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Teaching Pragmatics: Trends and Issues

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Theoretical, empirical, and practical interest in pragmatic competence and development for second language (L2) learners has resulted in a large body of literature on teaching L2 pragmatics. This body of literature has diverged into two major domains: (a) a group of experimental studies directly testing the efficacy of various instructional methods in pragmatics learning and (b) research that explores optimal instructional practice and resources for pragmatic development in formal classroom settings. This article reviews literature in these two domains and aims at providing a collective view of the available options for pragmatics teaching and the ways that pragmatic development can best be promoted in the classroom. In the area of instructional intervention, this article reviews studies under the common theoretical second language acquisition paradigms of explicit versus implicit instruction, input processing instruction, and skill acquisition and practice. In the area of classroom practice and resources, three domains of research and pedagogical practices are reviewed: material development and teacher education, learner strategies and autonomous learning, and incidental pragmatics learning in the classroom. Finally, this article discusses unique challenges and opportunities that have been embraced by pragmatics teaching in the current era of poststructuralism and multiculturalism.

An emergence of communicative competence models (Bachman, 1990; Bachman & Palmer, 1996; Canale & Swain, 1980) marked a shift in the view of second language (L2) learning from simply a mastery of grammatical forms to the acquisition of functional and social use of these forms as well. Since then, pragmatic competence, namely, the ability to communicate and interpret meaning in social interactions, has become an essential component of L2 proficiency, distinct from grammatical, discourse, and strategic competencies. Perhaps the most widely used definition of pragmatics is found in the relationship between *pragmalinguistics* and *sociopragmatics*. Pragmalinguistics refers to the linguistic resources available to perform language functions, and sociopragmatics refers to the language user's assessment of the context in which such resources are implemented (Leech, 1983; Thomas, 1983). Pragmatic development entails

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acquisition of both of these knowledge bases, as well as efficient control of them in real-time communication. For instance, learners need to know what syntactic forms and lexis they should use in order to refuse an invitation from someone. At the same time they need to be able to determine whether such refusal is acceptable within a particular situation in the target culture, and if so, what to say in order to refuse whom and under what circumstances. To this end, pragmatics extends beyond grammar. It entails knowledge of forms, as well as their functional possibilities, and contextual requirements that determine form-function mappings.

The teaching of pragmatic competence has gained greater attention as pragmatics in the communicative competence models has begun to gain explicit recognition. This is evidenced in the dozen book-length publications that have appeared on this topic since 2000. Some of these publications are edited volumes of empirical papers that describe instructional methods and learning opportunities in the classroom (Alcón-Soler & Martínez-Flor, 2008; Martínez-Flor & Alcón-Soler, 2005; Martínez-Flor, Usó-Juan, & Fernández-Guerra, 2003; Rose & Kasper, 2001; Taguchi, 2009; Yoshimi & Wang, 2007). Others are teachers' guides and resource books with ready-made lesson plans and teaching tips (Bardovi-Harlig & Mahan-Taylor, 2003; Houck & Tatsuki, 2011; Ishihara & Cohen, 2010; Ishihara & Maeda, 2010; Tatsuki & Houck, 2010), and still others are research monographs that document the process of pragmatic development in formal settings, in turn informing us about instructional activities and practice that are optimal for pragmatic growth (Ohta, 2001; Taguchi, in press). Collectively, these books have helped us recognize the interconnectedness among theory, research, and practice in pragmatics. They have given us an opportunity to explore the theoretical construct of pragmatic competence and its central features, along with instructional methods and materials through which these features can be taught. Empirical studies, either as laboratory experiments or classroom implementations, have served to assess learning outcomes of target pragmatic features and generate an array of implications for teaching in the classroom as well as in less traditional learning environments (e.g., computer-mediated forums and online social media outlets).

This article reviews a selection of the existing literature and discusses diverse issues related to pragmatics teaching and learning in the following two categories: (a) experimental studies that directly test the effectiveness of specific instructional methods of pragmatics learning and (b) literature that addresses optimal instructional materials and resources for pragmatic development in formal classroom settings. In the area of instructional intervention, this article reviews studies that have applied the common second language acquisition (SLA) frameworks of explicit versus implicit learning, input processing instruction, and skill acquisition and practice. In the domain of instructional practice and resources, literature in three areas is reviewed: material development and teacher education, learner strategies and autonomous learning, and incidental pragmatics learning in classroom. Finally, this article discusses unique challenges faced by interlanguage pragmatics in the era of poststructuralism and multiculturalism and the ways in which these challenges translate into pragmatics teaching.

