



Interlanguage Pragmatics: A Compendium of Theory and Practice

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Abstract

Interlanguage pragmatics (ILP), the application of pragmatics in second language acquisition (SLA), gained research momentum in the 1990s following the recognition of functional and pragmatic aspects of language as essential to the process of language acquisition in models of communicative competence. From a 'pragmatics' standpoint, language is object to manipulation by language users, hence their pivotal stance in the study of language; however, the relativity and indeterminateness inherent in the study of human beings has rendered attempts at putting forth a cure-all for ILP development ineffectual. Accordingly, the instruction and assessment of pragmatic knowledge is among the most contentious areas of investigation in SLA research. The present study provides a coherent review of pragmatics and ILP theory and research. More specifically, it sketches the theoretical underpinnings of ILP, discusses its stance in models of communicative competence, and provides a synopsis of instructional and assessment approaches featuring in mainstream ILP research.

Keywords: communicative competence, instructional pragmatics, interlanguage pragmatics (ILP), pragmatics, speech act

AN INTRODUCTION TO PRAGMATICS

Delimiting the scope of pragmatics is a daunting task, and as van Dijk (2009, p. 13) puts it, pragmatics is "hardly a well-integrated field of research;" however, it is possible to distinguish between a narrow and a broad conceptualization of pragmatics in the existing research literature, each reflecting a particular theoretical orientation. The narrow sense views 'pragmatics' as a *component* of linguistics on the same level as syntax and phonology, while the broad sense subsumes under it all issues underlying social and cultural aspects of language in use, conceptualizing it as a *perspective* transferrable to such domains as syntax and phonology (Mey, 1993). Yule (1996) adheres to the former standpoint, proposing that pragmatics is the study of speaker's intended and implied meaning, contextual meaning, and the expression of one's distance with their interlocutor. Crystal (1997, p. 301), too, defines pragmatics as "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.” On the other hand, Verschueren (cited in Locher & Graham, 2010, p. 1) advocates the more inclusive conceptualization of pragmatics as:

[a] general functional perspective on (any aspect of) language, i.e. as an approach to language which takes into account the full complexity of its cognitive, social, and cultural (i.e. meaningful) functioning in the lives of human beings.

Likewise adhering to the ‘perspective’ standpoint, Thomas (1995, p. 23) defines pragmatics as “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.” This distinction between the narrow and broad conceptualizations of pragmatics is reflected in Verschueren (1999), though under the rubrics ‘micropragmatics’ and ‘macropragmatics’ respectively, subsuming under the former such issues as performativity and systematic pragmatically-implicated properties of language, and under the latter discourse, culture, ideology, and intercultural communication. There is yet a third view advocating the integration of the narrow and broad definitions of pragmatics, positing:

a pragmatic component, understood as the set of whatever pragmatic functions can be assigned to language, along with a pragmatic perspective, i.e., the way these functions operate within the single units of the language system and of language use, respectively (Mey, 1993, p. 47).

The narrow and broad senses of pragmatics converge on the idea of pragmatics as going beyond a view of language as a system of codes to a concern with language use as linguistic (inter)action (Ariel, 2010). The concept of ‘linguistic action’ at the heart of pragmatics can be traced back to the second half of the 20th century in Austin’s (1962) *speech act theory* and Grice’s (1975) *cooperative principle* (CP), both of which define language from the point of view of its users. Austin’s *performative hypothesis* nested the assumption that when using language, people also perform actions. Along the same lines, Grice’s CP viewed conversational interaction as the premise of interlocutors’ cooperation to achieve intended meanings. CP attributes to language much more than a system of context-independent codes. No less influential was the concept of ‘face’ proposed by Goffman (1967) constituting the essence of Brown and Levinson’s (1987, p. 5) politeness theory. Goffman capitalizes on the ‘doing’ aspect of language use in defining his concept of face:

[...] the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact. Face is an image of self-delineated in terms of approved social attributes – albeit an image that others may share, as when a person makes a good showing for his profession or religion by making a good showing for himself.

