

## Issues in Acquisitional Pragmatics

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### ABSTRACT

This paper aims at a comprehensive review of the growing body of research in L2 pragmatic acquisition, including both theoretical discussions and empirical studies to date. To this end, the paper deals with a number of issues which are grouped into four broad categories: the essential constituents of pragmatic competence, models of pragmatic development, major processes of pragmatic competence, and various factors affecting pragmatic development. Throughout the paper, it is shown that cultural knowledge has central importance in pragmatic competence and that such knowledge can be acquired through language-mediated social interactions. Furthermore, a learner's unconditional adoption of a new set of cultural beliefs and values is unrealistic due to the unresolved conflict between L2 norms of speaking and the learner's needs and beliefs about the ways of being in the world. Given these perspectives, this paper points to the need for a holistic approach to L2 pragmatic development, taking into account both the intra-learner, psychological and the inter-learner, sociocultural aspects of learning. The paper concludes with the suggestion that L2 pragmatic competence be discussed in terms of intercultural competence involving the learner's continuous, identity and attitude formation, rather than the acquisition of prescribed behavioral rules of speaking.

### INTRODUCTION

As various models of communicative competence make apparent, communicating effectively and efficiently in any given language requires more than just linguistic knowledge. The ability to use this linguistic knowledge appropriately in the given sociocultural context is also essential. Hence, pragmatics is an indispensable aspect of language ability in order for second language (L2) learners to understand and be understood in their interactions with native speakers (NSs). Despite this logical connection, pragmatics has long been a neglected area in second language acquisition (SLA) research. This is ironical when one considers that pragmatics is firmly established as a critical research area in first language (L1) development. It is only recently that pragmatics has been recognized as a legitimate focus of inquiry in mainstream SLA research, and considerable progress in understanding the pragmatic aspects of language has been made. However, because most L2 pragmatic studies have been comparative or contrastive in nature,

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primarily looking at learners' language *use* rather than *development* (Kasper, 1996; Rose, 1997), much remains to be learned about the acquisitional processes of L2 pragmatics.

In response to this need for more research on acquisitional pragmatics, this paper attempts to: (a) provide an overview of what learners need to know to be pragmatically competent<sup>2</sup>, (b) review theoretical models of pragmatic development, (c) discuss the major processes of pragmatic competence, and (d) identify various factors that have been suggested to play a role in pragmatic development from stage to stage. As the research in the field is still at its nascent stage, it is hoped that, upon finishing this paper, the reader will have a better understanding of how L2 learners acquire pragmatic competence.

## WHAT DO LEARNERS HAVE TO ACQUIRE IN ORDER TO BE PRAGMATICALLY COMPETENT?

### The Ability to Perform Speech Acts

Numerous studies have recognized that the ability of learners to use appropriate speech acts in a given speech event and to select appropriate linguistic forms to realize this speech act is a major component of pragmatic competence. As early as 1979, Rintell asserted that "pragmatics is the study of speech acts", arguing that L2 learner pragmatic ability is reflected in how learners produce utterances to communicate "specific intentions," and conversely, how they interpret the intentions which these utterances convey (p. 98). Fraser (1983) also describes pragmatic competence as the knowledge of how an addressee determines what a speaker is saying and recognizes intended illocutionary force conveyed through subtle "attitudes" (p. 30) in the speaker's utterance. Among empirical studies of speech act behavior, Cohen (1996b) lists studies of the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization Project (CCSARP) as the most comprehensive studies, both in depth and breadth. These studies compared the speech act performance of NSs of different languages with that of learners of those languages (Blum-Kulka, House, & Kasper, 1989). One of the consistent findings in these studies is that, although the typology of speech acts appears to be universal, their conceptualization and verbalization can vary to a great extent across cultures and languages. In other words, L2 learners may have access to the same range of speech acts and realization strategies as do NSs (Fraser, Rintell, & Walters, 1980; Walters, 1979), but they can differ from NSs in the strategies that they *choose*. Therefore, it is clear that L2 learners must be aware of L2 sociocultural constraints on speech acts in order to be pragmatically competent.

On the most general level, the acceptable situational circumstances for a particular speech act are culturally relative. Examples abound. While Americans often use indirect complaints (complaints not directly about the addressee) as a solidarity strategy, Japanese learners of English tend to avoid this speech act because it is perceived to be face-threatening behavior and

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<sup>2</sup> There is great variation in the use of terms such as *competence*, *ability*, *knowledge*, *proficiency*, etc. among various studies of L2 pragmatics (see Rose, 1997, for discussion). The purpose of this section of the paper is not to propose a *model* of pragmatic competence consisting of clear-cut components such as in the field of language testing, but to shed light on various facets of pragmatic competence as a whole. Therefore, the issue of terminology is not a major concern here. However, in order to avoid as much confusion as possible, in this paper the term 'competence' is roughly conceived of as learners' "ability to use [the knowledge of X]", adopting Bachman and Palmer's (1996) framework, and as learners' 'ability to do X'.

problematical in their L1 (Boxer, 1993). In Alaska, Athabaskan Indians find Americans ridiculously garrulous because it is inappropriate to talk to strangers in Athabaskan culture. Silence is an acceptable type of conversation in Athabaskan culture, and people often sit quietly with each other without saying anything (Scollon & Scollon, 1995), whereas in American culture silence is uncomfortable once interlocutors have been introduced to each other. American learners of Indonesian may not understand why it is a compliment to mention someone's new sewing machine or shopping habits, unaware of the fact that in Indonesian culture such remarks imply approval of an addressee's accomplishments (Wolfson, 1981). And finally, learners of Arabic must know that in Egyptian culture, complimenting pregnant women, children, or others by saying they are attractive is believed to draw harmful attention from the Evil Eye, jeopardizing the safety of the addressee (Nelson, El Bakary, & Al Batal, 1996).

In addition to culturally acceptable mappings of speech events to speech acts at the macro-level, choosing appropriate pragmatic strategies is necessary for speech act ability. Wolfson (1981) noted a tendency among middle-class Americans to make their compliments original and less formulaic in order to convey sincerity, while Arabic speakers prefer proverbs and ritualized phrases. In a study of compliment responses performed by native speakers of Mandarin Chinese and of American English, Chen (1993) found an overwhelming preference for rejection of compliments by Chinese speakers as compared to Americans.

Learners also have to be aware of differences in the linguistic forms that an L1 and an L2 use in realizing pragmatic strategies. According to Schmidt and Richards (1980), Czech speakers may not identify the English modals *can* and *could* as indicating a request; Japanese speakers may not recognize the English conditional form *would* as carrying imperative force; and speakers of Spanish, Hebrew, Swahili, and Yiddish may perceive the construction *Let's* as ungrammatical. Some researchers have focused on specific semantic formulas or combination of formulas and found cross-cultural differences in: (a) preference for a particular semantic formula by Hebrew learners of English (Olshtain, 1983), (b) sequencing and frequency of semantic formulas by Japanese learners of English (Beebe, Takahashi, & Uliss-Weltz, 1990), and (c) choice of head semantic formulas by Korean learners of English (Murphy & Neu, 1996), and so on.

So far, what L2 learners must know for successful speech act performance has been presented in a "top-down processing" manner (Kasper, 1984, p. 3): learners first have to recognize the extra-linguistic, cultural constraints that operate in a NSs' choice of a particular speech act appropriate to the context. They also have to know how to realize this speech act at the linguistic level and in accordance with the L2 sociocultural norms. Cohen (1996a) terms this "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" (p. 254).

## **The Ability to Convey and Interpret Non-literal Meanings**

Simply put, pragmatics is the study of the relationship between linguistic forms and their *uses*, whereas semantics, which is closely related to pragmatics, is the study of the relationship between linguistic forms and their *referents*. Grice (1975) distinguishes between *sentence meaning* which refers to the propositional meaning of an utterance, and *speaker meaning* which refers to the indirectly conveyed meaning beyond the surface-level linguistic forms of an

utterance. From this perspective, pragmatic competence is concerned with the ability to bridge the gap between sentence meaning and speaker meaning in order to interpret the indirectly expressed communicative intention. The process by which interlocutors arrive at speaker meaning involves *inferencing*, which is guided by a set of rational and universal principles that all participants are expected to observe for successful communication, namely, *the Cooperative Principle*. According to Carrell (1984), “one aspect of pragmatic competence in an L2 is the ability to draw correct inferences” (p.1). Fraser (1983) also includes the ability to interpret figurative language as part of pragmatics because utterances that are overt and deliberate violations of the conversational maxims (e.g., *the future is now* as a violation of the maxim Quality, *I wasn't born yesterday* as a violation of Quantity) require the ability to recognize and interpret conversational implicature.

