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# Pragmatic Tactics in Traffic Trials

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**Abstract**---This study aims at finding out the pragmatic tactics employed in the contexts of traffic trials as used by the judge and the defendants and the purposes to which they serve. Based on the data analysis, it is found that there are six pragmatic tactics in contexts of the traffic trials interaction which are felicitousness, effectiveness, maximum efficiency, appropriateness, avoidance of imposition, and maximal options for deniability. The purpose behind the use of these tactics is that a pragmatic tactic is a particular way in which a pragmatic strategy is employed to comply with a particular aim in a particular situation. It can be regarded as the starting step towards achieving a short-term goal using certain pragmatic strategies. Thus, both pragmatic tactics and pragmatic strategies are activated in the contexts of traffic trials.

**Keywords**---court context, pragmatic strategies, pragmatic tactics, traffic trials.

## Introduction

As is widely known, pragmatics is one of the rapidly increasing domains in contemporary linguistics. In this study, pragmatic tactics refer to some pragmatic plans that are applied in the context of successful communication. As borrowed from the military terminology, it is generally agreed that tactics are planned to win battles but strategies are executed to win wars (Menon, 2013). In Sun Tzu's words, "a strategy without a tactic is the slowest route to victory, and a tactic without a strategy is the noise before defeat" (Hewitt, 2018). Even though accomplished, a tactic in the absence of a strategy cannot satisfactorily achieve its best goals. Contrariwise, a strategy devoid of its supportive tactic can be a handicap rather than a help. In this sense, pragmatic tactics and pragmatic strategies, in this study, are key components that go hand in hand in maintaining and developing a particular communicative dialogic exchange. This study, thus,

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suggests that both pragmatic tactics and pragmatic strategies are interdependent, complementary, and indispensable mechanisms which if they work together, they will achieve an everlasting victory. Principally, a tactic is a particular way in which a strategy is employed to comply with a particular aim in a particular situation. It can be regarded as the starting step towards achieving a short-term goal. Moreover, it is an initiative practice and a specific fresh plan that is intended to resolve a complication or to improve a situation. Substantially, six pragmatic tactics are used in this study to examine the interaction and the pragmatic intention in the court contexts of the traffic trials and these tactics encompass felicitousness, effectiveness, maximum efficiency, appropriateness, avoidance of imposition, and maximal options for deniability. As far as the pragmatic tactic of felicitousness is concerned, it refers to the operation of felicity conditions under which, according to [Searle & Searle \(1969\)](#), the pragmatic strategies of speech acts can be reasonably characterized as felicitously performed or not, i.e. felicitous or infelicitous. It is against this background that their performance is based on the tactic of felicitousness to test whether or not the message is communicated by the interlocutors clearly and felicitously.

In this manner, felicitous speech acts form the first tactic, i.e. felicitousness, in the approach of this study. In other words, the categories of speech act whether they are representatives, directives, commissives, expressive, or declarative, share the same tactic. Concerning the pragmatic tactic of effectiveness, [Levinson \(1983\)](#), points out that Gricean maxims are regarded as guidelines for effective use of language to further cooperative ends. This view serves as an indication that the effectiveness of conversational maxims, whether observed or not, can be used as an important tactic to show how the interaction of the traffic trials works in the data under scrutiny. What is more, cooperative principles and conversational maxims, whether observed or not, must be resorted to in any dialogic communication to make the dialogue flows smoothly because they govern any goal-directed cooperative human behavior. Regarding the pragmatic tactic of maximum efficiency, [Brown et al. \(1987\)](#), point out that doing an act baldly without redressive action means doing it most directly and clearly. They (*ibid.*: 95) have shown that the main reason for the use of bald on-record politeness is that the speaker wants to do the face-threatening act with "maximum efficiency" when he does not want to satisfy the hearer's face to any degree. This maximum efficiency can be used as the tactic of bald on-record politeness performed in this study. Regarding the pragmatic tactic of appropriateness, [Brown et al. \(1987\)](#), argue that the speaker must bear in mind the degree of politeness in choosing appropriate linguistic realizations of on-record positive politeness. From this view and in the context of this study, this perspective serves as an indication that the tactic of appropriateness leads to the performance of the strategies of on-record positive politeness in this study. Moreover, the pragmatic tactic of avoidance of imposition is perceived through the use of negative politeness strategies which are avoidance-based as they imply avoidance of imposition (*ibid.*: 70). Thus, the tactic of the implementation of these strategies is avoidance of imposition. Finally, the pragmatic tactic of maximal options for deniability is related to the use of the strategies of off-record politeness which is, as [Blum \(1997\)](#), claims, used by the speaker to leave "maximal options for deniability", especially when he realizes that the risk to face may be estimated as very high. Hence, in this study, the strategies of off-record politeness come as a result of the tactic of maximal options for