It was under these influences that the interpretation of language as a static system of codes gave way to the more inclusive view of it as a dynamic and (inter)action-related enterprise. Research into pragmatics has traditionally mainly rested on its narrow conceptualization, addressing such pragmatic areas as deixis, reference and inference, presupposition, implicit meaning and conversational implicature, conversational structure, speech acts, and (im)politeness (Verschueren, 1999; Yule, 1996). With its origin in the philosophy of language, pragmatics found its way to the field of second language acquisition in the 1980s, and has gained recognition as an utterly significant and vibrant area of SLA research since then.

PRAGMATIC COMPETENCE AS AN ASPECT OF COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE

Pragmatic competence has been assigned a special place in models of communicative competence since the 1980s, though not always under the rubric 'pragmatic competence.' 'Sociolinguistic competence' was first spelled out in Canale and Swain's (1980) model of communicative competence as sociocultural and discursal knowledge. The concept was broadened in Canale's (1983) expanded model as knowledge of sociocultural rules and pragmatics in terms of appropriateness of form and meaning, and other factors involved in the creation of social meaning. Canale reserved the same label, but excluded discursal competence. It was Bachman (1990) who first used the term 'pragmatic competence' in his conceptualization of linguistic competence, subsuming under it illocutionary and sociolinguistic competencies. This acumen, he posited in his model, should be developed alongside grammatical competence in order for linguistic competence to be duly effected. He viewed pragmatics as "concerned with the relationships between utterances and the acts or functions that speakers (or writers) intend to perform through these utterances" (Bachman, 1990, p. 89). Along the same lines, Bachman and Palmer's (1996) model of communicative competence, though offering some amendments to Bachman's (1990), retained 'pragmatic knowledge' with its functional and sociolinguistic components intact. Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei, and Thurrell (1995), however, included in their model 'actional competence,' alongside sociocultural, linguistic, discourse, and strategic competencies, to signify the ability to use speech acts.

As a more recent model of communicative competence, Celce-Murcia's (2007) stands out in its concern with various aspects of pragmatic competence. In an attempt to improve the 1995 model, Celce-Murcia put forth 'actional competence,' i.e. the ability to produce and comprehend speech acts, as just one component of a more general acumen termed 'interactional competence.' She postulated that successful communication entails, on top of 'linguistic competence,' 'discourse competence,' 'sociocultural competence,' 'formulaic competence,' 'interactional competence,' and 'strategic competence,' all of which bear on successful pragmatic performance in the target language. Celce-Murcia further posited three main knowledge areas involved in successful interactional performance:

1. Actional competence (i.e. skill in the use of speech acts)
2. Conversational competence (i.e. skill in managing conversations)

3. Nonverbal/paralinguistic competence (i.e. skill in the use and comprehension of kinesics, proxemics, and non-linguistic utterances)

Investigating the just-mentioned models from a chronological perspective, one can realize an increasing concern with various aspects of pragmatic competence, explaining the bulk of research addressing this aspect of communicative ability. Since the recognition of 'pragmatic competence' as a key aspect of communicative competence, multitudinous efforts have been expended to delineate its nature. The general understanding is that being pragmatically competent in language use is on a par with being adept at using language in a socially, culturally, and conventionally appropriate way. Celce-Murcia and Olshtain (2000, p. 20) state that "...pragmatic competence relies very heavily on conventional, culturally appropriate, and socially acceptable ways of interacting. These rules of appropriacy result in regular and expected behaviors in language use." Along the same lines, Watts (2003) maintains that pragmatic competence invokes upon knowledge and skill in terms of not only the four conversational maxims of quantity, quality, relevance, and manner, but also the rules of politeness, however the latter may be defined.

Leech (1983) posited two 'intersecting domains' to pragmatic competence: 'pragmalinguistics' and 'sociopragmatics.' Pragmalinguistics capitalizes on the intersection of pragmatics and formal conventions, while sociopragmatics deals with the intersection of pragmatics and sociocultural conventions. Kasper and Roever's (2005) definition offers illustrative details:

Sociopragmatic competence encompasses knowledge of the relationships between communicative action and power, social distance, and the imposition associated with a past or future event (Brown & Levinson, 1987), [and] knowledge of mutual rights and obligations, taboos, and conventional practices (Thomas, 1983)... [but] pragmalinguistic competence comprises the knowledge and ability for use of conventions of means (such as the strategies for realizing speech acts) and conventions of form (such as the linguistic forms implementing speech act strategies; Clark, 1979; Thomas, 1983). (pp. 317-318)

It is worth noting that pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic competencies are inextricably interrelated in the sense that both are necessary for successful communication.