However, it must be kept in mind that while many researchers assume Grice's maxims to be universal, these maxims are not implemented and interpreted in the same way across cultures. Keenan (1976), for example, pointed out that Grice's first sub-maxim Quantity, *be informative*, (e.g., *She's either in the house or at the market*) is inappropriate in the Malagasy society of Madagascar. Due to a fear of committing oneself to an assertion, Malagasy norms of conversation regularly require speakers to provide less information than is required – even when a speaker has access to the necessary information.

Furthermore, even when the participants in a conversation share an understanding of maxims, the same utterance may result in an L2 learner drawing a different implicature from a NS because different cultural backgrounds engender different values and customs. For example, Bouton (1988, 1994b, 1996, 1999) found that there was a significant difference in the way NSs of English interpreted the same implicatures from the way seven ESL learner groups with different L1 backgrounds did; the learner groups differed both from the NSs and among themselves. Since the language proficiency of all the learners was essentially the same, Bouton attributed these differences to their different cultural backgrounds.

In addition, certain types of conversational inferences may be particularly difficult for L2 learners to understand. Carrell (1984) showed that it was easier for ESL learners to draw inferences from semantically positive predicates than for presuppositions. As the above-cited studies indicate, the ability to draw non-literal meaning is surely part of L2 pragmatic competence.

## **The Ability to Perform Politeness Functions**

Brown and Levinson (1992) posit universal principles for linguistic politeness based on a social rationale. As Leech (1983) and Thomas (1995) note, indirectness increases the degree of optionality and negotiability on the part of hearer and thereby reduces the imposition on the hearer. However, as a number of cross-cultural pragmatic studies on politeness point out, the application of this principle differs systematically across cultures and languages. Greek social norms, for example, require a much higher level of indirectness in social interaction than American ones, while Israeli norms generally allow even more directness than American ones (Blum-Kulka, 1982, 1987). Similarly, House and Kasper (1981) observed that German speakers generally selected more direct politeness than Americans when requesting and complaining. Wierzbicka (1985) found that some Polish requests use the imperative form as a mild directive when in English this might be considered rude. All these studies demonstrate that the ability to

choose the appropriate linguistic directness with reference to the L2 norm is crucial for pragmatic competence.

Politeness phenomena have been studied from multidimensional perspectives (Fraser, 1990). Among them, a number of studies indicate that social-indexing or social discernment – manifested by systematic linguistic variation along various social dimensions – is one of the universal principles for politeness. For example, power affects the level of directness of English requests used by Hebrew learners (Blum-Kulka, Danet, & Gerson, 1985), distance affects the level of directness (Ervin-Tripp, 1976) and the length of English requests by NSs (Wolfson, 1986) and French learners (Harlow, 1990), status affects the level of directness of various types of face-threatening acts by Japanese learners of English (Beebe & T. Takahashi, 1989a; Beebe et al., 1990), and age affects utterance length in thanking behavior by ESL learners (V. Cook, 1985), and so on.

Indeed, virtually all languages have forms of social-indexing (Hill, Ide, Ikuta, Kawasaki, & Ogino, 1986). However, the level of sensitivity to social factors when determining linguistic directness is clearly subject to cross-cultural variation. For example, in Japanese the use of polite expressions is more normative and prescriptive than in English. That is, in Japanese there exists a much stronger link between the relative social status of interlocutors and appropriateness of linguistic forms than in English because the choice of linguistic forms in Japanese inherently carries social information (Fukushima, 1990; Ide, 1989; Matsumoto, 1988, 1989). However, in contrast to Japanese, Yeung (1997) found that Chinese speakers' use of polite requests in English was only significantly influenced by the factor of imposition. Yeung suggests that this is due to L1 influence in that unlike Japanese or Korean where linguistic choice is strictly governed by the relative status of the interlocutors, Cantonese is not an honorific language.

Face-saving – the mutual monitoring of potential threats to interlocutor face and the devising of strategies to maintain face – is another notion of politeness posited as a universal phenomenon. From this perspective, politeness is conceptualized as strategic conflict avoidance. Once again, a concern that arises here for L2 learners is that the conceptualization of face varies across cultures. In other words, Brown and Levinson's (1992) notion of *positive* and *negative* face is not applicable to all cultures and languages. For example, in questioning Brown and Levinson's claim that Japanese culture is negative-politeness oriented, Matsumoto (1988) argues that what is characteristic of Japanese culture is its emphasis on acknowledging one's relative position in society and not the rule *not to impose on individual freedom of action*, thus making the Japanese concept of face “concern for social interrelationship” (p. 405).

Agreeing with Matsumoto, Mao (1994) proposes a new definition of face, “the relative face orientation,” consisting of two types of face – individual and social face (p. 471). For example, the Igbo of Nigeria have a dual notion of face: “individual face” which refers to one's own desires and “group face” which refers to one's need to observe socially prescribed ways of behavior (Nwoye, 1992, p. 326). In Greek society, the distinction between “in-group” and “out-group” has great importance. Since Greeks emphasize the in-group relationship, requests that might be face-threatening under the same circumstances in another culture imply no imposition in Greek culture at all – e.g., *I'm taking a cigarette. Whose are they?* (Sifianou, 1993, p. 71). Likewise, Ewe-speaking Africans use a genuine apology when someone has hurt himself/herself, whereas English speakers would use a sympathy expression. This is because of Ewe group-oriented culture; Ewe speakers believe that others' unhappiness is also their responsibility (Ameka, 1987). To summarize, Brown and Levinson's claim that there are universal principles of politeness does not seem to be valid. For instance, their notion of face is individualistic in

nature and therefore cannot be applied to non-Western cultures which emphasize group harmony rather than individual autonomy. Indeed, encoding and decoding politeness is achieved in culturally specific ways. Therefore, in developing pragmatic competence, learners have to become familiar with the cultural ethos associated with politeness as shared by members of the L2 community.

## The Ability to Perform Discourse Functions

Most of the time, achievement of communicative intent in naturally occurring conversation requires a number of turns at talk between two interlocutors. Accordingly, as Blum-Kulka (1997b) points out, “a full pragmatic account would need to consider the various linguistic and paralinguistic signals by which *both* participants encode and interpret each other’s utterances” (p. 49). Van Dijk (1981) also extends the notion of speech act to apply to a sequence of utterances constituting a stretch of discourse, that is, the “macro speech act” (p. 195). Kasper (2001a) notes that speech act performance is often *jointly* accomplished throughout the whole discourse through a sequencing of implicit illocutionary acts rather than any explicit expression of the communicative intent. For this reason, Celce-Murcia and Olshtain (2000) express the concern that learners need to be aware of discourse differences between their L1 and the L2 in order to acquire pragmatic competence. At the observable behavioral level, what should L2 learners acquire in order to communicate their intentions successfully in discourse? It seems that two types of discourse management ability are at work: (a) the ability to interpret and fill the discourse slot as L2 conversational norms dictate, and (b) the ability to recognize and produce discourse markers correctly in terms of their pragmatic functions.

First of all, some researchers focus on the ability to smoothly enter into and end discourse. Literature on conversational analysis has demonstrated that conversation closing is accomplished mostly in conventional ways. However, a neglected area in this discussion is that conventions clearly vary across cultures, and that this is a major source of pragmatic failure. Omar (1992, 1993), for example, found that advanced American learners of Kiswahili in Tanzania were well aware of the L2 norms for lengthy and elaborate conversation openings and closings. However, they were still unsuccessful due to their unwillingness to reopen a closing after goodbyes because the conventions of their L1 determine goodbyes as terminal exchanges. Edmondson, House, Kasper and Stemmer (1984) found that German speakers tended to use lengthy, content-oriented, non-ritualized expressions, whereas English speakers preferred routine formulas such as territory invasion signals (e.g. *Excuse me*), topic introducers (e.g., *There’s something I’d like to ask you*), extractors (e.g., *I really must go now*), and sum-ups (e.g., *Let’s leave it at that, then*). Thus, as Hartford and Bardovi-Harlig (1992) contend, “closings are culture specific, both in their obligatoriness and structure” (p. 93).

Other researchers look at adjacency pairs when investigating whether learners are able to respond to ritualized speech acts in a contextually appropriate manner. Kasper (1984) observed that an advanced learner failed to interpret the interlocutor’s inquiry about his well-being as an “opening-sequence [frame] specific [to] phatic talk” (p. 11). In Jaworski’s (1994) study, advanced Polish learners of English failed to perceive the formulaic nature of greetings, interpreting them as requests for information. House (1993) also found that German learners of English often did not recognize that questions asking about their recent situation were preparatory moves for inviting.