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INSTRUCTIONAL INTERVENTION STUDIES IN INTERLANGUAGE PRAGMATICS

Pragmatic competence involves the ability to manage a complex interplay of language, language users, and context of interaction. Given this complexity, one would naturally wonder whether pragmatic competence is indeed teachable. Gabriele Kasper's plenary talk at the TESOL Convention in Orlando, Florida, in 1997, entitled "Can Pragmatic Competence Be Taught?" (Kasper, 1997) inspired growth in applied empirical studies on the teaching of pragmatics. As a result of the dominance of morphosyntax studies in instructed SLA, the teachability of pragmatics was a genuine question at that time, motivating researchers to explore the ways that formal instruction could be translated to the area of sociocultural and sociolinguistic abilities. Following this call, early studies produced in the 1990s showed that most aspects of pragmatics are amenable to instruction, meaning that instruction is better than noninstruction for pragmatic development (for a review, see Kasper & Rose, 1999; Rose, 2005).

Having established the benefits of instruction, the field later evolved around a question of efficacy: What instructional methods could best enhance the learning of pragmatics? This question was taken up by a line of instructional intervention studies that implemented a planned pedagogical action directed toward the acquisition of select pragmatic features. These studies compared the effects of certain teaching methods over others by measuring the degree of learning from pre- to post-instruction (Kasper, 2001; Kasper & Roever, 2005; Martínez-Flor & Alcón-Soler, 2005; Roever, 2009). Later studies largely followed cognitively oriented SLA theories in experiment design, which, in turn, has strengthened the connections between interlanguage pragmatics and SLA at large. By far, the SLA theory that has provided the strongest impetus for pragmatics intervention studies is Schmidt's (1993, 2001) noticing hypothesis, which claims that learners must notice L2 features in input for subsequent development to occur in their acquisition of these features. Hence, speakers' attention to linguistic forms, functional meanings, and relevant contextual features is a necessary condition for pragmatics input to become intake.

Previous instructional studies have applied this theoretical paradigm by designing interventions in such a way that noticing of the target form-function-context mappings is facilitated through various instructional methods such as explicit metapragmatic information, input enhancement, consciousness raising, and repeated processing of pragmalinguistic forms. A group of studies that compared the effect of explicit versus implicit approaches can serve as representative of these methods. Explicit approaches involve direct explanation of target pragmatic features followed by practice, while implicit approaches withhold explanation but provide input and practice opportunities where learners can develop implicit understanding of pragmatic forms and their uses (Kasper & Rose, 2002). Recently, researchers have argued that selection of explicit and implicit conditions represents a continuum between absolutely explicit and implicit extremes rather than a dichotomy (Jeon & Kaya, 2006; Takahashi, 2010a, 2010b).

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Alcón-Soler (2007) is an example of an intervention study that compared the effect of explicit and implicit treatment on Spanish EFL (English as a foreign language) learners' acquisition of request forms in English. The explicit group received metapragmatic information regarding requests. Then they were asked to identify examples of requests in provided scripts and to justify their choices. The implicit group was given awareness-raising tasks that featured input enhancement (i.e., requests and related sociopragmatic factors placed in bold type or capitalization) but received no metapragmatic explanation. In the posttest, both groups outperformed the control group, but no significant differences were detected between the two experimental groups; however, the explicit group maintained learning up to the delayed posttest given 3 weeks after the treatment.

These studies are discussed in more detail in Takahashi (2010a). There she reviewed 49 intervention studies in L2 pragmatics published since the 1980s, which were divided into three groups: studies that explored the effectiveness of explicit intervention ($k = 26$), studies that focused on the effectiveness of implicit intervention ($k = 2$), and studies that compared explicit and implicit conditions in terms of their instructional effects ($k = 21$). Several generalizations were drawn from this review. First, echoing Jeon and Kaya's (2006) meta-analysis, the robustness of explicit instruction was largely confirmed, reiterating the crucial role of metapragmatic explanation for promoting pragmatic development. Second, instructional treatments that showed strong durability effects in delayed posttests were often characterized as having cognitively demanding tasks, by, for example, having participants engage in a comparison between their performance and target-like performance and/or promoting their discovery of target pragmatic conventions. Takahashi argued that the superiority of explicit instruction found in Alcón-Soler's study, cited above, can be attributed to learners' greater cognitive involvement in the explicit condition; unlike implicit conditions in which learners simply identified request forms that were directed by researchers through input enhancement, learners in the explicit condition were required to find target request forms on their own. Takahashi also emphasized that, while the nature of intervention does play a decisive role, L2 proficiency, instructional targets, length of instruction, and methods of assessment also moderate observed learning benefits.