INTERLANGUAGE PRAGMATICS (ILP)

Interlanguage pragmatics has been defined as "the study of nonnative speaker's use and acquisition of linguistic action patterns in a second language" (Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993, p. 3). Elaborating on interlanguage pragmatics and potential influences on its development, Cohen (2010) states that in order to perform well pragmatically, L2 learners need to gain a working knowledge of the target community's social and cultural norms (i.e. sociopragmatic knowledge) along with their associated linguistic conventions (pragmalinguistic knowledge). He equates 'pragmatic ability' with pragmatic knowledge and use with regard to both perception and production. This

ability, he assumes, is contingent upon the users' proficiency, age, gender, occupation, social status, and experience with native and proficient nonnative L2 speakers, as well as their multicultural/multilingual experiences. In a similar vein, Kasper and Roever (2005) maintain that the acquisition of second language pragmatics can be a considerable challenge to foreign and second language learners since it involves learning "not only how to do things with target language words but also how communicative actions and the 'words' that implement them are both responsive to and shape situations, activities, and social relationships" (p. 317).

Interlanguage pragmatics has attracted the attention of many a researcher in the field of applied linguistics since the 1980s in line with the postulation of sociocultural competence in models of communicative competence. The conspicuous upturn of interlanguage pragmatics research can be said to be mainly due to the realization in the research literature that a high level of grammatical proficiency does not necessarily guarantee a high level of pragmatic proficiency (Halenko & Jones, 2011; Kasper & Rose, 2002a). According to Bardovi-Harlig (2001):

Even grammatically advanced learners show differences from target-like pragmatic norms. That is to say, a learner of high grammatical proficiency will not necessarily possess concomitant pragmatic competence ... Advanced NNSs are neither uniformly successful, nor uniformly unsuccessful, pragmatically; however, they are more likely to be less successful as a group than NSs on the same task where contextualized reaction data are available (as in the case of authentic conversations and institutional talk). (p. 14)

This potential discrepancy between L2 learners' grammatical competence and pragmatic competence explains why more than three decades of research has been dedicated to investigating the microgenesis and acquisition of various aspects of second language pragmatics, viz. speech acts, conversational implicature, and interactional routines such as hedges, gambits, discourse strategies, and interactional markers (Takimoto, 2007; Yamashita, 2008), though speech acts obviously stand out in such research. Offering a broader conceptualization of L2 pragmatic proficiency, Roever (2011) proposes as one of its main components the "ability to produce extended monologic and dialogic discourse" (p. 463). Table 1 shows Roever's (2011) postulated components of L2 pragmatic competence.

Table 1. Components of L2 pragmatic ability with sub-constructs (Roever, 2011, p. 473)

Monologic: extended monolog	Dialogic: Participation in interaction	Routine formulae	Implicature
Production & recognition of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speech styles • Contextualization cues • Discourse structure 	Production & recognition of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speech styles • Contextualization cues • Sequence organization: pre-sequences, core sequences, post-sequences • Openings and closings • Repair • Response to first-pair parts • Effect on interlocutor 	Production and recognition of routine formulae	Comprehension of implicature