deniability. In this study, Judge Caprio and the American defendants employ various pragmatic tactics to achieve successful communication in processing the traffic trials (Chemmel & Phillipe, 2018; Muminova, 2021). Generally speaking, traffic trials are concerned with handling traffic ticket cases where traffic lawbreakers plead guilty and pay the required fine or they wish to plead not guilty by appearing in court on the decided date on the citation, where they may argue their cases before the judge. A matchless context of pragmatic tactics is the traffic trials that are broadcasted on the TV court show entitled "Caught in Providence" which is more regulated than any other context. The reason is simply that in this court context, there is a judge or referee who determines the case at hand and there are rules of court proceedings that disallow severe forms of aggressive arguments and regulate when each interlocutor may speak and how long each one may speak. The best context in which such pragmatic tactics take place is the legal context where dialogue reaches its highest level of formality. Precisely, these traffic trials constitute a unique legal context that must be taken seriously. Judge Frank Caprio, who is best known for his civility, is the chief judge of these traffic trials in Rhode Island. He is a member of the Rhode Island Judiciary who pledges to conduct in a civil manner in his legal profession and he treats all people with salient civility, honesty, justice, and fairness. Lucidly, the intrinsic intention of the defendants' interaction is to win a verbal victory by impressing the judge. Aaronson (1995), opens his article with the crucial statement that "the practice of law as a profession presupposes a commitment to civility in rational discourse". Guinness (2008), states that the continuous reliance on rights-based settling and firm judicial resolutions in preference to democratic debates devastates American civility. As Sarat (2016), puts it, what demand decisions are the quandaries of injustice and the lack of civility in the court context. Thus, such pragmatic tactics regulate communication and reinforce its positive communicative aspects.

Rosulek (2014), observes that in courtroom settings, there are certain standards of how interlocutors, i.e. judges, jurors, defendants, victims behave because they are expected to communicate with a kind of formality and respect towards each other. Particularly, Schak (2018), proceeds to expound that polite and well-mannered interlocutors are the illustrious indicators of the civilized community.

### **Research Methodology**

The research design used in this study is a mixed one with qualitative as well as a quantitative method to determine all the possibilities needed to identify the pragmatic tactics and the pragmatic strategies that represent them in the context of this study. The subject of this study is represented by twenty traffic trials taken from the court interaction between Judge Caprio and the American defendants as broadcasted on a TV show namely "Caught in Providence". In other words, "Caught in Providence" is a courtroom show that features real people and real-life court cases about careless drivers who have traffic violation tickets. Judge Frank Caprio, the Chief Judge, deals with these real traffic cases in Providence, Rhode Island which is a constituent state of the United States of America. The American Providence court is regarded as a microcosm of the American courtroom interaction at large (Schwebel et al., 2016; Adegbite, 2005). Judge Frank Caprio is one of the brilliant Italian American jurists who have made ample achievements in the realm of law throughout American history. Judge Francesco, known as

Frank, Caprio was born in 1936. He is an American attorney, politician, jurist, and the chief municipal judge in the American Providence court. His judicial work is televised on the television program "Caught in Providence" dealing with several cases of traffic violations in his courtroom. He legally represents the jurisdiction of the court which is the official power to make legal decisions and judgments in the American Providence. The present study focuses on examining the pragmatic tactics used in the American Providence court as they have a pivotal role in courtroom interaction. The object of this research is the pragmatic tactics and the pragmatic strategies that manifest them (Ker et al., 2005; Carsten et al., 1998). Data collection is carried out by transcribing the videos of the traffic trials by the researchers themselves. In this case, the official authentic videos of these trials represent the source of data. The method of this study includes reading the dialogic interaction used as data sources carefully, marking utterances that contain the target pragmatic tactics and their pragmatic strategies, and statistically counting the frequency of the occurrences of these tactics along with their strategies. Figure 1 below shows a model demonstrating the pragmatic tactics and strategies used in traffic trials under scrutiny. The model is used as the key instrument to analyze the target data.