Although the noticing hypothesis and related concepts of consciousness and attention have long permeated the pragmatics instructional practice, recently the field of interlanguage pragmatics has welcomed two new theoretical paradigms as guiding frameworks for pragmatics instruction—input processing and skill acquisition theories. Under the assumption that language acquisition is a by-product of comprehension, the input processing theory aims to describe cognitive mechanisms that operate when the learner is processing input (VanPatten, 1996, 2007). The model makes a number of claims about strategies that learners use to understand form–meaning connections or to parse sentences. Derived from various insights of the input processing model, a teaching model called processing instruction aims to teach learners how to process input so that target grammatical structures are processed to comprehend meaning. To achieve this, the processing instruction engages learners in structured input

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activities in which learners have to rely on grammatical forms in order to get meaning.

Input processing theory and processing instruction have recently been applied to pragmatics instruction in a study by Takimoto (2009), which investigated the effects of input processing instruction on learning request forms in L2 English. Takimoto compared three types of input-based interventions: (a) structured input tasks with explicit metapragmatic information, (b) structured input tasks without explicit information, and (c) problem-solving tasks (a type of inductive activity). In structured input tasks, learners first listened to a dialogue containing target request forms and then evaluated their appropriateness. Four productive and receptive tasks assessed the instructional outcomes: a discourse completion task, a role-play task, a written appropriateness judgment task, and a listening appropriateness judgment task. The three experimental groups outperformed the control group in all measures, but no significant differences were found among the treatment groups in the posttest. A delayed posttest revealed the sustained effect of structured input tasks and problem-solving tasks for all measures, although the explicit group failed to maintain their gains on the listening measure. Takimoto's studies lend support to the effectiveness of processing instruction found in morphosyntax studies (e.g., VanPatten & Oikkenon, 1996): Comprehension-based instruction could prove effective in both production and comprehension-based tasks.

These findings were further confirmed in a more recent study by Takimoto (2010), but this time, he examined the effects of repetition of input processing tasks on learning request forms in English. He compared two task repetition conditions: same task and similar task repetition. The former group repeated exactly the same input structured activities, while the latter group repeated these activities using slightly different scenarios. The control group received no instruction. Two measures of learning outcomes were used: an acceptability judgment test evaluating target request forms and a discourse completion test that elicited requests. Although no difference was found between the two treatment conditions on the judgment task, the same task group outperformed the similar task group on production of requests. Findings were attributed to the deeper-level perceptual processing involved in the same task condition. The same task repetition allows learners to familiarize themselves with the activity content more easily, consequently freeing up their memory and directing their attention to target forms. Takimoto's study brought new insights into pragmatics by incorporating some key concepts of current SLA literature—repetition, practice, and frequency (e.g., Collins & N. Ellis, 2009; DeKeyser, 2007).

More recently, the role of repetition and practice, together with insights drawn from input processing theory and processing instruction, have been applied to the teaching of Chinese pragmatics. Li's (in press) study examined effects of explicit metapragmatic information and structured input tasks on learning accurate, speedy comprehension, and production of Chinese request forms. Building on the cognitive theory of skill acquisition, specifically the ACT-R model (Anderson, 1993), Li conceptualized acquisition of pragmatic rules as involving a transition from the stage of declarative knowledge to procedural knowledge. Declarative knowledge refers to the knowledge of *what,* which is

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conscious and analyzable. Procedural knowledge refers to the knowledge of *how* and involves the state in which one's knowledge is executed in actual behavior. Skill acquisition is a process in which declarative knowledge becomes proceduralized via repeated practice of rules. The endpoint of skill acquisition is a stage in which rule application becomes automatic and unconscious, leading to fluent, accurate performance.