Theories underlying interlanguage pragmatic development

Since the 1980s, an enormous bulk of research has aimed at delineating L2 pragmatic development and its underlying processes, and in so doing has borrowed heavily from theoretical pragmatics, viz. speech act theory, Gricean pragmatics, and conceptualizations of politeness. These theories explain the objects of ILP research, rather than ILP development (Kasper & Roever, 2005). On the other hand, positing a definitive allegiance between developmental pragmatics research and SLA theory is as of yet enigmatic, and as Kasper and Rose (2002b) cogently point out, attempts at theorizing ILP development have been mainly a posteriori, following a research-then-theory approach. In other words, research findings have been mostly justified by making reference to prevailing first and second language acquisition theories. More recently, however, developmental pragmatics with major SLA theories as its springboard is growing in scope (see Taguchi, 2011). Kasper and Rose (2002b) discuss two groups of theories for explaining ILP development, which Tello Rueda (2004) terms 'individual-psychological' and 'social practice' theories. Kasper and Rose (2002b) subsume Schumann's (1978) 'acculturation model,' Schmidt's (1993) 'noticing hypothesis' and Bialystok's (1994) 'two-dimensional model of L2 development' under the former, and 'sociocultural theory,' and 'language socialization' under the latter. Taguchi (2011) draws upon 'input processing theory' and 'skill-acquisition theories' (more specifically, 'ACT (Active Control of Thought) model' as two cognitive processing theories underlying ILP development. Along the same line, Tello Rueda (2004) adds Swain's (1985) 'output hypothesis' and Long's (1996) 'interaction hypothesis' to the cognitive processing category, though these two hypotheses can be assigned a social aspect as well. Table 2 presents the main tenet of each of these theories, approaches and models based on Mitchell and Myles (2004) and Ellis (2008).

These models and theories have contributed to theoretical explanations of ILP development to varying extents. As with the acculturation model, Schmidt's (1993) case study showed acculturation to be a predictor of discourse-pragmatic development. Nevertheless, due to its being static and individual, acculturation does not constitute a strong theoretical foundation of ILP development (Tello Rueda, 2004).

On the other hand, cognitive processing theories, though failing to appreciate language learning as a social venture, have lent explanatory ILP development many of its concepts. Schmidt's (1993) noticing hypothesis has led to the emergence of such notions as 'pragmatic noticing' (i.e. noticing the occurrence of a speech act in a speech situation), and 'pragmatic understanding' (i.e. relating the formal properties of the noticed instance to social context variables) (Kasper & Roever, 2005; Kasper & Rose, 2002b). Bialystok's two-dimensional model encompasses propositions as to different ILP development processes in children and adults. Bialystok (cited in Tello Rueda, 2004) stated that in their endeavors to develop L2 pragmatic competence, children go through developing conceptual, formal, and symbolic representations, whereas adults skip the first stage, having their universal pragmatic conceptualizations in place. Accordingly, their main task is to develop processing control over this existing knowledge.

Table 2. Theories explaining ILP development

ILP development theories		Main tenet
Individual- psychological theories	<i>Acculturation model</i>	L2 learners' social-psychological proximity to speakers of the target language is a main determinant of acquisition success.
	<i>Cognitive processing theories</i>	Noticing hypothesis To become intake, relevant input features should be registered under attention (i.e. noticed), and related to relevant contextual features (i.e. understood).
		Bialystok's two-dimensional model Language acquisition involves the development of analytic representations of L2 knowledge and subsequently of processing control over existing forms.
		Output hypothesis Interlanguage development ensues from opportunities to produce output which allows L2 learners to notice gaps in their performance, formulate and test hypotheses about the target language, and engage in metalinguistic talk.
		Interaction hypothesis Meaning negotiation is facilitative of L2 acquisition in that it brings together learners' selective attention and processing capacity with relevant input features (e.g., negative evidence) and the linguistic environment.
		Input processing theory The process of language acquisition is mainly a function of sentence parsing strategies (e.g., preferring semantic processing over morphological processing) while making sense of input.
	Skills-acquisition theories Skill-related practice effects a progression from declarative knowledge characterized by controlled processing to procedural knowledge characterized by automatic processing.	
Social practice theories	<i>Sociocultural theory</i>	Language learning involves the internalization of linguistic knowledge, dialogically constituted in interaction adapted to the learner's zone of proximal development.
	<i>Language socialization</i>	Language learning involves being socialized to use the target language meaningfully through the very act of language use.