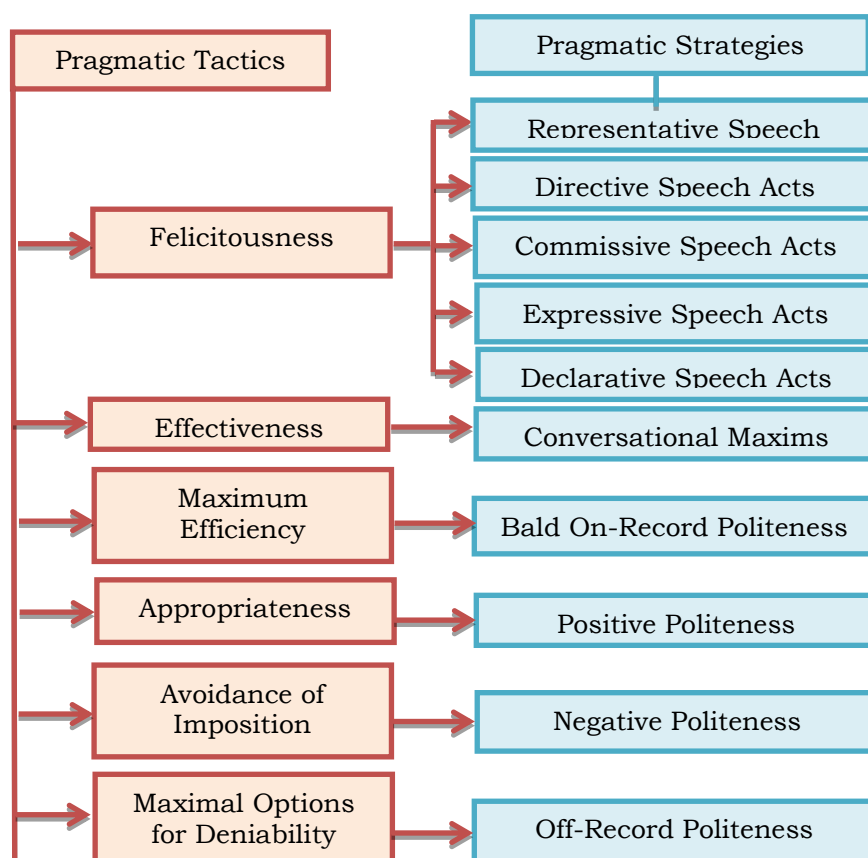


Figure 1. Proposed model of pragmatic tactics

## Data Analysis

The collected data are qualitatively and quantitatively analyzed. When working with the court contexts, the pragmatic analysis is combined with the contextual and communicative analysis to have a full understanding of the context in which pragmatic tactics take place (Björkman, 2011; Kwan & Dunworth, 2016). The trials of this court are full of implementations of the target pragmatic tactics. Thus, the preeminent reason behind predominantly choosing this court to be the source of the target data is that it is a different kind of courtroom that is compatible with the aims of this study. It is conditioned by its formal institutional setting. Above and beyond, the pragmatics of the legal language in this court is prolific and unique as it embraces extraordinary aspects that are absent from usual contexts. Because full analysis of these trials takes a considerable space in this research, only six representative examples of the practical application of the pragmatic analysis of these tactics are illustrated below. These examples are taken from two traffic trials where the chief judge is Judge Caprio and the defendant is named Marcella Wright. Some required information about these trials is presented before analyzing the target extracts.

Case Name: Homeless and Hopeless.

Traffic Violation: Twelve unpaid tickets and, as a result, the vehicle is booted.

Defendant Name: Marcella Wright.

Case Context: Marcella Wright comes to court after her car is booted and she has twelve unpaid tickets. She suffers difficult circumstances as she has a young son, she does not have any money to pay the tickets, and she is evicted with no place to live. She has overcome with emotion and tears while explaining her difficult circumstances to Judge Caprio.

Extract No. 1

Judge Caprio: (1) Marcella Wright. (2) Good morning.

Marcella: (3) Good morning.

Judge Caprio: (4) Marcella, your vehicle has been booted.

Marcella: (5) Yes, sir.

Judge Caprio: (6) You have twelve tickets.

Marcella: (7) Yes, sir.

Judge Caprio: (8) None of which have been paid.

Marcella: (9) I just paid 75 dollars to get here to see you.

Judge Caprio: (10) You paid 75 dollars to whom?

Marcella: (11) To the lady out there. (12) I had 75 dollars ticket that I tried to pay, but she said it didn't go through, so it got kicked back to my account, and I had to pay it again, so I just paid her 75 dollars.

