried in the classroom with younger learners, meaning that their previous success reflects the true transparency of the tasks and their possible adaptability to a range of fictional texts.

In addition, what renders the tasks flexible and worthwhile is the manner in which they are organised in terms of sequencing, grading and task types. In terms of sequencing, the tasks attempted to follow Cohen and Ishihara's (2013) four-part sequence alluded to in the previous methodology chapter, and as far as possible, they were graded according to their complexity and the cognitive demands they require from learners (see Nunan and Candlin, 1987 and Candlin, 1987). For instance, tasks targeted towards Year 9 students include more linguistic support (e.g., presentation of useful language) than those tasks that would be tackled in Year 11. The task types are also varied, involving the learners in objective tasks that require noticing language and others that require creativity and the application of pragmatic competence. The latter frequently take the form of textual intervention whereby the learners are invited to interact with the text by challenging it and changing it. This leads to a better micro-linguistic and macro-linguistic understanding of the text (Pope, 1995). A major strength of the materials is that teachers are also supplied with support via the notes in the companion resource pack which provides learning outcomes, a range of informative linguistic points, success criteria that are intended to be co-constructed with the learners, discussion questions, procedural recommendations and extension tasks.

4.3 Conclusion

This chapter served to explore the tasks on multiple levels. The first subsection discussed the tasks' theoretical underpinnings and outlined their salient features. The second subsection continued to consider the tasks' prospects in light of the more utilitarian facets of teaching and learning. Here, an understanding of the tasks' strengths and limitations were outlined, the former of which have proven to outweigh the latter thus far. The next chapter will synthesise a number of generalisations derived from this study by revisiting the research questions and considering opportunities for further research.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

5.1 Revisiting the research questions

This project based-dissertation has started to build an understanding of how pragmatic competence can be taught through fictional texts, hence inviting learners to make connections between language use and the literariness of fictional texts. Attempting the first research question via a text-based materials development approach contributed towards achieving this, and an in-depth analysis of the relevant task components has proven that literary texts do carry relevance in teaching complex linguistic phenomena to L2 learners of English. In other words, the projections for the materials are quite favourable and what renders them so is their reliance on a wide-ranging body of research as outlined in the literature review, and the implementation of a relevant methodology backed by communicative language teaching principles that are of current relevance.

Developing the tasks also shed light on a curricular consideration via the exploration of the second research question that enabled this study to compare the outcomes of the targeted materials to those being promoted by the language syllabus. While recognition of attempts to involve aspects of discourse competence, functional competence and design competence as put forward by the CEFR (CoE, 2022) was established, awareness has been brought about to the need for a more focused language syllabus that gives precedence to pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic competence in addition to other language skills. The way forward in this regard could constitute a formal, in-depth study (perhaps of a comparative nature) that would serve to analyse the syllabus in order to appraise its strengths and outline any opportunities for improvement in terms of pragmatic competence as well as the ever-valuable language-fiction interface.

The third research question considers a number of limitations of the study, specifically the challenges that using materials exploiting literary texts to teach communicative competence might be subject to should they be implemented in the L2 classroom. The nature of such limitations and challenges are very much dependent on the context within which the materials are operating. The materials' inherent flexibility, adaptability and practicality respond to this research question; they give practitioners the autonomy and ability to assess the classroom needs in terms of proficiency and ability to take on the tasks, to use a completely different text or a range of shorter texts, to only utilise specific aspects of the materials, or to organise them in a different manner for easier integration. All this arises out of their sensitivity to real-life language teaching and learning contexts.

5.2 Opportunities for further research

Although the chosen methodology is relatively established within the world of materials development, it could not be fully exploited in the traditional sense due to limitations of time and space. Since the aim of this dissertation was to explore the ways in which pragmatic competence can be taught through an entire novel, there were no opportunities for pre-use, in-use and post-use evaluation phases (McGrath, 2002).

Indeed, since the tasks are generic in nature and were not designed with the scope of conducting a study on materials development relating to a specific cohort of L2 learners, it would be best that these evaluation phases are carried out (formally or informally by educators themselves) in order to adapt the tasks to the learners' immediate needs. Nonetheless, these materials could serve as a springboard for further research on pragmatic competence and the language-fiction interface, the latter of which has already proven relevant and highly beneficial to the teaching and learning of language in general, notably grammar, vocabulary, the receptive skills and the productive skills (see Lazar, 1993 and Collie and Slater, 1987).

In fact, the materials developed could easily serve as the basis for an action research project, gathering quantitative and qualitative data from real-world contexts on how the materials fared and how they may be improved. Informed and evaluative feedback from learners and practitioners alike would give insight into how frequently neglected areas of applied linguistics having extreme communicative relevance can be implemented into the everyday classroom. Hutchinson and Water's (1987) extended model for materials development illustrates this in a clear manner, as seen in the Figure 7.

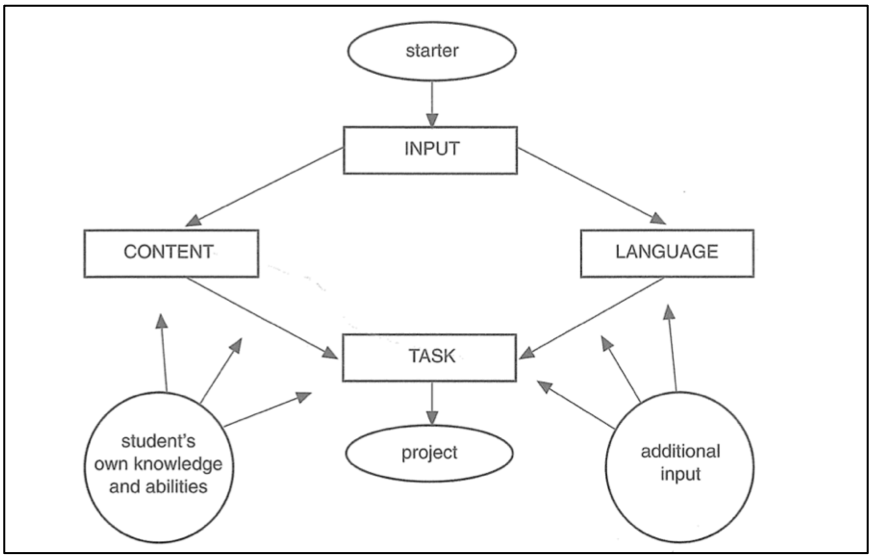

Figure 7: Materials development framework (from Hutchinson and Waters, 1987, p. 118)

It may be noted that there is also room for further research in the field of pragmatics itself since, as far as the researcher's knowledge, there seems to be lack of data giving insight into the patterns of local language usage in general. Additionally, more specific longitudinal studies carried out in several schools may also give insight into the pragmatic competence of teachers and learners, hence informing the nature and level of support required by both parties when designing and developing similar projects. Such studies would be of great relevance to future resource development practices that wish to target pragmatic competence in local secondary schools.

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