Li investigated whether or not different amounts of practice could yield differential effects in the development of accurate and speedy performance of the speech act of requests. Learners of Chinese were assigned to three groups: an intensive training group, a regular training group, and a control group. The intensive and regular training groups received explicit explanation on request forms and then practiced them through structured input activities modeled after Takimoto's studies (2009, 2010). The intensive group practiced twice as much as the regular group. The control group received metapragmatic explanation but had no practice. Two measures assessed learning outcomes: a listening appropriateness judgment task and an oral discourse completion task. In the former task, judgment accuracy and response times were analyzed. In the latter task, production accuracy and fluency (measured by planning time and speech rate) were analyzed. Results revealed no group difference on accurate judgment of request forms in the listening task, probably due to a ceiling effect: All groups did well after metapragmatic instruction, leaving little room to improve through practice. As to response times, the intensive group's response speed became significantly faster after practice, whereas no such effect was found in the other two groups. Analyses of the oral production of requests also revealed mixed findings. There was no significant practice effect on fluency, but there was on accuracy: The intensive group outperformed the other two groups after practice. The findings are in part consistent with skill acquisition theory in that declarative knowledge (as measured by accuracy) is shared across different skill domains (e.g., listening and speaking), but procedural knowledge (as measured by fluency) requires skill-specific practice (DeKeyser, 2007). Following this principle, comprehension-based practice might improve performance accuracy in both comprehension and production tasks, but the effect may not transfer across modalities in fluency.

Other than House (1996), Li's study is probably the only instructional study that extends the usual measure of pragmatic performance accuracy to performance fluency, thereby expanding the conceptualization of pragmatic competence. Following Kasper's (2001) claim that pragmatic development involves acquiring pragmatic knowledge and gaining automatic control in processing this knowledge in real time, several recent studies examined the development of the combination of processing speed and fluency in pragmatic performance (e.g., Taguchi, 2008a, 2008b). These studies showed that accuracy and fluency are distinct components of L2 pragmatic performance and do not develop in parallel, which further reiterates the importance of conjoined analysis of pragmatic knowledge and processing capacity in pragmatic development.

Although empirical efforts to measure pragmatic fluency are relatively recent, the knowledge–processing dichotomy is hardly new and goes back to the 1980s, as seen in Faerch and Kasper's (1984) original model of pragmatic competence.

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They conceptualized pragmatic knowledge as involving declarative and procedural components. Declarative knowledge consists of resources needed for pragmatic performance (e.g., linguistic and sociocultural knowledge, knowledge of discourse). Procedural knowledge refers to knowledge used in selecting and combining parts of declarative knowledge for the purpose of achieving communicative goals. Whether or not instruction helps promote development of procedural knowledge as well as declarative knowledge, indicated in fluency and accuracy respectively, is an original question that should be explored further in future research. This direction will help situate interlanguage pragmatics in a wider field, composed of SLA, cognitive psychology, and psycholinguistics.

In summary, the last two decades have seen a rapid expansion of intervention studies in interlanguage pragmatics. Like grammar and lexis, pragmatic competence was found to be profitably enhanced through instruction under the common SLA frameworks of noticing and explicit/implicit instruction, input processing, and skill acquisition and practice. Some of the recent developments are seen more explicitly in connection with cognitive theories that intend to reveal the underlying mechanisms that operate in registering and retaining form-function-context mappings. Another recent development is seen in the target of instruction, which has also expanded its scope from pragmatic knowledge to processing efficiency in using this knowledge.

An accumulation of empirical findings suggests several directions for future pragmatic instructional studies. First, future research should explore more dynamic examination of learnability, pragmatic targets, instructional methods, and learning outcomes. Although previous pragmatics studies targeted a range of proficiency groups from beginning level to advanced, very few studies have aimed at comparing learning success of learners with different proficiency levels nor measured their linguistic competence for instructional readiness specific to target pragmalinguistic forms. These observations have been made in recent reviews (Roever, 2009; Takahashi, 2010a, 2010b). Takahashi suggested that future research should explore how learners with different proficiency levels cope with the same pragmatic interventions, based on the premise that learners whose linguistic competence is still underdeveloped may not be able to fully benefit from instruction. Similarly, Roever (2009) suggested considering a three-way interaction among pragmatic targets, types of interventions, and learners: namely, exploring what kinds of target features (e.g., speech acts, formulae) should be taught to what kinds of learners (in terms of proficiency or developmental level) using what kinds of methods (e.g., implicit or explicit, input-based or output-based). This direction of research will advance our understanding of the relationship between pragmatic learnability and instructional intervention. Empirical data might tell us that instructional effect is mediated through learners' readiness; learners' linguistic maturity and complexity of pragmalinguistics forms and sociopragmatic factors are important variables to consider when understanding effects of particular instructional methods.