The implications of the output hypothesis, interaction model, and input processing theory for ILP development are yet to be fully sketched in interactive models; however, structured input, pushed output, as well as negative evidence and interaction-induced meaning negotiation have been referred to as "theoretical conditions for the learning of speech acts" (Martínez-Flor & Usó-Juan, 2010, p.9). Skill-acquisition theories, too, implicate in conceptualizations of the concept of 'pragmatic fluency' and its development. According to Taguchi (2011), developing pragmatic fluency, as a distinct

aspect of pragmatic competence, implies the development of processing control over one's pragmatic knowledge through repeated skill-related practice.

Social practice theories, on the other hand, can provide stronger explanatory venues; nevertheless, such "theories of second language learning have not yet [adequately] informed interventional studies" (Kasper & Roever, 2005, p. 324). Sociocultural theory has introduced the concepts of 'scaffolding' and 'guided participation' into mainly observational ILP research (Kasper & Rose, 2002b). In addition, the concept of 'pragmatic socialization' originates in the language socialization approach. Blum-Kulka (cited in Kasper & Rose, 2002b) defined pragmatic socialization as the process of being socialized to use language in accordance with culture-specific social rules underlying conversational interaction.

In sum, while cognitive processing theories prevail in ILP development research, the potential of social practice theories for L2 pragmatic development needs to be demonstrated in coherent research. Investigating the combined effect of social and cognitive (socio-cognitive) theories where possible would also be well worth the effort.

Interventionist interlanguage pragmatics research

Interlanguage pragmatic development research is comprised of two groups of studies: interventionist/explanatory studies, and non-interventionist/descriptive studies. The latter, more visibly characteristic of early ILP research, hinges on the impacts of a number of factors on L2 pragmatic performance and development including:

1. Individual learner variables: gender (e.g., Sum-hung Li, 2010); language learning motivation (e.g., Takahashi, 2005); pragmatic motivation (e.g., Tajeddin & Zand Moghadam, 2012); introversion/extroversion (e.g., Kuriscak, 2006); length of residence in the target culture (e.g., Félix-Brasdefer, 2004); etc.
2. Grammatical proficiency (e.g., Rose, 2000)
3. Pragmatic transfer (e.g., Takahashi & Beebe, 1993), and its interaction with grammatical proficiency (e.g., Takahashi, 1996)

On the other hand, interventionist ILP research, as a subset of instructed SLA research (Rose, 2005) is characterized by three main areas of investigation: (a) the teachability of pragmatics, (b) the efficacy of instruction vs. exposure, and (c) the effect of different instructional approaches. There is ample research evidence for the teachability of interlanguage pragmatics, and also for the clear benefits of instruction over mere exposure to pragmatic features in non-instructed settings (Rose, 2005; Taguchi, 2011). Regarding the second area of investigation, Bardovi-Harlig (2001) admits that input opportunities are necessary for L2 pragmatic development, but that even abundant input, in the absence of instruction, is likely to fail to effect target-like pragmatic competence. Likewise, Kasper and Rose (2002a) contend that due to their low perceptual saliency, sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic features of the input will not be duly attended to by language learners unless they are directed to them through implicit or explicit awareness-oriented instruction. This observation provides support

for Schmidt's (1993) noticing hypothesis, which underscores the necessity of bringing targeted L2 features into the learners' conscious attention. Upon the substantiation of the teachability of L2 pragmatic features and also the necessity of pragmatic instruction, the field of interlanguage pragmatics research witnessed a growing number of studies comparing the efficacy of various instructional approaches, targeting various aspects of L2 pragmatic ability.

Instructional approaches in ILP research

Based on Taguchi (2011), instructional approaches in interventionist ILP studies can be categorized into three groups on the basis of their theoretical foundation:

1. **Explicit vs. implicit instruction:** Studies in this category are theoretically founded in the main on Schmidt's (1993) noticing hypothesis, which in pragmatics terms, means that "speakers' attention to linguistic forms, functional meanings, and relevant contextual features is a necessary condition for pragmatics input to become intake" (Taguchi, 2011, p. 291). Within this framework, researchers have chiefly operationalized explicit instruction (e.g., Cohen & Ishihara, 2005; Edwards & Csizér, 2004; Silva, 2003; Tateyama, 2007; Yoshimi, 2001), implicit instruction (e.g., Fukuya & Zhang, 2002), or explicit and implicit instruction in comparative designs (e.g., Alcón, 2005; Martínez-Flor, 2006; Takahashi, 2001; Takimoto, 2006). Explicit or metapragmatic awareness raising instruction has been principally operationalized as the direct provision of metapragmatic information on the pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic aspects of targeted pragmatic features, aiming to raise learners' metapragmatic awareness. It has also incorporated one or more explicit metapragmatic awareness-raising tasks, including "dialogue/conversation analysis, discussions, role-plays, video viewing, narrative reconstruction, translation exercises, and self-reflection" (Takahashi, 2010, p. 399). It is also worth noting that explicit conditions have been realized the form of either deductive or inductive instruction (e.g., Rose & Ng Kwai-fun, 2001).

On the other hand, implicit instruction has involved practices aimed at enabling learners to infer linguistic rules and social norms underlying the use of certain pragmatic features intentionally embedded in the input and practice opportunities provided (Kasper & Rose, 2002c; Rose, 2005; Takahashi, 2010; Taguchi, 2011).

Explicit and implicit conditions can be structured along a continuum, rather than viewed as a dichotomy (e.g., Takahashi, 2001). In their meta-analyses of interventionist ILP research, Jeon and Kaya (2006) and Takahashi (2010) demonstrated that both types of instruction can be effective, but that explicit condition has generally led to superior performance in the targeted features.

2. **Processing instruction:** Anchored in VanPatten's (cited in Mitchell & Myles, 2004) input processing theory, the application of 'processing instruction' to ILP

development research is a rather recent phenomenon (e.g., Takimoto, 2007). In ILP research, processing instruction is characterized by the presentation of 'structured input' (through input flooding or interpretation tasks), which learners are required to comprehend and process in nonverbal or minimally verbal terms, such that pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic knowledge evolves whilst processing. Takimoto's (2007) findings as to the acquisitional significance of structured input have been promising. Structured-input conditions would be more or less explicit depending on the extent to which inductive or deductive presentation of metapragmatic information is woven into them.

3. Practice-based instruction: Studies in this category mainly predicate on skill-acquisition theories (e.g., Li, 2012). Interventions incorporate, as an essential procedure, extensive skill-related practice opportunities which can enhance learners' automatic processing of metapragmatic information provided at an earlier stage of instruction. As such, conditions in this category are mainly deductive explicit in nature.

Speech acts: The prime target of ILP research

Within the domain of SLA, Cohen and Ishihara (2005) trace the prevailing research interest in speech acts back to the notional-functional syllabi of the 1970s which placed a premium on the 'doing' aspect of language use. Several studies have investigated and put forth speech act realization strategies and the effect of various instructional treatments on the production and (fewer on the) comprehension of different speech acts. This predisposition can be attributed to the fact that appropriate performance of a speech act involves not only deciding on whether or not to perform it in the first place, given the peculiarities of the speech situation, but also performing it at an acceptable linguistic level and in accordance with the sociocultural norms of the target language. The point is well spelled out by Cohen (1996, p. 254) under the rubric "sociocultural knowledge:"

... a speaker's ability to determine whether it is acceptable to perform the speech act at all in the given situation and, if so, to select one or more semantic formulas that would be appropriate in the realization of the given speech act.

Taking a similar tack, Bardovi-Harlig (2001) stated that though "it is not the only way of viewing pragmatics, speech act research has been well represented in crosscultural and interlanguage pragmatics research, and provides a common analytic framework which facilitates comparison across studies" (p. 13). She further maintained that the sizeable research on speech acts is explicable in terms of the purported differences between native speakers and non-native speakers' production regarding four main facets of speech act behavior:

1. Choice of speech acts, e.g., whether or not to apologize in a speech situation;
2. Semantic formulas, e.g., whether to simply express regret or to offer an explanation as well while making an apology;

3. Specific content, e.g., how detailed one's explanation in a refusal is;
4. Form, e.g., whether or not one's complaint contains mitigators or aggravators;

A myriad of studies has targeted the acquisition of speech acts in ILP research, including requests (e.g., Alcón, 2005; Halenko & Jones, 2011; Takimoto, 2007;), apologies (e.g., Eslami-Rasekh & Mardani, 2010), refusals (e.g., Silva, 2003), compliments and compliment responses (e.g., Rose & Ng Kwai-fun, 2001), suggestions (e.g., Fernández-Guerra & Martínez-Flor, 2006; Martínez-Flor & Fukuya, 2005), and thanking (e.g., Ghobadi & Fahim, 2009; Tateyama, 2001).