Yet, Ebsworth, Bodman and Carpenter (1996) report a different pattern: In responding to greetings, learners tend to adhere to ritualized routines and remain formal, lacking the repertoire of creative language use. According to these researchers, it is generally contended that greetings are purely phatic and only convey attitudes (e.g., sincere vs. insincere) rather than facts – thus only requiring a formulaic answer or sometimes no answer at all – but that in natural interactions, Americans often give an honest answer containing content to friends and acquaintances. Wolfson (1989) contends that whereas native English speakers show variation in their types of compliment-responses, perceiving compliments mainly as solidarity builders, Korean and Japanese learners tend to recognize compliments as formulaic conversation openers and respond with a simple *thank you* or even with silence.

In addition, learners also tend to transfer the illocutionary force or significance of pauses or silences from their L1 to the L2. This can be misleading in natural conversations with NSs of that L2 (Austin, 1998; Scollon & Scollon, 1995). As Celce-Murcia and Olshatin (2000) observe, “there are [cross-cultural] differences in the length of pauses that are ‘tolerable’ within the conversational flow (i.e., in one culture these may be extremely short and when conversation stops for any reason...in another culture pauses of some length may be expected, and perhaps even considered polite, in that they allow for reflection and avoid overlaps with other speakers)” (p. 173).

Secondly, the ability to use discourse markers appropriately also appears to be an important aspect of discourse pragmatics. Scarcella (1983) notes that even highly proficient learners have “discourse accents” which are manifested in their inappropriate use of discourse markers: Spanish learners of English used more consecutive pause fillers such as *you know* and *uhm* than NSs, assuming that these fillers were functioning to maintain their speaking turn as in their L1 (p. 306). However, the NSs sometimes interpreted these fillers as signals that the learners wished to relinquish their turns at talk. Kasper (1979) also found that German learners of English often produced contextually inappropriate gambits, e.g., using *yes* as a cajoling tag, *I think* as the firm statement of belief. Quite similarly, House (1993) observed that German learners of English misused the formula *As I told you*, directly translating this neutral L1 cohesive device into the L2 where it carries a rather aggressive and irritable tone.

Appropriate back-channeling behavior has also been discussed as part of pragmatic ability. Boxer (1993) observed that the overuse of back channels without a more substantive response by a Japanese learner of English discouraged rather than encouraged his counterpart’s continuation. Blanche (1987) observed different conceptualizations of back-channeling behavior between Japanese students and their American English teacher: The teacher continued the class not realizing until much later that the students’ nods coupled with vocalizations of *yes* at the right places were not signals of understanding, but simply expressions of attending. Berry (1994) also reports on inappropriate back-channeling behavior by Spanish learners of English caused by cross-culturally different turn-taking styles; these learners’ frequent interruptions and longer back channels to display their interest were actually interpreted by the NSs as lack of interest. In sum, conversational routines are often used on a habitual rather than a conscious-processing level (Wildner-Bassett, 1994). It should be noted, however, that for smooth day-to-day, face-to-face interactions these routines also carry cultural meanings, expressing cultural appropriateness and tacit agreements. Thus, the appropriate use of routines clearly plays an important role in L2 pragmatic ability.

## The Ability to Use Cultural Knowledge

The four aspects of pragmatic competence discussed so far considerably overlap with each other. In other words, they do not operate independently but interact with each other in complicated and yet systematic ways that govern learner linguistic behavior. More importantly, specific L2 culture-bound knowledge has been discussed as a deciding factor that underlies different aspects of pragmatic ability. This places culture at the heart of L2 pragmatic competence. Jiang's (2000) metaphor effectively captures the nature of language and culture as a whole: "communication is like transportation: language is the vehicle and culture is the traffic light" (p. 329). Considering that culture regulates all language use and that every conversational exchange between a learner and a NS of a language is a form of intercultural encounter (Richards & Sukwiwat, 1983), second language acquisition is indeed "second culture acquisition" (Robinson-Stuart & Nocon, 1996). Although some traditional pedagogies assume L2 culture learning to be a natural consequence of L2 language learning (as it is in L1 acquisition), others consider culture to be an outcome of conscious learning. It is simplistic, however, to state that culture is important and must be learned: Cultural beliefs are subconscious systems and, therefore, it is difficult to make them explicit.

The interdisciplinary nature of pragmatic competence calls forth a need to acquire pragmatic knowledge in a holistic context, encompassing all the discrete components of pragmatic ability, including discourse management ability and, most importantly, culture (Austin, 1998). In this context, Blum-Kulka (1990a) proposes a model of "general pragmatic knowledge (GP)" where an L2 learner's GP for a speech act is organized as schema containing the L2 linguistic forms used for the speech act (p. 255). This schema, in turn, is governed by a L2 "cultural filter" (p. 256) which decides the situational appropriateness of the L2 linguistic forms. Consonant with Blum-Kulka, Wildner-Bassett (1994) advocates a solid connection between culturally bound schema, a specific situation, and an utterance appropriate to that situation: If L2 learners acquire L2 cultural knowledge about archetypal structures of speech events, they will not only be able to better understand a given speech event in general, but effectively participate in that given speech event using appropriate speech acts.

In order to acquire L2 cultural knowledge, however, a more precise and conceivable description of L2 cultural rules of behavior is necessary. Responding to this call, Wierzbicka (1994) proposes the notion of "cultural script", a specific type of schema, in order for learners to understand "a society's ways of speaking" (p. 2). Cultural scripts capture characteristic L2 cultural beliefs and values, but avoid ethnocentric bias by using culture-independent terms (Goddard, 1997; Goddard & Wierzbicka, 1997). For instance, in a situation where an American's car brushed against a Japanese child who had run into the street, the American may not understand why his Japanese counterpart would be upset and expect an apology when the American was not at fault. This is because he has not yet learnt the Japanese cultural grammar *if something had happens to someone because I did something, I have to say something like this to this person: "I feel something bad"* (Wierzbicka, 1994, p. 5). According to Wierzbicka, Japanese culture is often mistakenly characterized by the tendency to apologize too frequently. However, the above cultural script accurately captures the Japanese norm that seeks harmony among the social members, without relying on the English speech act verb *apologize* which becomes a source of the stereotyping. As another example, Ranney (1992) observed that in medical consultation with L2 speakers, Hmong learners of English referred to their L1 cultural scripts for speech event discourse patterns, often causing misunderstandings during speech acts



such as asking questions, giving information, showing approval, or giving advice. Thus, acquiring accurate L2 cultural scripts can prevent pragmatic failure, as well as being a useful guide for acquiring L2 culture without potential stereotyping. While the other aspects of pragmatic competence discussed in previous sections are undoubtedly important, they can only be put to use if one has acquired the broader background of cultural knowledge.

## HOW IS PRAGMATIC COMPETENCE DEVELOPED?

SLA researchers have tended to take psycholinguistic orientations, and consequently, the voices that acknowledge the social dimensions of language use have often been unheard (Firth & Wagner, 1997). Since the early 1990s, however, research into L2 pragmatics has begun perceiving pragmatic development as sociocognitive in orientation (Kasper, 2001a), thus escaping from the prior exclusive focus on language learning as internal, cognitive processes of the individual learner. In response to the need to pay more attention to language acquisition as a social phenomenon, three theoretical models seeking a more holistic approach to L2 pragmatic development, taking both learner and sociocultural context into consideration, are presented in this section: Speech Accommodation Theory, Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development, and Language Socialization.

### Speech Accommodation Theory

Speech Accommodation Theory (SAT) seeks to explain the social-psychological mechanisms underlying certain shifts in a learner's speech style in social interaction (e.g., *convergence vs. divergence*) and some of the social consequences that result from this. One of the first theoretical discussions of the relevance of SAT to SLA was offered by Beebe and Giles (1984). They discuss learning as occurring when the learner converges toward the NS's speech in order to achieve certain communicative effects or gain social approval from the NS. These concepts of SAT have been adopted in a few interlanguage pragmatics studies. For example, Yuan (1996) analyzed compliment-responses used by Chinese learners of English and found that saliency and frequency of input was a major factor in accommodation: While the learners' pragmatic convergence did not occur all at once, salient (i.e., drastically different from the L1) and frequent semantic formulas were acquired first, and less salient and frequent ones were acquired at a later stage of development. In another study, Beebe and T. Takahashi (1989b) observed "psychological convergence" occurring when Japanese learners used bluntly direct linguistic forms when performing face-threatening speech acts (p. 214). These learners were attempting to converge towards a stereotypical norm of American speech behavior, but instead diverged from the NS.