This trial demonstrates the tendency towards the activation of some pragmatic tactics. In (1), Judge Caprio resorts to the tactics of felicitousness through the use of the directive speech act of summoning together with the expressive speech act of greeting in (2) that results in a greeting exchange as it is clear in (3) by Marcella. Then, Judge Caprio makes use of the representative speech act of asserting in (4), (6), and (8) to demonstrate that Marcella's vehicle has been booted and she has twelve unpaid tickets. As a response, the representative

speech act of affirming is used in (5) and (7) by Marcella which prefers to use a simple "yes" to affirm that what is said by Judge Caprio is valid. In (9) and (11), Marcella employs the representative speech act of stating to state that she has paid seventy-five dollars to get to the court and to meet Judge Caprio who uses the directive speech act of asking in (10) which enables him to ask for the sake of facts ascertaining. Finally, in (12), Marcella reports that she paid seventy-five dollars. In terms of the tactic of effectiveness, it is observed that Judge Caprio and Marcella are cooperative in most of their utterances in their dialogic exchange when they are trying to come to a common understanding about the case in question. One exception is that Marcella flouts quantity maxim in (11) and (12) because she is asked about the identity of the person to whom she has paid seventy-five dollars, but she answers with "the lady out there" as she does not know her name and then she shifts to provides other information concerning the payment which are not needed or asked by Judge Caprio.

#### Extract No. 2

- Judge Caprio: (1) Marcella, tell me a little bit about yourself. (2) Where do you live? (3) You live in Rhode Island?
- Marcella: (4) Now I do. (5) I fled Florida for domestic violence so all these tickets. (Crying). (6) I'm sorry. (Sobbing and muttering).
- Judge Caprio: (7) All right, Marcella
- Marcella: (8) I just came for a payment plan. (9) I can't afford 800 dollars. (Sobbing). (10) I just need a payment plan. (11) That's it. (12) That's it. (13) I don't have to fight. (14) Just a payment plan. (15) That's it. (16) I can't do it, I can't. (17) I gotta move today, or the sheriff is gonna come pick my stuff up, the guy selling the house. (18) I just want a payment plan so I can get my stuff out of my house. (19) I'm sorry, I'm sorry. (Crying and sniffing). (20) Today is hard. (21) I'm missing work. (22) I have no money. (23) I have no home. (24) Just a payment plan, please. (25) That's all I'm asking.
- Judge Caprio: (26) All right, Marcella, tell me a little bit about yourself. (27) Do you have any children?
- Marcella: (28) I have a son.
- Judge Caprio: (29) Does he live with you?
- Marcella: (30) Yeah.
- Judge Caprio: (31) How old is he?
- Marcella: (32) Eight.
- Judge Caprio: (33) Are you working?
- Marcella: (34) I work for American Safety Program.
- Judge Caprio: (35) Marcella, I have the message that you don't have any money. (36) I have the message that you have a young son, and I have the message that you have to move out today. (37) So just relax and answer my questions. (38) Do you have a place to go to?
- Marcella: (39) No. (Crying). (40) No, I don't. (41) I'm sorry, I'm so sorry.

The dialogic exchange in this stage is permeated with consideration and care to some pragmatic tactics. In terms of the tactic of effectiveness, Judge Caprio starts with the directive speech act of commanding in (1) and asking in (2) and (3). Marcella, in (4), resorts to the representative speech act of affirming that she lives