Assessment of L2 pragmatic proficiency in ILP research

A consequential aspect of ILP research is the assessment of cross-cultural and interlanguage pragmatics. Several measures of L2 pragmatic ability, speech act production and comprehension ability included, have been referred to and compared in the existing literature: (a) discourse completion tasks (DCTs); (b) picture response tests (PRTs); (c) video response tests (VRTs); (d) verbal reports; (e) interviews and elicited conversations; (f) Diaries; and (g) observation of naturally-occurring speech (Ahn, 2005; Ellis, 2008; Félix-Brasdefer, 2010; Yamashita, 2008).

The tasks which figure most prominently in ILP studies are written discourse completion tests (WDCTs), in which respondents are presented with a written situational prompt developed with regard to Brown and Levinson's (1987) three social context variables of distance, power, and imposition, and asked to write down what they would say in the given situation. The predominance of WDCTs as speech act production measures originates in the late 1980's Cross-cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP), which capitalized on cross-culturally different realization strategies of the two speech acts of 'apology' and 'request' (Ahn, 2005; Roever, 2011). WDCTs' versatility lies mainly in the fact that they yield large amounts of valuable speech act data.

It needs to be admitted that WDCTs are not the best choice. As Félix-Brasdefer (2010) states, an important issue with WDCTs is just how much contextual information should be provided in the situational prompt, and whether or not to provide rejoinders, i.e. responses in subsequent turns. A further issue with DCTs in general and WDCTs in particular is that they measure pragmatic knowledge, rather than pragmatic competence, and this makes DCT's authenticity an irrelevant concern. It is no wonder, then, that several studies have either used more authentic measures than DCTs, such as role plays (e.g., Edwards & Csizér, 2004), storytelling tasks (e.g., Yoshimi, 2001), and email and phone activities (e.g., Martínez-Flor & Fukuya, 2005), or triangulated their DCT data with other measures in multi-method assessment approaches (e.g., Rose & Ng Kwai-fun, 2001; Takimoto, 2007). Assessment of L2 pragmatic competence has turned into a dynamic area of second language assessment research. There are now calls for broadening the scope of L2 pragmatics tests to assess other components of L2 pragmatic ability than only speech act production, viz. monologic and dialogic discourse

skills, the production and comprehension of routine formulae, and also the comprehension of implicatures (see Roever, 2011; Yamashita, 2008).

CONCLUSION

After a matter of two decades, interlanguage pragmatics seems to have secured itself a deserved position in SLA research. Attempts at lending ILP a firm theoretical stance have almost yielded the results early ILP researchers had called for; instructional practices have now been amply expanded and researched tantamount to theoretical paradigms specifically spelled out for ILP development; targets of such research, viz. aspects of pragmatic competence implicating in successful communication, have been clearly delineated; and the 'how' of assessing such targets has been well sketched; ILP researchers seem to have abstracted away from the haunting dilemma of implicit vs. explicit instruction of speech acts, and begun to step on two less tried out paths in ILP research:

1. invoking upon *discourse* in the broad sense of the word, and also *culture* as key to the understanding and delineation of pragmatics, manifest in the emergence of such discourse-grounded concepts as *anticipatory pragmatics* (Mey, 2012);
2. drawing on inter-disciplinary evidence implicating in pragmatic theory from fields as widely apart' as animal communication and experimental cognitive psychology (Bara, 2010), as evident, among others, in the postulation of such inter-disciplinary variants of pragmatics as *cognitive pragmatics*.

Given these pragmatics research turns, it seems to be high time for ILP researchers to address learner-related variables and learner-based instructional approaches (e.g., output-based instruction). Research can also address the implications of different cultures for complying with the target community's pragmatic norms in terms of speech act production or use of routine formulae.

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