Accommodative shifts toward L2 norms of speaking, however, are not always considered desirable by the learner, especially when it comes to pragmatic behavior that reflects their beliefs about who they are. In this respect, Giles and Byrne's (1982) Intergroup Theory (IT) of SAT offers a useful framework for understanding how such factors facilitate or impede NS proficiency in an L2. According to IT, a learner who perceives using an L2 as subtractive to his/her ethnic identity (i.e., ethnic betrayal) is not likely to achieve NS proficiency of the outgroup language and is likely to become proficient only in classroom aspects of the L2, such as

vocabulary and grammar. On the other hand, a learner who regards L2 learning as additive and who has integrative motivation and positive attitudes towards the outgroup culture is more likely to achieve NS proficiency not only in vocabulary and grammar but also in sociolinguistic mastery of the L2. Therefore, *maximal convergence*, Giles' (1979) term, is not achieved in many cases of adult pragmatic acquisition because adults tend to have two competing socio-psychological needs: the need to become proficient in the L2 versus the need to mark their own ethnic identity by preserving some of the L1 privilege features. Consequently, most adult learners develop a unique intercultural system to resolve this conflict. For example, Blum-Kulka (1990a) reported the persistence of interlanguage pragmatics in American immigrants in Israel who were grammatically highly proficient from their long-term residence in the L2 community. They showed some bicultural or intercultural styles which systematically differed from both the L1 and the L2 norms. Blum-Kulka further suggests that L2 learners often converge towards L2 pragmatic behavior by *choice* and to the level they consider to be desirable, determining their ultimate degree of cultural accommodation.

SAT is, however, is not without shortcomings when applied to pragmatic development. Most significantly, the active role of interlocutors in interactional dynamics tends to be overlooked, limiting SAT's claim to be able to explain acquisition in a social context. Also, a learner's convergence towards an appropriate L2 speech style in an observable form in an immediate context does not necessarily equate to acquisition of the sociocultural rule underlying the use of this linguistic form. It probably takes many years of exposure to the L2 input to notice recurrent use of the form in connection with a certain social context, and to formulate the fundamental cultural norm that extends the use of the acquired form to other contexts. The microanalytical tool of Conversational Analysis often employed in the SAT approach has little to say about learning for retention, especially when the possibility of learners' subconscious mimicking of the counterpart is raised. However, SAT surely has some explanatory potential for adding more information to the social psychological principles that underlie a learner's approximation towards the NS norms of speech style, and for contributing to expanding existing cognitive accounts of pragmatic development in multidisciplinary directions.

## Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development

In the Vygotskian view, learning takes place in the area of *the Zone of Proximal Development* (ZPD), that is, "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with peers" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). When the construct of the ZPD is applied to L2 learning, learning is viewed as occurring as the result of mediation in which a NS or more skilled peer acts as the "go-between" between the learner and the task at hand (Schinke-Llano, 1993, p. 124). In the early stages, the learner entirely depends on more skilled peers, who instruct the learner on what to do, what not to do, and how to do it. This *other-regulation* continues until the learner gains control over strategic mental processes, i.e., until *self-regulation*, through noticing saliencies and patterns of the immediate context (Vygotsky, 1981). Learning can be said to have taken place when the transition from other-regulation to self-regulation is accomplished through collaborative, dialogic activity (Lantolf & Appel, 1994).

There exist several studies that discuss pragmatic development within the framework of the ZPD. Shea (1994) demonstrated how a lack of opportunity to actively participate in interactions with NSs resulted in the failure of L2 speakers of English to overcome L1 communication styles. Despite the availability of adequate input from the NS interlocutor, learners were deprived of practice opportunities crucial for developing pragmatic fluency. This was because the learners lacked the appropriate knowledge of L1 discourse conventions, resulting in the NS devaluing the learners' competence and consequently excluding the learners from the conversation. Ohta (1997) examined how two learners of Japanese acquired the use of politeness strategies through teacher-learner interactions – the teacher-fronted *Initiation-Response-Follow-up* (IRF) routine – and learner-learner interactions, or role-plays. The learners practiced the appropriate L2 request forms with assistance but, over time, they needed less and less assistance until they finally completed the task successfully without aid. More interestingly, it was not only the weaker learner who benefited from this peer learning activity. Rather, both learners assisted each other to reach this higher level of proficiency together. Thus, in Ohta's study, her view of the ZPD is expanded beyond the original novice-expert interaction framework (Kasper, 2001a).

Antón (1999) reports the differential effects from classroom activities. She observed first-year university French and Italian classes throughout a semester and found that learner-centered discourse, not teacher-centered discourse, provided learners with opportunities for negotiation of classroom rules for behavior. When the learners were engaged in negotiation, language was scaffolded-assistance as the learners progressed in the ZPD. Hall (1998) also found differential effects from participation structure on the opportunity space for learning. In this study there were four learners of Spanish, two who were primary players and two who were supporting. Given that the primary players received more attention from the teacher and were given more rights to participate than the supporting players, differential participation opportunities may affect the development of interactional ability, even in the same teacher-learner interaction.

Both Ohta's (1997) and Hall's (1998) studies identify the teacher-fronted IRF routine as a meaningful context providing learners with the opportunity to practice through the teacher's scaffolding and, thus, promoting development. Acknowledging the usefulness of IRF, Ohta (2001) further points out that the third turn of follow-up is particularly important since teachers tend to provide input in this turn. Ohta examined how two adult learners of Japanese developed the ability to use the sentence-final particle *ne* as an alignment marker over an academic year. What Ohta found was that when a learner did not respond with an appropriate alignment expression, the teacher used a listener response to induce the learner to use the correct form. This, Ohta concluded, offered both direct participation for the learner being directly addressed and peripheral participation for the other learner. Towards the end of the observation period, both learners were showing a gradual development towards the spontaneous and productive use of alignment forms. As the above studies show, the Vygotskian sociocultural framework provides a valuable insight into how pragmatic competence develops in joint construction through collaborative verbal interaction.

## Language Socialization

Language socialization (LS) theory seeks to explain how a novice acquires language as a socially situated cultural form in the process of becoming a competent member of a community. In essence, LS proposes that children acquire sociocultural knowledge by participating in language-mediated daily interactions which transmit important sociocultural values to them (H. Cook, 1999). Socializing children through language takes place either *explicitly* or *implicitly* (Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986). Explicit LS occurs when caregivers overtly teach the appropriate behavior governing an immediate social interaction by providing metapragmatic information on the social norms shared by members of that society with regard to the speech act of event. Conversely, implicit LS means that children learn to be competent members of society by participating in daily routines and acquiring their regularities with no recourse to the overt metapragmatic instruction. Part of LS is learning “to use language meaningfully, appropriately, and effectively” (Ochs, 1996, p. 408), and, in this respect, LS has been actively embraced as an insightful perspective into pragmatic development in recent years (Kasper, 2001b).

Blum-Kulka (1990b) provides a good example of explicit LS in which middle-class American, Israeli, and American immigrant parents made metapragmatic comments to their bilingual children around the dinner table. While both the Israeli and the American parents socialized their children into becoming competent conversation partners in accordance with Gricean conversational norms, there were marked cross-cultural differences with respect to children’s face wants. American parents tended to pay more attention to children’s face wants, teaching rules for discourse management for appropriate turn-taking (e.g., *OK, let’s hear your day, Are you finished saying what you were saying? Can I start talking?*), whereas Israeli parents taught correct language use (e.g., *One should not say that and Say “please”*). Later, Blum-Kulka and Schefer (1993) and Blum-Kulka (1997a) demonstrated that such different styles of “pragmatic socialization” (Blum-Kulka, 1990b, p. 259) led to bi-directional transfer between the L1 and L2 in bilingual Hebrew-English children, thus creating a unique intercultural interactional style. Saville-Troike (1985) observed that an ESL teacher explicitly socialized her child learners by using verbal directives (e.g., *Don’t hit your friends*) that conveyed important cultural input about being a good student in elementary school. In DuFon’s (1999) study, adult learners of Indonesian received explicit metapragmatic instruction in asking permission when they wanted to leave their host family’s house.