in Rhode Island. Then, she uses the representative speech act of lamenting in (5) to express her dissatisfaction, sadness, and strong public overt expressions of sorrow about the fact that she was subjected to domestic violence and, thus, she fled from Florida and that is why she was speeding. At this point, Marcella feels that she has reached an impasse as she is homeless and hopeless. Then, she cannot control her emotions so that she starts crying and, as a result, she has recourse to the expressive speech act of apologizing in (6) while she is sobbing. In (7), the expressive speech act of comforting is activated by Judge Caprio. Marcella repeatedly employs the directive speech act of requesting in (8), (10), (14), (18), (24), and (25), which has the illocutionary force of requesting for Judge Caprio to help her and this request is phrased in such a civil manner to attract the judge. In (9), (16), (17), and (20-23), the representative speech act of lamenting is used Marcella to expresses her discontent and sorrow about the sad state of the affair that she cannot pay the tickets as she has no work, no money, and no home. In (11-13), and (15), the representative speech act of asserting is used by Marcella with the main function and intention of informing Judge Caprio. Thus, Marcella provides Judge Caprio with some relevant information about her circumstances as she asserts that she does not come to the court to fight or argue her case, but rather all she wants is a payment plan. In (19), Marcella again uses the expressive speech act of apologizing. In (26), Judge Caprio employs the expressive speech act of comforting at the beginning of the utterance and then he uses the directive speech act of commanding. Thus, Judge Caprio commands Marcella to tell him about herself as he feels great sympathy for her. Judge Caprio makes use of the directive speech act of asking in (27), (29), (31), and (33) to ask Marcella some questions about her life, her children, their age, and her work. Marcella, as a response, makes use of the representative speech act of stating in (28) (32), and (34) to say that she has one son who lives with her and she works for the American Safety Program and she also uses the representative speech act of affirming in (30) to affirm that her son lives with her. In (35) and (36), Judge Caprio performs the expressive speech act of comforting to tell Marcella that he has the message that she does not have any money and she has young so that he wants her to relax. In (37), the expressive speech act of comforting and the directive speech act of commanding are used by Judge Caprio to ask Marcella to relax and to answer his questions and then he uses the directive speech act of asking in (38) to ask whether she has a place to live or not. In (39) and (40), Marcella employs the speech act of asserting that she does not have a place to go to, and finally, she performs the expressive speech act of apologizing in (41). About the tactic of effectiveness, the exchange between Judge Caprio and Marcella encourages a considerable directness in this stage where both are informative, truthful, relevant, and perspicuous in most of their utterances. Judge Caprio elicits certain information and he assumes that Marcella is trying to provide as much information as is needed, to be truthful, to offer relevant contributions, and to be perspicuous. However, some exceptions are observed. First, when Marcella was asked by Judge Caprio to tell a little bit about herself, she flouts quantity maxim by proving, more information than it is required in (8-25) with repeated utterances in form and function. Second, she flouts the same maxim in (39) and (40) to emphasize her negative assertion that she has no place to go and live.

Third, Judge Caprio also flouts quantity maxims in (1) and (26) as he repeats the same question. Fourth, Judge Caprio uses "a little bit" in (1) and (26) which means saying less than is required by flouting quantity maxim. Concerning the tactic of maximum efficiency, it is also observed when Judge Caprio exploits bald-on record politeness using the directive speech act of commanding in (1), (26), and (37). The tactic of appropriateness is triggered when Judge Caprio notices Marcella's conditions in (1-3), (26-27), (29), (31), (33), and (35-38) using on-record positive politeness, precisely the strategy of noticing H's interest to observe Marcella's interests, wants, needs, conditions, remarkable changes, and possessions. Presupposing common ground is also exploited in (34) when Marcella refers to American Safety Program without further clarification. Giving gifts to H is also demonstrated in (7), (26), (35), (36), and (37), by Judge Caprio who uses comforting to tell Marcella that he understands that she has no money to pay and she has a young son so that he wants her to relax to satisfy her wants to be cared about, listened to, and understood. The same strategy is exploited by Marcella using the act of apologizing in (6), (19), and (41). As for the tactic of avoidance of imposition, it is observed also when on-record negative politeness is used by Marcella in (8), (10), (14), (18), and (24) using "just" as a hedging device which is also used by Judge Caprio in (37). To follow the tactic of maximal options for deniability, Judge Caprio uses understatement when he says "a little bit" in (1) and (26) to intensify the diminution of the acts.

#### Extract No. 3

Judge Caprio: (1) Marcella, I have a pretty good indication of what your circumstances are. (2) And I'm not going to ask you to go into them because I understand it's very personal. (3) But I want you to know that there are an awful lot of very compassionate people in this country and in this world. (4) There's a wonderful person from California named Patricia Williams and a gentleman from Norfolk, Connecticut, by the name of Matthew Gilgamo, and they have made contributions to the court. (5) So, I'm going to find you 100 dollars for the boot and 200 dollars for the tickets. (6) So, because of the generosity of those wonderful people, you're gonna be able to get your vehicle back today, leaving you some money to take care of your son, and hopefully, get you relocated. (7) Just don't lose hope, and just hang in there. (8) The boot is gonna get released. (9) Good luck to you.

Marcella: (10) Thank you. (Crying).

About the tactic of felicitousness, Judge Caprio employs the expressive speech act of comforting in (1-4) to tell Marcella that he is aware of her difficult circumstances, to assure her that he is not going to ask her to go into their very personal circumstances, and to stress the fact that there are compassionate people who have made financial contributions to the court to help those people who suffer financial hardship. Such an act may attract the support of the public by stating the commonality among citizens for the sake of achieving a favorable pragmatic effect. In (5) and (6), Judge Caprio uses the declarative speech act of declaring the verdict that he will find Marcella one hundred dollars for the boot and two hundred dollars for the tickets so that she will be able to get her vehicle leaving her some money to take care of her son. In (7), the directive speech act of



advising is enacted by Judge Caprio to represent his care and concern for the general public in general and Marcella in particular and, thus, he advises her to be hopeful and patient. In (8), the declarative speech act of declaring the verdict that the boot of her car will be released. Finally, Judge Caprio performs the expressive speech act of well-wishing in (9) to positively and hopefully terminate his dialogic turn. The reaction of Marcella is the face-supporting act which is the expressive speech act of thanking in (10) to express her gratitude to Judge Caprio who offers her help and makes some contributions to support her. It is worth mentioning here that all these speech acts are felicitously performed since they are uttered in their appropriate context.

