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SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION 30

Series Editor: David Singleton, *Trinity College, Dublin, Ireland*

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Edited by

Eva Alcón Soler and Alicia Martínez-Flor

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Preface

AMY SNYDER OHTA

The field of applied linguistics has seen a great deal of change in the last 40 years. In the 1960s and 1970s the business of classroom language instruction was, by and large, teaching grammar. Even when focused on oral production, the emphasis was on producing complete sentences. And, the sentences that were put together in textbooks to serve as models often didn't make good pragmatic sense. I recall one audiolingual text writer stating that she was asked to write a textbook for a language she could hardly speak, Japanese, and one of the dialogues began with a Japanese person asking a Westerner, 'Do you like meat?' Needless to say, pragmatics was not yet on the radar. For foreign language learners worldwide, pragmatics was what students learned in-country if they were fortunate enough to travel or study abroad, or if they emigrated.

In my early days of teaching Japanese, I worked in a program where we used an old-fashioned audiolingual method textbook. Even at the time, in the late 1980s, the text was out of date. We tried to compensate for the poor textbook by making a lot of handouts, but these also focused on sentence-level concerns and nearly always neglected pragmatics. One of my students visited Japan, and when she returned she said 'Boy, they sure don't talk like we were taught in class'. Reflecting on my own experiences living in Japan, I realized that that was true. At the time, I felt that there was little I could do to change how Japanese was taught, but facing the gap between what I was teaching and what students needed to learn inspired me to do research in interlanguage pragmatics. That gap continues to inspire me today.

Fortunately, times have changed. These days, materials developers and textbook writers are informed by the field of interlanguage pragmatics, a subfield of applied linguistics that emerged from cross-cultural pragmatic studies. Moving beyond comparisons of how native and target cultural routines differ, the field of interlanguage pragmatics today grapples with a range of issues faced by language learners and those who teach and assess them. Some of the questions addressed relate to how pragmatics competence develops in classroom contexts, online communities or sojourns abroad. Other studies consider developmental issues and problems related to language transfer. Yet others investigate

methods of teaching and assessing pragmatics. Interlanguage pragmatics research has a wide variety of investigative tools at its disposal and draws on diverse theoretical approaches. This diversity continues to grow, enriching the field.

The present volume is devoted to consideration of developmental pragmatics – its learning, teaching and testing – in foreign language contexts. The work gathered reflects the diversity of the field and provides a view of how interlanguage pragmatics research has developed and is growing. The editors and chapter authors bring an impressive range of theoretical perspectives and investigative tools to this endeavor for application to questions related to development of pragmatics in foreign language settings.

Following an overview chapter authored by the editors, the volume has three sections. The first two sections focus on issues related to learning and teaching. The contexts considered include traditional classrooms, context-based instruction, computer- and internet-mediated learning opportunities, translation and interpretation, and teacher training. The third section focuses on how foreign language pragmatics can be assessed using a variety of approaches, including oral and written discourse completion tasks, roleplay, self-assessment, video prompting and conversation analysis.

Along with the diversity of contexts investigated throughout the volume, the chapters also draw upon a range of theoretical approaches: psycholinguistics, language socialization, conversation analysis and sociocultural theory. Data are presented from learners of such languages as Indonesian, German, Korean, Japanese, Spanish, Finnish, Iranian and English. Chapter authors are scholars with reputations for excellence in the field, including those whose early work formed the foundation of inquiry that continues today. I commend the editors for their leadership in the field. Their collaboration as editors has resulted in important forums for the production and dissemination of research. It is a pleasure to see the completion of this volume as it brings the best of the field together to focus on interlanguage pragmatics in foreign language contexts.

Introduction

Chapter 1

Pragmatics in Foreign Language Contexts

EVA ALCÓN SOLER and ALICIA MARTÍNEZ-FLOR

The study of pragmatics deals with areas such as deixis, conversational implicature, presupposition and conversational structure. However, the study of second language pragmatics, also referred to as interlanguage pragmatics (ILP), focuses mainly on the investigation of speech acts, conversational structure and conversational implicature. These research topics have been addressed by comparative and acquisitional studies. While comparative studies are close to research on cross-cultural pragmatics, those conducted from an acquisitional perspective address developmental issues that affect learners' acquisition of pragmatics. In addition, interlanguage pragmatic research has traditionally divided linguistic knowledge from social knowledge. Leech (1983) and Thomas (1983) account for this fact by dividing pragmatics into two components: pragmlinguistics and sociopragmatics. The former refers to the linguistic resources for conveying communicative acts and interpersonal meanings, whereas the latter refers to the social perceptions underlying participants' interpretation and performance of communicative acts. Hence, while dealing with pragmatics attention is paid to consider knowledge of the means to weaken or strengthen the force of an utterance (i.e. pragmlinguistic knowledge) and knowledge of the particular means that are likely to be most successful for a given situation (i.e. sociopragmatic knowledge).

In the field of language learning there has also been a tendency to consider Leech's (1983) and Thomas's (1983) division of pragmatics into pragmlinguistics and sociopragmatics, but one has to accept that this has resulted in an unbalanced focus on the pragmlinguistic component. To date, most of the studies in the field of ILP present a partial view of learners' use of the target language, as either the sociopragmatic component is not taken into account or, when it is considered, general descriptions of the situational context are provided. From this perspective, most research studies have analysed routines and pragmlinguistic realisations (see Kasper & Rose, 2002; Rose & Kasper, 2001). Several studies exist that concentrate on request realisations (Blum-Kulka, 1991; Hassall, 1997; Li, 2000; Rose, 2000, among others), refusals (Félix-Brasdefer, 2004), compliments (Rose & Ng Kwai-fun, 2001) and apologies