There are more pragmatic studies on implicit than explicit LS, and these studies have tended to distinguish between two major areas: (a) expressing and recognizing affect, and (b) indexing social identities. In order to be socially competent members of the L2 group, learners must learn how to appropriately convey their feelings and recognize others’ feelings, since expressing affect by displaying sensitivity to the needs and feelings of others has a direct impact on social relationships, i.e., building rapport (Clancy, 1999). Working within this focus, several studies have looked at Japanese grammatical forms in which affect is linguistically encoded. Ohta (1999), for example, reports the power of classroom language (via the IRF routine) in socializing expressions of alignment (using sentence-final particles such as *ne* and *na*) through both active (teacher-fronted) and peripheral (learner-learner) participations in interactional routines. Her adult learner of Japanese showed a complete absence of such expressions early in the academic year. However, by the end of the year, she used the third turn of the IRF sequence for the same range of affective functions the teacher did (c.f., Ohta, 1997, 2001).

The indexing of social identities has been reported as another component of second language LS. As Ochs (1996) points out, “indexical knowledge is at the core of linguistic and cultural competence, and is the locus where language acquisition and socialization interface” (p. 414). In fact, indexical properties of LS in pragmatic acquisition have been evidenced mostly in language classrooms. Learners acquire the knowledge of how to get meaning across as they become socialized through experiencing a variety of roles in interactions in classroom with the guidance of the teacher. Poole (1992), for example, analyzed teacher-learner interactions in two beginning ESL classes at the tertiary level of education and found the teacher’s recurrent use of expert-novice convergence style included avoiding overt displays of asymmetry and down-playing the status differential between the teacher and learners. According to Kasper (2001b), this is typical of white middle-class American caregivers’ socialization style with their children or students and, therefore, the American positive perspective of egalitarianism was implicitly conveyed to these learners. In contrast, Falsgraf and Majors (cited in Kasper, 2001b) observed that teachers’ directives in Japanese immersion classes were significantly more direct than those in English medium classes, reflecting culturally determined values regarding teacher authority and status differentials between the teachers and learners. Indeed, as Poole notes, classroom discourse can be understood as largely societal in origin, and the teacher’s interactional style represents “the voice of a social role” (Poole, 1992, p. 611).

However, the indexical power of a form (e.g., *Let’s do it* for reducing status difference versus *Do it* for marking it) does not lie solely in the form itself. It also comes from the timing of occurrence of the form in interaction in relation to other forms, and from the subjective understanding of all these forms within the context of the activity being constituted. He (1997) demonstrates that Chinese- and Taiwanese-American children’s classroom identities were collaboratively constructed both with their teachers and peers through various classroom activities. More specifically, while learning language skills such as pronunciation and reading, these learners were simultaneously socialized into appropriate ways of speaking in accordance with their changing roles. And these different roles were determined by the teacher’s shifting speech style during the course of instruction. Also, in a longitudinal study, Kanagy (1999) examined how L2 learners of Japanese in an immersion classroom acquired the ability to initiate and respond to roles and spontaneously incorporate a routine into a novel situation, e.g., greeting, attendance, and personal introduction.

Among the various sociocultural contexts for LS is the workplace environment. Li (2000) traced the use of requests by a Chinese immigrant learner of English in her workplaces over a period of eighteen months. Although this learner initially relied on her L1-based rules of requesting such as avoidance, hinting, and elaborate and lengthy grounds, she was socialized into being a more competent member of the workplace community through sharing L2 request experiences with NSs and colleagues. By learning to be a more competent L2 requester (effectively using more direct requests), she also became a more competent employee and better adapted to her new environment. In sum, LS offers a particularly useful approach when researching the acquisition of L2 pragmatics because it incorporates the neglected dimension of the speech event as a determinant factor in assessing learners’ pragmatic performance. Furthermore, it links the microanalysis of learners’ discourse with a focus on spoken modes of language, e.g., genres, speech acts, turn-takings, and discourse topics, to a more general ethnographic account of the cultural beliefs and practices of the community into which a learner is being socialized.

## WHAT ARE THE PROCESSES OF PRAGMATIC COMPETENCE?

### Pragmatic Transfer

Interlanguage and cross-cultural pragmatics studies have provided ample evidence that L2 learners' L1 pragmatic knowledge significantly influences their comprehension and production of pragmatic performance in the L2 (Kasper, 1992). (Negative) pragmatic transfer has been well documented in a wide range of areas of speech acts. For example, learners seem to transfer L1 pragmatic strategies (Beebe et al., 1990; Blum-Kulka, 1982; Olshtain, 1983; Olshtain & Cohen, 1989; Phillips, 1993; Saito & Beecken, 1997). Learners also appear to transfer L1 linguistic means as a function of speech act realization, e.g., L1 apology semantic formulas (Olshtain & Cohen, 1989), L1 conventional forms for requesting (Blum-Kulka, 1982) and expressing gratitude (Eisenstein & Bodman, 1993), L1 modal verbs in requests (Færch & Kasper, 1989), and the frequency, order, and content of semantic formulas in refusals (Beebe et al., 1990). Furthermore, learners transfer the L1 norm of social-discernment in assessing one's relative social position (Beebe & T. Takahashi, 1989b; Beebe et al., 1990; T. Takahashi & Beebe, 1993). Finally, learners often show an inappropriate response to their NS interlocutors in discourse. House (1993) suggests that this can be a result of L1 schematic transfer, a problem stemming from a lack of the culture-specific pragmatic knowledge needed for a given situation rather than a lack of linguistic competence. For example, House observed that a German learner of English at a party responded to a native English speaker's suggestion *Should we go and get some cheese now?* with *Oh, no, no, no, I stay here*, interpreting it as a question indirectly asking the German if she wanted to discontinue the conversation, as it would have been in German.

Then, how does transfer occur? Apparently, a lack of linguistic resources is one of the reasons. Maeshiba, Yoshinaga, Kasper, and Ross (1996) found a negative correlation between the likelihood of transfer and the level of proficiency: Advanced learners were better than intermediate learners at identifying contexts where L1 apology strategies could or could not be used. S. Takahashi and DuFon (1989) also reported that their lower-level Japanese learners of ESL showed the L1 Japanese pattern of bimodal distribution of indirectness (e.g., L1 hinting strategies) in requesting, while all the higher-level learners used more direct requests, resembling the NSs.

Yet, others report contradicting findings. Ellis (1994) and Koike (1996) claim that pragmatic transfer requires that learners be able to analyze the components of complex speech acts, and that advanced learners sometimes make incorrect hypotheses about how L1 and L2 lexical and syntactic items correlate. However, both positive and negative linear correlations between grammatical and pragmatic ability should be interpreted with caution. T. Takahashi and Beebe (1987) propose a skewed bell curve for level of transfer against a horizontal axis of increased proficiency. They argue that the more proficient learners are, the more they have "the rope to hang themselves with" (p. 153), because they have the words to say what they want to say. However, transfer decreases as their proficiency becomes higher. In short, findings in the studies of the relationship between proficiency and transfer have been incompatible to date, and thus no solid pattern has yet been established. Before any conclusions are drawn, as S. Takahashi (1993) notes, we need to recognize that other factors may outweigh linguistic proficiency (e.g., learners' familiarity with the situational context) in determining the relationship.

A number of learner-internal psychological mechanisms have been identified as underlying the phenomena of transfer, among them, that the greater the similarity perceived by the learner between the L1 and L2, the greater the likelihood that transfer will occur (House & Kasper, 1987). For example, language-neutral (universal) vs. language-specific perceptions seem to play an important role in determining the transferability of an element under consideration (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989). In Olshtain's (1983) study, Russian learners of Hebrew who had a universal perception of occasions for apology provided far more apologies than English-speaking learners who had the culture-specific perceptions of the L2 that NSs of Hebrew are less apologetic than English native speakers. Learners' transferability judgment is also influenced by the context in which the speech act takes place (S. Takahashi, 1993). Specifically, S. Takahashi (1996) points out the effects of imposition on Japanese EFL learners' overuse of a particular L1 strategy *Would you please do X*; learners perceived the strategy as more transferable in high-imposition situations. This indicates their "playing-it-safe" (p. 212) strategy that mitigated request forms are more polite and thus more appropriate to the high-imposition situations.

Finally, T. Takahashi and Beebe (1987) point to the setting of learning as another factor that influences the amount of transfer: Their EFL group tended to transfer L1 rules for refusing to a greater extent than their ESL group. If this was a result of a greater exposure to L2 input, then it is quite possible that a negative correlation exists between length of stay in the target community and the degree of pragmatic transfer. Unfortunately, there is no study which specifically investigates the effects of length of residence in the L2 community on pragmatic transfer, although some studies report that extended residence in the target community does not necessarily diminish or eliminate negative pragmatic transfer (Kasper, 1992).