Case Name: God is watching.

Traffic Violation: Parking ticket.

Defendant Name: Frida Adams.

Case Context: Frida Adams is charged with a parking ticket. She immediately confesses that she is guilty as she believes that God is watching her guilt. Despite claiming that she is guilty, Judge Caprio gives her a break due to her sincerity and her hard work as a foster mother.

Extract No. 1

Judge Caprio: (1) Frida Adams.

Frida: (2) Your Honor, I'm guilty. (Laughter).

Judge Caprio: (Laughter) (3) You're guilty of what, everything?

Frida: (4) The ticket. (5) I parked because they had the street blocked. (6) I tried to back up and get in because I had an operation on my knee some time ago. (7) I have the plaque.

Judge Caprio: (8) Handicap.

Frida: (9) I was at the handicap area. (10) I was trying to back up because they were working on the street, on Page Street, and I couldn't get through. (11) So I just backed up and parked there.

In (1), Judge Caprio resorts to the tactic of felicitousness using the directive speech act of summoning. Frida expresses her standpoint very strongly in (2) using the representative speech act of admitting that she is guilty. In (3), Judge Caprio performs the directive speech act of asking to ask Frida about the exact offense that she is responsible for. Then, the answer comes from Frida with the help of the representative speech act of stating in (4), reporting in (5) and (6), and asserting in (7) to tell Judge Caprio that she is guilty of the parking ticket because the street was blocked and, thus, she parked in a place that is not designated for parking. She also clarifies that she has the plaque which tells that she is disabled. In (8), Judge Caprio uses the representative speech act of stating to correct the word "plaque" and put it right as "handicap". Then, in (9-11), Frida continues her utilization of the representative speech act of reporting to tell that she was at the handicap area and she was trying to back up because the street was blocked for maintenance purposes and, thus, she parked there. Concerning the tactic of effectiveness, Judge Caprio and Frida try to be cooperative in this stage to communicate what they mean clearly and sincerely in most of their utterances. Judge Caprio appears to be very accurate in presenting certain terms in this court context as when he corrects the term "plaque" using "handicap" to refer to the handicap parking sign. Also, Frida appears to be truthful by her

honest confession. However, Frida flouts the manner maxim in (2) saying "I'm guilty" without clarifying that she is guilty of what and she also flouts this maxim in (7) saying "plaque" which is not the exact word of what she wants to say.

Extract No. 2

- Frida: (1) I ran into DCYF and when I came out I had a ticket, and I had just left here.
- Judge Caprio: (2) Now, DCYF is the Department of Children, Youth, and Families.  
(3) What were you doing there?
- Frida: (4) I'm a foster mother.
- Judge Caprio: (5) Are you?
- Frida: (6) But I'm not doing it, not right now. (7) I took a break from it.
- Judge Caprio: (8) Okay, but you did have foster children?
- Frida: (9) Yeah. (10) I took a break from it. (11) But I'm guilty of the ticket. (12) I got the ticket. (13) I'm not going to take myself out of a ticket when I know God is looking at me. (14) He sees everything and he said he wants us to speak in the spirit and the truth. (15) So I am here to speak the truth.
- Judge Caprio: (16) So you're guilty? (17) You're guilty of the parking ticket?
- Frida: (18) I'm guilty of the parking.
- Judge Caprio: (19) While you're here, do you want to confess to anything else?  
(20) Are you guilty of anything else?
- Frida: (Laughter) (21) No I just want to confess to the ticket.