Another direction for future research relates to transfer of learned pragmatic knowledge, in response to a question on whether learning one pragmatic feature can facilitate learning of another pragmatic feature. This question is pertinent, considering that most previous studies limited their instruction to one or two

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pragmatics features (e.g., speech acts, address terms, and routines), consequently reinforcing a view of pragmatic competence as a constellation of bits of isolated pragmatic features that have to be taught independently from one another. Future research could be more creative in identifying commonalities across pragmatic features and targets, and devising an instructional method that promotes transfer of learned pragmatic knowledge from one area to another knowledge domain. For instance, syntactic and lexical mitigations in requests (e.g., hedging) could also be used as softeners in disagreements. Hence, it would be interesting to examine whether learned knowledge about requests can help promote performance of another speech act, disagreements. Similarly, formal versus informal address terms can be taught and measured within speech acts of different levels of formality so that sociopragmatic knowledge of form–context associations gets strengthened over different domains of pragmatic resources. Because the exchange of pragmatics resources across different pragmatic acts has not been attested, while learners' overgeneralization of specific pragmatic forms is certainly a consideration, future research in this direction could help us see connections among seemingly separate pragmatic targets, thereby presenting a possibility for a more comprehensive curriculum of pragmatic instruction.

INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCES AND PRACTICE FOR PRAGMATICS LEARNING

Materials for Pragmatics Teaching and Teacher Education

As shown in the previous section, instructional studies in interlanguage pragmatics have long centered around debates on their effects on pragmatic learning. As a by-product of these studies, a variety of materials and activities have been generated for teaching pragmatics in classrooms. Because pragmatics entails linguistic resources for both performing communicative acts and discerning social perceptions of these acts, teaching materials inevitably involve several key elements: social context, functional language use, and interaction. Therefore, activities and tasks have been designed in a way to incorporate these components. For example, consciousness-raising tasks typically have learners listen to conversations either through video or audio, with attention directed to the target pragmatic features and sociolinguistic variables of particular speech events (e.g., setting, participant relationships) (e.g., K. Ishida, 2009). Similarly, receptive-skills tasks expose learners to pragmatic input but have them act on this input by evaluating the appropriateness of the target pragmatic forms on a rating scale or by selecting appropriate forms from a list of expressions (e.g., Takimoto, 2009). Productive-skills tasks have taken a variety of formats, including role-playing activities, structured conversations, discourse completion tests, and cloze tests. In role-playing activities, students typically practice speech acts by assuming specific roles in hypothetical scenarios and interacting with peers (e.g., Pearson, 2006). These activities and tasks are presented in resource books and textbooks targeted at pragmatics, as well as in teachers' guides (e.g.,

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Bardovi-Harlig & Mahan-Taylor, 2003; Ishihara & Cohen, 2010; Ishihara & Maeda, 2010; Tatsuki & Houck, 2010).

Martínez-Flor and Usó-Juan (2006) proposed a comprehensive framework for facilitating development of pragmatic and intercultural competencies. The model consists of six stages: (a) researching, (b) reflecting, (c) receiving, (d) reasoning, (e) rehearsing, and (f) revising. The first two stages expose learners to pragmatic concepts (e.g., speech acts of requests and apologies), and have them gather first language (L1) pragmatic data and analyze these data according to social variables (e.g., gender, social status). In the third and fourth stages, learners receive explicit instruction on the L2 version of these pragmatic acts and are then expected to analyze these acts using L2 data. The last two stages provide opportunities for learners to practice their knowledge in communicative activities and to receive feedback. This model brings together several critical elements of pragmatics teaching: cultural comparisons, explicit pragmatic information, awareness-raising of pragmalinguistic forms and their situational variations, focused practice, and feedback.