## **Fossilization**

No studies have investigated fossilization in pragmatic acquisition *per se*. This is perhaps because of its methodological difficulty. That is, pragmatics is not as accessible to researchers as syntax or morphology, because its object is language in use, which cannot easily be pinned down in terms of *ideal* forms or functions. Although little is known about pragmatic fossilization, a few studies report some empirical evidence for its existence. S. Takahashi (1996) claimed that after seven to ten years of formal instruction in English her Japanese learners manifested a fossilized false perception of the functional equivalence between L1 and L2 request strategies. She further argued that such a false projection of L1 form-function mapping onto corresponding L2 linguistic categories resulted from transfer of training which led the learners to assume that the English modals *would* and *could* conveyed the same communicative effect for politeness as the Japanese honorific auxiliary verbs.

Fossilization has been observed mostly in the use of routine formulas, surfacing in the oversimplification in structure and overgeneralization in function of the routines in question. Trosberg (1995) reports a fossilization phenomenon in the use of formulaic devices for polite requests (internal, syntactic modification and external modification by lexical downgraders) by highly advanced Danish EFL learners with more than ten years of instruction. It should be noted, however, that the learning context in both Takahashi's and Trosberg's studies were foreign language learning. One can be optimistic about the possibility for improvement if those learners were situated in an ESL setting, being exposed to adequate and sufficient input. Indeed,

the learning context has been found to be particularly crucial for pragmatic development in that, unlike other areas of language use, pragmatic aspects can be evaluated only in meaningful and, where possible, authentic interactions.

Yet, it is also reported that an ESL setting itself does not provide an adequate learning context for destabilizing fossilized interlanguage performance. Rehbein (1987), for example, examined the use of discourse markers by Turkish immigrants learning German in a German industrial workplace and found that the overgeneralized, multiple-purpose use of one particular fixed routine did not diminish with extended years of residency in the L2 community. More importantly, because the formula in question was highly frequent and salient in the available NS input, more experience and input in the same community would not have helped these learners to de-fossilize. In fact, studies of cross-cultural interaction between immigrants and NSs in the U.K. have reported learners' failure to attain an adequate level of sociocultural competence in spite of prolonged and frequent exposure to the L2 (Thornborrow, 1991). Scarcella (1983) examined the divergent use of conversational features by highly proficient Spanish learners of English who had arrived in the U.S. before age seven and had resided in the community for 12-17 years. Since these deviations appeared frequently, systematically (thus predictably), and coherently among the learners, Scarcella concluded that this inappropriate use of conversational features resulted from these learners' "wholesale transfer" (p. 319) at an earlier stage of development (rather than the creative adaptation of these features into English) and had remained fossilized ever since. In sum, based on these findings presented thus far, it may be reasonable to suspect the existence of fossilization at a pragmatic level. To make any decisive claims, however, it would be necessary to demonstrate that the fossilized item in question has completely ceased developing towards the L2 norm. However, this would require the researcher analyzing the learner's performance over a sufficient length of time, ideally from the moment of observation of a fossilized item until the learner's death, to be sure that no destabilization had occurred.

## Acquisitional Order

Not much is known about the order of acquisition in pragmatic development because of a conspicuous lack of longitudinal studies in the field. Nonetheless, several studies have claimed that at a macro-level, the acquisition of L2 form-function mapping generally precedes the acquisition of the L2 sociocultural rules needed to decide which form to map onto which function in which context. Rose (2000) found that Cantonese-speaking learners of English showed little situational variation in speech act performance, indicating "the precedence of pragmalinguistics over sociopragmatics in the early stages of pragmatic development" (p. 55). Edmondson and House (1990) report that their advanced learners were able to verbalize their speech acts but still were unsure about the appropriateness of these forms in the context. In Scarcella's (1979) study of Arabic learners' use of English politeness strategies, the learners' acquisition of politeness forms preceded their acquisition of the sociolinguistic rules governing the use and distribution of these forms.

This pattern is parallel to the findings of several longitudinal studies that examined early L2 pragmatic development. Initially, learners rely on a few pre-patterned routines as unanalyzed wholes, but they gradually analyze and use these routines more productively over time to meet different social goals in various contexts (Ellis, 1992; Sawyer, 1991; Schmidt, 1983). However,



Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford's (1993) longitudinal study reports a different finding. They examined suggestions and rejections used by advanced ESL learners in academic advising sessions. Their results showed that, although the learners more closely approximated the NS norms for appropriate speech act choice over time (i.e., more suggestions and fewer rejections), they failed to use appropriate forms to realize the chosen speech acts (i.e., direct rejections with fewer mitigators). According to Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford, pragmatic competence at a micro-level takes much longer for learners to acquire, and, therefore, what learners need at a later stage of development is "fine-tuning" (p. 302).

Additionally, it seems likely that learners acquire the use of utterances which have opaque illocutionary meanings later in their pragmatic acquisition. Highly indirect, nuanced pragmatic strategies such as those needed when refusing (Beebe et al., 1990) or when hinting to imply negative evaluation (Bouton, 1988, 1992) require high processing costs. Therefore, such off-record speech acts may be more difficult to acquire (Kasper & Schmidt, 1996). In fact, in a longitudinal study by Hill (1997), Japanese learners of English used considerably fewer hints in requesting than NSs did, and showed no development over time. Kärkkäinen (1992) also found that implicit, non-routinized expressions of modality were more difficult to acquire for Finnish learners of English than explicit, routinized modal expressions. This is because such "implicit markers of speaker-attitude" have the "potential for off-the-recordness," which make their pragmatic functions more difficult to define (p. 213).

## WHAT PLAYS A ROLE IN THE ACQUISITION OF PRAGMATIC COMPETENCE?

### Grammatical Competence

One of the most consistent findings in L2 pragmatic studies is that high levels of grammatical competence do not ensure equally high levels of pragmatic competence (Bardovi-Harlig, 1999; Hoffman-Hicks, 1992). Nevertheless, as the titles of Bisshop's (1996) study "*I am apologize*" and Eisenstein and Bodman's (1986) study "*I very appreciate*" illustrate, a minimal level of grammatical competence seems to be necessary. The majority of studies that have looked at the relationship between grammatical and pragmatic competence show higher proficiency learners to be generally better at drawing inferences (Carrell, 1984), using speech act strategies (Trosborg, 1995), and comprehending illocutionary force (Koike, 1996). In short, the literature presents two generally accepted claims about the relationship between grammatical competence and pragmatic competence: (1) grammar is not a *sufficient* condition for pragmatic competence; however, (2) grammar is a *necessary* condition for pragmatic competence.

The first claim is based on the observation that a learner already knows about linguistic structures but has not yet learnt that he/she can use them as some pragmatic strategies. For example, Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei's (1998) study showed that a learner identified as problematic the sentence *If tomorrow is good for you, I could come any time you say*, explaining that the past-tense verb *could* was used with *tomorrow* which made the sentence future tense. Apparently, the learner had not yet acquired the pragmatic function of the modal verb as an epistemic marker, although he had acquired the present vs. past inflections. Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford (1993) suggest that pragmatic extension of tense-mood-aspect forms to politeness markers is not acquired until core deictic (temporal) meanings have been acquired.

The second claim is based on the observation that a learner knows the appropriate pragmatic strategy for a given context, but does not know how to realize it due to limited linguistic knowledge. T. Takahashi and Beebe (1987) showed that their higher-proficiency learners were able to soften their refusals with modal adverbs, while the lower-proficiency learners tended to use direct refusals such as *I can't*. Attributing this to a lack of modal resources, T. Takahashi and Beebe argue that “the higher frequency of direct expressions among lower proficiency learners is not a function of NL transfer, but rather most probably a developmental stage where simpler, and also more direct, expressions are being used” (p. 150). In Salsbury and Bardovi-Harlig’s (2000) study, a Korean learner used a rather direct expression *I know what you mean, but don't think so* in disagreeing with her advisor. In spite of her apparent attempt to mitigate the force, her limited modal resources prevented her from making the disagreement polite. In addition to modality, a lack of knowledge of syntax also hinders developing pragmatic ability. Francis (1997) considered an ESL learner’s request *I, register next session, can I?* a failure to complete the syntactic inversion which is necessary to make a conventionally indirect request. Francis points out a clear absence of both syntactic and lexical downgraders with lower-proficiency learners because of the linguistic complexity of such moves. Similarly, S. Takahashi’s (1996) observed that her Japanese learners of EFL relied heavily on monoclausal structures in making requests and did not use biclausals (e.g., *I was wondering if you, Would it be possible for you to*) due to their structural complexity.