Following the tactic of felicitousness, Frida uses the representative speech act of reporting in (1) to recount what happened. Judge Caprio, in response, finds it good to further clarify the meaning of the acronym "DCYF" by stating its meaning as "the Department of Children, Youth, and Families" in (2). Then, Judge Caprio makes use of the testing procedure which boils down to the directive speech act of asking in (3), (5), and (8) to motivate more informative reactions from Frida. Thus, in (4), (6), and (7), Frida, answers with the representative speech act of stating that she is a foster mother and she takes a break from it. In (9), the representative speech act of affirming is used and then the representative speech act of admitting is performed in (10-15) to assert her previously stated claims that she is a foster mother, she takes a break, and that she is guilty. She asserts committing the guilt of her traffic violation because she believes that God is looking at her, sees everything, and wants her to speak in spirit and truth. As a defendant in this court context, Frida is in a subordinate position in which authority is handed down by Judge Caprio who is the powerful interlocutor in this legal setting. Thus, once more, the directive speech act of asking is performed again by Judge Caprio in (16), (17), (19), and (20) to be sure that Frida admits her guilt and if she has other quilts that she wants to admit. His asking results in the representative speech act of admitting in (18) and asserting in (21) to emphasize that she is guilty of the parking and she wants to admit this quilt only. The tactic of effectiveness takes place in this extract in the sense that Judge Caprio and Frida are aware of being cooperative where Judge Caprio is required to ask some questions and Frida is demanded to answer these questions truthfully and without speculating to be responsive in most of their utterances in this dialogic exchange. Nevertheless, Frida flouts the manner maxim in (1) by being ambiguous as she pronounces the acronym "DCYF" without referring to its

meaning as she assumes it as something known to Judge Caprio. Within the same utterance, Frida flouts RM by referring to this department to indirectly tell Judge Caprio that she is a foster mother. Concerning the tactic of appropriateness, the strategy of noticing H's interests is noticed in (3), (5), and (8) by Judge Caprio to ask Frida what she was doing in DCYF and whether she has foster children. The strategy of using in-group identity markers is also beneficial for Frida as it enables her to claim common ground with Judge Caprio by the use of the acronym "DCYF" in (1). Seeking agreement is also manifested in (5) and (8) by Judge Caprio. Presupposing common ground is used by Frida in (1) and (15) using the deictic expression "here" which denotes proximal demonstrations. The same strategy is exploited by Judge Caprio using "there" in (3) and "here" in (15) to denote distal and proximal demonstrations respectively. The strategy of giving reasons is also observed by Frida in (13-15) to give reasons as to why he admits her guilt to assume reflexivity and cooperation. In terms of the tactic of avoidance of imposition, the strategy of hedging is used by Frida in (1) using "just" to trim down any possible imposition in her speech. As for the tactic of maximal options for deniability, the strategy of hints is also observed in (19) and (20) when Judge Caprio asks Frida if she is guilty of anything else to create a sense of humor and to raise the issue that she seems as if she has a sacrament of penance in a church to confess her guilt.

#### Extract No. 3

Judge Caprio: (1) Well, anyone that is a foster parent that helps youngsters who are homeless is a very special person. (2) So I'm going to reward you for that. (3) I give you a break on the parking ticket.

Frida: (4) Oh, thank you (5) I better keep on being a foster parent. (Chuckles).

Judge Caprio: (6) Good luck.

In this extract, starting with the tactic of felicitousness, the expressive speech act of praising is performed by Judge Caprio in (1) to praise the good qualities of foster parents who help youngsters who are homeless. Then, the declarative speech act of declaring the verdict is employed in (2) and (3). As a response, Frida exploits the expressive speech act of thanking in (4) and the representative speech act of stating in (5). To terminate this trial, the expressive speech act of well-wishing is used by Judge Caprio in (6).

### Results and Discussion

Based on the analysis of the twenty traffic trials, six types of pragmatic tactics are observed in the communicative contexts of the traffic trials (Adelswärd, 1989; Marco & Arguedas, 2021). These pragmatic tactics and their pragmatic strategies can be tabled as below.

Table 1  
Frequency of the pragmatic tactics in the traffic trials

No.	Pragmatic Tactics	Frequency	Percentage
1	Felicitousness	1014	48.36
2	Effectiveness	729	34.76

3	Maximum Efficiency	9	0.43
4	Appropriateness	262	12.49
5	Avoidance of Imposition	58	2.77
6	Maximal Options for Deniability	25	1.19
Total Number		2097	100

Table 2  
Frequency of the pragmatic strategies in the traffic trials

No.	Pragmatic Strategies		Frequency	Percentage
1	Speech Acts	Representatives	512	24.41
		Directives	226	10.78
		Commissives	28	1.34
		Expressives	205	9.78
		Declaratives	43	2.05
2	Conversational Maxims	Observance of Conversational Maxims	517	24.65
		Non-Observance of Conversational Maxims	212	10.11
		Bald On-Record Politeness	9	0.43
3	Politeness Strategies	On-Record Positive Politeness	262	12.49
		On-Record Negative Politeness	58	2.77
		Off-Record Politeness	25	1.19
Total Number			2097	100