More recently, technology has brought exciting new venues for materials and formats used in pragmatics teaching (Taguchi & Sykes, in preparation). This is because some of the key instructional features endorsed by technology—for example, input, interaction, simulation, and multimedia environment—are indeed key conditions for pragmatics learning. There are several Web sites dedicated to L2 pragmatics (for a review, see Cohen, 2008). These Web sites provide interactive multimedia modules where learners can watch video clips of conversations that include speech acts and verbal explanations of these speech acts, find cultural tips, and complete exercises. Computer-assisted language learning (CALL) has also expanded our options for pragmatics instruction. Ward, Rafael, Bayyari Yaffa Al, and Thamar (2007), for example, developed a computer program in which learners of Arabic practice using backchannels by producing them in response to prerecorded utterances. A computer then analyzes the timing and frequency of their backchannels and provides corrective feedback. Using CALL, several instructional intervention studies have been conducted (Saita, 2001; Utashiro & Kawai, 2009). Utashiro and Kawai developed an original computer-based course called DiscourseWare and examined its effect on the learning of Japanese reactive tokens (i.e., backchannel signals; e.g., *sodesuka,* meaning "I see"; *honto,* meaning "really"). Learners of Japanese received computer-delivered instruction on different reactive tokens over a period of 2 weeks. They watched video clips of native speaker conversations and identified and practiced the reactive tokens that appeared in previous conversations. Instruction was sequenced according to three stages to promote a blended learning experience: self-paced/computer-based, instructor-led, and interaction-based learning. Results revealed significant gains in their receptive and productive tasks at all stages. Learners' awareness of reactive tokens also improved after instruction, and this gain was retained at the time of the delayed posttest, 1 week after the instruction. Findings suggest the importance of explicit instruction in the use of reactive tokens and the potential benefit of a blended learning experience when using CALL for pragmatics learning.

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Synchronous and asynchronous computer-mediated communication (CMC) is another instructional tool available for pragmatics learning (see Belz, 2008, for a review). Previous studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of CMC in teaching apology speech acts, interactional particles, and modal particles (e.g., Gonzalez-Lloret, 2008; Kakegawa, 2009; Sykes, 2005; Vyatkina & Belz, 2006; Wishnoff, 2000). CMC offers learners an authentic context for communication by having them engage in online dialogues with native speakers. Given that target pragmatic features appear in a contextualized manner, with written, unmoving input, it is easier for learners to notice pragmatic targets. These benefits were revealed in Kakegawa's (2009) study that examined the development of Japanese learners' use of sentence final particles through their e-mail correspondence with native speakers. In this study, Japanese learners in the United States received explicit instruction about the use of particles and exchanged e-mails with native speakers in Japan for 10 weeks. Over time, learners increased the frequency of particles and used a greater variety of them in a productive manner, suggesting that the combination of e-mail exchange and explicit instruction proved effective in learning these particles.

Another emerging technological option for pragmatics learning is virtual social platforms (e.g., *Second Life*). Examining language socialization in online communities is a growing interest among SLA researchers. Social networking, Internet interest communities and forums, three-dimensional multiuser virtual worlds, and online games are increasingly considered as alternative venues for language learning (e.g., Lafford, 2009). This trend is also seen in pragmatics. A series of publications by Sykes (Sykes, 2009, 2011; Sykes, Oskoz, & Thorne, 2008) describe her work on a virtual online space that simulates a Spanish study-abroad environment created for pragmatics learning. Sykes developed *Croquelandia,* a three-dimensional, graphically rich space that emulates real Spanish-speaking worlds where learners engage in goal-directed activities with avatars and practice speech acts. Advantages of these immersive spaces for pragmatics learning are summarized in Sykes et al. (2008). One major advantage involves situated roles and identities in immersive environments. Learners can simulate numerous participant roles and practice pragmatic functions in diverse social settings, which could help them to understand the impact of their language use in social interaction. Another advantage is that learners can feel emotional connection in response to the virtual environments and their collaborative partners, which could lead to motivation in learning. Finally, immersive spaces provide authentic interactional environments for low-risk practice. Learners can gain extensive opportunity to practice pragmatic acts in a nonthreatening environment with elements built into the spaces.