Is pragmatic competence built on a platform of grammatical competence? Or, is Koike (1989) right when she asserts, “since the grammatical competence cannot develop as quickly as the already present pragmatic concepts require, the pragmatic concepts are expressed in ways conforming to the level of grammatical complexity acquired”? (p. 286). Unfortunately, the questions still remain unanswered. As Bardovi-Harlig (1999) points out, studies have only looked at whether a failure to perform a *particular* pragmatic feature can be attributed to a lack of grammatical competence in a *general* measure, e.g., school grades, scores on a standardized proficiency test. And such an unbalanced comparison clearly is limited in its ability to explain to what extent and in what ways grammatical knowledge facilitates or impedes pragmatic development. To answer these questions, further research with an improved methodology would be necessary.

## Instruction

There is encouraging evidence for the teachability of pragmatics. A number of studies have reported that L2 pragmatic development profits from instruction in various areas: speech acts (Billmyer, 1990; Olshtain & Cohen, 1990), conversational implicatures (Bouton, 1994a), conversational management (Liddicoat & Crozet, 2001; Wildner-Bassett, 1984, 1986, 1994), and pragmatic fluency (House, 1996). Overall, the studies that address pedagogical interventions for teaching pragmatics can be categorized into two general teaching approaches: explicit vs. implicit teaching. Motivated by Schmidt’s (1993) notions of the role of consciousness and noticing-of-the-gap, implicit teaching involves consciousness-raising activities, i.e., presenting prototypical uses of the item in meaningful contexts with or without input enhancement (to help learners notice relevant input) (Bardovi-Harlig, 1996; Bouton, 1994a; Rose, 1994; Saito & Beecken, 1997). The underlying assumption is that if learners are “encouraged to think for themselves about culturally appropriate ways” to perform speech acts, then these learners will

become aware of “their own lay abilities for pragmatic analysis” (Bardovi-Harlig et al., 1996, p. 325; Carel, 1999; Rose, 1994, 1997). Therefore, in the implicit teaching of pragmatics, the success of instruction may depend on how well it raises the learners’ awareness of the rules for appropriate L2 use (Clennell, 1999; Tanaka, 1997). Explicit teaching, on the other hand, generally involves providing explicit metapragmatic information about L2 rules through explanations (Billmyer, 1990; Bouton, 1994a; House, 1996; LoCastro, 2001), metacognitive discussions (Olshtain & Cohen, 1990), and corrective feedback (Bouton, 1994b).

In recent years, several studies have examined the differential effects of these two approaches. Fukuya and Clark (cited in Kasper, 2001a) found no difference between their explicit ESL group that received metapragmatic presentations and their implicit group that received input enhancement on their use of mitigators in requesting. However, there have been more findings that point to an explicit approach as being more conducive to learning. For example, House (1996) found that German learners of English who were given metapragmatic information about the social conditions for the use of L2 routines were superior in realizing a more richly varied and more interpersonally active repertoire of gambits and strategies. Rose and Ng (2001) examined the differential effects of inductive (pragmatic analysis activities for self-discovery) versus deductive teaching (metapragmatic information through explicit instruction) on Cantonese-speaking EFL learners’ acquisition of compliments and compliment-responses. Their results indicated that only the deductive group showed progress in the use of appropriate compliment-responses. Tateyama, Kasper, Mui, Tay and Thananart (1997) and Tateyama (2001) examined how beginning learners of Japanese acquired functional variations of the routine formula *sumimasen* as an attention getter, an expression of gratitude, or apology. They found that the explicitly taught group that discussed functions and social conditions received higher ratings in role-plays and on multiple-choice task items requiring higher formality. This showed that explicit instruction was particularly beneficial for learners learning how the choice of routine is influenced by degree of indebtedness and severity, social factors, and in-group vs. out-group distinctions.

More importantly, Tateyama et al.’s and Tateyama’s studies demonstrate that higher level L2 pragmatic knowledge (the mapping of form to social context) is indeed teachable to beginners before they develop the mapping of form to function. This entails that teachers may not need to be concerned with their students’ *developmental readiness* when they make decisions about the *teachability* of the item in question. Even if formal instruction cannot change the established developmental sequence (i.e., even if it is not possible to skip a stage in an established order), it still is clear that instruction *accelerates* progress. To conclude, irrespective of the teaching approach and agenda, the potential for instruction to promote pragmatic development seems powerful.

## Input Factors

If there is no input, learning will never occur. When it comes to the learning of pragmatics, it becomes even more critical. As Kasper and Schmidt (1996) suggest, by definition pragmatic knowledge is particularly sensitive to the sociocultural features of a context. Therefore, it is not surprising that the majority of L2 pragmatic studies contend that second language learning contexts provide richer input than foreign language learning contexts and thus are more conducive to developing pragmatic ability. In T. Takahashi and Beebe’s (1987) study,

the amount of negative transfer was greater with Japanese EFL learners than ESL learners. Kitao (cited in Bardovi-Harlig, 2001) also found that Japanese ESL learners showed a closer approximation to NS perceptions of politeness in requests. Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei (1998) showed that their ESL group identified more pragmatic errors and rated them as more serious than grammatical errors, while their Hungarian EFL group identified more grammatical errors and judged them as more serious than pragmatic errors.

However, in a replication study of Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei (1998), Niezgodna and Röver (2001) reported no difference between the two types of settings: Both their lower-proficiency EFL and ESL learner groups noticed more pragmatic errors than grammatical errors and rated pragmatic errors as more serious. An interesting finding was that it was the lower-proficiency learners, not the higher-proficiency learners, who showed greater pragmatic awareness. Niezgodna and Röver suggest that development of pragmatic competence may depend more on individual learner characteristics – the degree to which they proactively attend to input and how it affects the assignment of attention to pragmatic and grammatical aspects – than on the quality or quantity of input.

Of course, foreign language learning does not necessarily mean impoverished input. For instance, Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei's EFL learners received instruction focusing on grammar because of exam requirements, while Niezgodna and Röver's EFL learners received instruction within the communicative language teaching approach. By the same token, second language learning settings do not necessarily guarantee the availability of input (Bardovi-Harlig, 1997). For example, Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford (1996) observed that in private academic advising sessions, advanced ESL learners failed to acquire effective mitigation of their suggestions due to a lack of relevant input and explicit feedback. Even when positive input was provided by the advisor, the learners did not always utilize the available input. According to the researchers, this was probably because the learners' own developing competence had not reached a point where the positive evidence was perceived as relevant input, thus preventing them from noticing the form. Similarly, Tarone and Kuehn (2000) found that in a social service financial intake interview, a Spanish-speaking learner of English used little or no back-channeling and fewer explicit responses to directives and confirmation requests. The researchers hypothesized that the private nature of the social service interview meant that the learner did not have enough needed prior input or collaborative support to learn this new genre.

However, few would deny that *ease* of access to pragmatically adequate input clearly favors second language learning settings over foreign language learning settings. In foreign language learning contexts, learning occurs almost exclusively in classrooms where many teachers share the same L1 and cultural background as their students, and where only a limited range of social interactions is provided, e.g., shorter and less complex discourse organizations, minimal openings/closings, the typical IRF routine, and fewer discourse and politeness markers (Lörcher, 1986; Lörcher & Schulze, 1988). Provided that learners who are living in the host community are exposed to sufficient and adequate input, studies have investigated whether learners benefit from a longer period of residence in the L2 community. Results indicate that length of residence is positively correlated with level of achievement in various areas of pragmatic ability, e.g., conversational routines for pragmatic fluency (House, 1996), acceptance of L2-specific request strategies (Olshtain & Blum-Kulka, 1985), decreased verbosity through the use of fewer external modifications (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1986), appropriate mapping of speech acts to speech events (Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 1993), and interpretation of conversational implicatures (Bouton, 1992, 1994b).

Taken as a whole, research has suggested that second language learning settings provide both quantitatively and qualitatively richer input than foreign language learning settings and that learners tend to show gradual convergence to NS pragmatic behavior as their length of residence increases. However, as mentioned above, whether living in the target community truly leads to a learner's intake of input is debatable due to a lack of studies which follow this specific line of inquiry. Also, the question of whether length of residence is likely to override other factors such as level of proficiency still remains unanswered.