It is interesting to note that the statistical analysis demonstrates that there are six types of pragmatic tactics used by Judge Caprio and the American defendants in the context of the traffic trials. The six types of pragmatic tactics are felicitousness, effectiveness, maximum efficiency, appropriateness, avoidance of imposition, and maximal options for deniability. Concerning the tactic of felicitousness, the analysis shows that it has the highest percentage of occurrence that counts as (48.36%) and this tactic refers to the socially and culturally appropriate language use of effective communication by both Judge Caprio and the American defendants. Then, the tactic of effectiveness is ranked as the second frequent one and it is used with a percentage of (34.76%). Such use of this tactic is attributed to the fact that Judge Caprio and the American defendants try to make their conversational contribution as it is required ([Angermeyer, 2021](#); [Boulal et al., 2011](#)).

Another frequent use comes from the occurrence of the tactic of appropriateness with the percentage of (12.49%) to express solidarity, familiarity, and in-group membership. This frequency of the tactic of appropriateness is followed by the tactic of avoidance of imposition which is used with the percentage of (2.77%) to show deference and formality. Then, the tactic of maximal options for deniability counts as (1.19) which is used as an attempt to avoid any kind of conflict. Finally, the tactic of maximum efficiency counts as (0.43) which is used in certain situations where the face threat to the hearer is very low. To pragmatically realize these tactics, certain pragmatic strategies are used including speech acts, conversational maxims, and politeness strategies. Speech acts of representatives, directives, commissives, expressive, and declarative are used to satisfy the tactic

of felicitousness. Representatives have the highest occurrence with a percentage of (24.41). Then, directives count as (10.78), expressive receive the percentages of (9.78), declarative score (2.05), and finally, commissives count as (1.34). The use of such speech acts refers to the employment of the tactic of felicitousness which indicates Judge Caprio and the defendants' ability to determine whether a speech act set is used or not and which set of speech act is appropriately selected for use. Thus, such use of speech acts refers to the interlocutors' skill at selecting appropriate linguistic forms following the context. Some speech acts are used by the defendants to narrate their story which starts from the moment of breaking the traffic law. Observance of conversational maxims receives the frequency of (24.65) because they form a set of maxims that are used as guides by both Judge Caprio and the defendants for the interpretation of any particular utterance in any particular context, while non-observance of conversational maxims counts as (10.11) to effectively guide the court interaction by conveying additional meanings. Strategies of on-record positive politeness have the occurrence of (12.49) as they are geared to satisfy the hearer's positive face and to achieve solidarity and empathy. Strategies of on-record negative politeness score the percentage of (2.77) to indicate distance and formality. Strategies of off-record politeness count as (1.19) and they imply indirect language that is used to mitigate any possible threats. Finally strategies of bald on-record politeness that score (0.43) where their uses indicate the open admission of the use of face-threatening acts by Judge Caprio as an authoritative figure and the asymmetrical use of language by Judge Caprio as he is the chief judge of the traffic trials. Such occurrence of politeness strategies indicates that Judge Caprio and the defendants fend off and redress any possible risks to the hearer's face.

## **Conclusion**

On the grounds of the findings arrived at by the pragmatic and statistical analyses of the data under investigation, several conclusions are presented. First, traffic trials incorporate a combination of six tactics which are felicitousness, effectiveness, maximum efficiency, appropriateness, avoidance of imposition, and maximal options for deniability. These tactics represent the general system of pragmatic interaction in the context of traffic trials. These tactics are extended over the whole communication. Second, these tactics are pragmatically achieved using some pragmatic strategies so that the tactic of felicitousness is executed using pragmatic strategies, the tactic of effectiveness is achieved in the use of conversational maxims, and the tactics of appropriateness, avoidance of imposition, and maximal options for deniability are realized in the employment of politeness strategies including bald on-record politeness, on-record positive politeness, on-record negative politeness, and off-record politeness respectively. Third, the tactics of felicitousness and effectiveness are the most frequent in the context of traffic trials because these tactics along with their strategies are more helpful in performing the communicative task than any other tactics and strategies. These two tactics lead to felicitous and effective communication by which different meanings are conveyed by Judge Caprio and the American defendants. Fourth, the six pragmatic tactics used in the traffic trials have particular interactional and social functions as they facilitate the interaction, manage the dialogic exchange, and monitor the degree to which utterances indicate formality, respect, and solidarity.

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