## **Biological Factors**

Unfortunately, as interesting as the inquiry into biological factors is, few studies touch on this issue and, thus, little is known. In their comprehensive review of interlanguage pragmatic studies, Kasper and Schmidt (1996) introduce a couple of studies that address gender as a factor in L2 learners' perception. In one, Kerekes (cited in Kasper & Schmidt, 1996) found that female learners showed a much closer approximation towards the L2 norm than did male learners in their perception of sympathy and support. In another study, however, Rintell (1984) found no gender difference in learners' perception of expressions of emotion. Although there is no absolute consensus, it is generally contended in L1 research that women are more polite (Holmes, 1993) and prefer personal concern and emotional content (Tannen, 1991). If the same applies to L2 learners, then Kerekes's findings would be more plausible than Rintell's, given that both studies deal with perception and the emotional dimensions of pragmatics.

Age, another biological factor, has received considerable attention from mainstream SLA research. One of the general contentions is that learners who begin learning an L2 after puberty are unlikely to acquire an NS level of proficiency and that, irrespective of whether NS proficiency is achieved, younger learners are more likely to reach higher levels of attainment than adults (Ellis, 1994). A number of reasons for this have been suggested, e.g., neurological, motivational, cognitive, and input factors. However, what seems to be particularly relevant to pragmatic acquisition is that younger learners appear to lend themselves more readily to dealing with the threat imposed on their identities by the adoption of L2 cultural norms because they have not yet established a fixed idea of their own social identities (Preston, 1989). Another possible explanation is that younger learners benefit more from explicit input (e.g., explicit instruction and explicit socialization) than older learners. However, adult learners' pragmatic errors are more likely to be conceived of as idiosyncratic personal traits. Therefore, they rarely receive corrective feedback.

Kim's (2000) study is probably the only study which specifically investigates the age factor in L2 pragmatic development. She compared the request and apology strategies used by Korean adult ESL learners and NSs of English through discourse completion tasks (DCTs), role-plays, and questionnaires. Her results confirmed the general findings in SLA studies that an earlier onset age, more informal input, closer cultural orientation to the L2, and more native-like performance on the tasks were all positively correlated. However, Kim's findings must be interpreted with caution in that other important factors were not controlled for in her study, e.g., she does not address learners' linguistic proficiency and length of residence, which might be strong additional factors accounting for these results. Clearly, further research is required before any conclusions can be drawn about the role that biological factors play in L2 pragmatic development.

## Individual Factors

Of the various types of individual learner variables, SLA research has identified socio-affective factors such as motivation, attitude, and identity as key factors that influence learning outcomes (Ellis, 1994). Among these, *integrative motivation* – the learner’s desire to learn the L2 to actively participate in interaction with members of the target community – seems to be particularly relevant to pragmatic development. In Schmidt’s (1983) famous case study of the Japanese ESL learner Wes, Wes’s high level of integrative motivation was facilitative for his development of sociolinguistic competence but not for grammatical competence. Salsbury and Bardovi-Harlig (2000) examined disagreements used by ESL learners. Although their participants EJ and MR were at the same stage in their development of linguistic competence and possessed the same range of modality markers, they differed markedly from each other in their use of acquired linguistic resources. MR, who had a higher level of desire and intention to communicate than EJ, pushed her linguistic resources to the limit. Thus, her linguistic resources were fully utilized in developing pragmatic competence, whereas EJ’s were not.

However, a learner’s positive attitude towards learning an L2 does not necessarily mean a positive attitude towards adopting L2 pragmatic norms, especially when these L2 norms conflict with the learner’s value system about how he/she should behave. Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei, and Thurrell (1995) state, “sociocultural rules and norms are so ingrained in our own identity that it is difficult to change behavior based on a new set of assumptions” (p.23). Yet, despite the fact that sociolinguists long ago provided compelling evidence that a learner identifies and presents himself/herself as a member of a particular speech community through language use (Beebe, 1977; Beebe, 1981; Beebe & Zuengler, 1983), many SLA theories draw an unnatural distinction between the *learner* and the *learning context* (Pierce, 1995). Arguing for the need to reconceptualize *motivation* as less individualistic and more social, Pierce (1995) proposes the notion *investment* as better capturing the complex relationship between a learner’s *motivation* to learn the L2 and his/her *willingness* to use the L2 in pragmatically appropriate ways.

Pierce’s point is well illustrated in Siegal’s (1996) case study of a white American woman learning Japanese in Japan. Siegal examined how a learner’s *subjectivity* can negatively influence his/her acquisition of L2 pragmatic competence. Requesting a professor to write a recommendation letter for her, the learner employed various L2 pragmatic strategies expressing politeness and femininity at the cost of her own ethnic identity, e.g., the use of “singing voice” (p. 367) and the epistemic modal *desh\_*, both of which are typically used by Japanese women and often perceived by Western women as “too silly” or “too humble” (p. 363). Throughout the interaction, however, the learner showed a dynamic co-construction of identity, corresponding to her conflicting needs to speak the L2 with pragmatic appropriateness and to get things done. For example, when the professor finally acknowledged her improvement in Japanese, the learner inappropriately used the expression of gratitude *sumimasen* (I’m sorry) in a context where denying the compliment would have been more polite according to the Japanese norm. She intentionally violated the L2 norm because of her subjective judgment (affected by the L2 norm) that denying the compliment would be against her goal to get the professor to write a letter of recommendation commenting on how her Japanese had improved.

LoCastro (1998) reports on her own L2 pragmatic learning. She was well aware of the need to use Japanese honorific linguistic forms engendered by the Japanese hierarchical view of

society. However, her subjective position based on experiences in more egalitarian societal structures caused “demotivation” (p. 10) to learn the forms beyond a minimal range of formal politeness routines. Similarly, Cohen (1997) reports on his own pragmatic development in Japanese as a foreign language. He failed to acquire an L2 norm that requires honorific forms when speaking about a person of a higher status than the interlocutor even when the higher status person is not present. Cohen writes, “I was resisting this rule, since it seemed illogical to me” (p. 151). This unresolved conflict between a learner’s conception of his/her own identity and what the L2 pragmatic norms require speakers to do often results in bi-directional transfer, creating a unique intercultural style which differs from both the L1 and L2 (Silva, 2000; Yoon, 1991). Therefore, as all of these studies show, there is no doubt that L2 pragmatic development is significantly influenced by an individual learner’s psychological mechanisms.

## CONCLUSION

This paper attempts to integrate a number of issues that arise in L2 pragmatic acquisition and SLA research. The major purpose of this literature review is to shed light on the developmental processes underlying the acquisition of L2 pragmatic competence, and thus establish a link between pragmatics and SLA. This review of literature suggests two areas particularly rich for further research: (a) the need to investigate the processes underlying the acquisition of L2 pragmatic competence from a holistic, learner-environmental view of learning, and (b) the need for bi-directional interactional analysis of cross-cultural communication.

On the one hand, sociocultural models of L2 pragmatic development emphasize that learning occurs through situated, moment-by-moment interaction between the learner and the surrounding environment, and not wholly in the mind of the learner (Ohta, 2000). On the other hand, the studies that investigate the psychological mechanisms of an individual learner show the internal needs of the learner to relate himself/herself to the language being learned, to integrate it with his/her own social goals, and to use it to express his/her own self. The contribution to L2 pragmatic acquisition made by both social and psychological factors is clearly evident in this paper. Nevertheless, these two aspects are often isolated in research and have not yet been properly reconciled (Kasper, 2001b). In order to better understand the complex and subtle processes of L2 pragmatic acquisition, it is necessary to consider both inter-learner and intra-learner aspects of learning. A synthesis of these two approaches will create a powerful framework for explaining L2 pragmatic acquisition.

This paper also points to the emergence of the notion *intercultural competence*. The literature reveals renewed interest in the cultural-language pairing view of L2 pragmatic development. Indeed, L2 pragmatic learning is L2 culture learning. Culture learning essentially involves the learner’s continuous construction and modification of a worldview, influenced by psychological factors affecting identity and attitude formation (Sercu, 2000). Therefore, a learner’s level of achievement in L2 pragmatic acquisition is better discussed in terms of “the degree to which the learner is able to transcend the boundaries between of his/her ego in order to acquire the target language” (Trosberg, 1995, p. 65). In this context, the concept *intercultural competence* effectively brings together issues of language learning and culture learning, thus providing a more balanced model for L2 pragmatic development, overcoming the “magic-carpet-ride-to-another-culture syndrome” (Robinson, 1997, p. 76), i.e., that when acquiring a second language, one automatically acquires that culture as well. It is hoped that this paper will bring

researchers and educators face to face with the need to deal with the pragmatic dilemma facing L2 learners: how to acquire intercultural competence, the fundamental basis of L2 pragmatic competence.

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