Effects of virtual environments in pragmatics learning were reported in Sykes (2009, 2011). In her study, Spanish learners completed five request speech acts with computer-generated avatars in *Croquelandia.* A discourse completion task consisting of request-making scenarios was administered at pre- and posttests, and request expressions types were then coded and compared. Results revealed very little change from pre- to posttest in terms of expression choice, but there was evidence of increased pragmatic awareness. Lack of improvement in prag-

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malinguistics was interpreted as incongruence between the outcome measure (i.e., discourse completion test) and the types of learning that occurred in the virtual environment.

Although empirical data are still limited, use of immersive worlds suggests a number of profound transformations to traditional approaches in terms of pragmatic learning. This type of instructional arrangement brings together the key elements of pragmatics teaching: context, functional language use, and interaction, with added values of authenticity, self-discovery, and experiential learning. However, as Sykes (2009, 2011) cautioned, a great deal of work needs to be done in order to understand how interactions in virtual spaces may facilitate pragmatics learning. For instance, this unique setting necessitates more empirical investigation into learners' behavioral data as virtual environments involve multimodal processing of written, oral, and gestural communication modes in tasks and in-game exploration features (e.g., area map and navigation tools, written and voice chats, feedback mechanisms, help centers, and hidden tips). Analysis of learners' use of these symbolic resources will help us understand how goal-oriented tasks and content delivery in virtual spaces compare to those in CMC or face-to-face interaction, and what aspects of these contexts may carry significant considerations for pragmatics learning. Afterwards, an experiment can be conducted to determine whether these features specific to immersive environments could prove effective for pragmatic development.

Up to this point I have discussed available resources and practice for pragmatics teaching in traditional and nontraditional learning contexts. As the body of materials and options for pragmatics learning grows, emerging research in pragmatics teaching is significant for practitioners and consumers of these materials. To this end, teacher training is critical because it inevitably influences the ways in which instructional methods and materials are utilized. Despite this importance, the knowledge and beliefs held by teachers about sociocultural aspects of language and effective techniques for teaching pragmatics have rarely been addressed (Cohen, 2008; Eslami-Rasekh, 2005). According to a nationwide survey conducted by Vasquez and Sharpless (2009), many of the 104 MA TESOL programs in the United States reported the teaching of pragmatics theories, but actual training on methods for teaching and assessing pragmatic competence was largely inconsistent. There was large variation among programs in their beliefs and attitudes toward the importance of the pragmatics-component in teacher preparation education. Some programs stated that pragmatics should be integrated throughout the curriculum, while others expressed that pragmatics is addressed as questions come up. The findings indicate a discrepancy between theoretically and empirically grounded needs for pragmatic teaching and teachers' preparedness and willingness in dealing with pragmatics in the classroom.

Learner Strategies and Autonomous Learning

Another emerging instructional option for pragmatics is strategy instruction, which could be profitably combined with technology-based materials that

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provide an array of opportunities for autonomous, independent learning. Cohen (2005) recently developed a set of taxonomies of speech act strategies consisting of three categories: strategies for the initial learning of speech acts (e.g., identifying target speech acts and gathering information about them), strategies for using speech act material that has already been learned (e.g., using a memory aid to remember speech act expressions), and learners' metapragmatic considerations (e.g., monitoring their own speech acts for appropriateness; see Ishihara & Cohen [2010] for an update). To date, there have been only a few preliminary findings on the effectiveness of strategy-based instruction in pragmatic development (Cohen & Shively, 2007; Cohen & Sykes, in press).

Recently Shively (2010) proposed a pedagogical framework that promotes strategy instruction in pragmatics teaching in a study-abroad context. Her framework is informed by previous models that combine explicit instruction and awareness raising of pragmatic features with data-driven activities (e.g., Martínez-Flor & Usó-Juan, 2006). She extends these models by taking advantage of the affordances that an immersion context and technology offer. In Shively's model, after explicit pragmatic instruction at the predeparture stage, learners are introduced to fieldwork methods for pragmatic data collection. The class instructor provides specific guidance as to how to look for pragmatic features in naturalistic data, as well as how to analyze, interpret, and reflect upon pragmatic behaviors in relation to larger communicative patterns in the host culture. Learners then engage in communicative practice of pragmatic features and receive feedback from the instructor. Taking advantage of the immersion context, practice consists of assigning learners to participate in the speech activity they are currently studying through authentic social interaction in the host community (e.g., inviting their host family to social events). At the post-study-abroad stage, learners could continue their learning of language and culture by staying connected with friends they made in the host country through technology (e.g., chat, blogs, and social networking sites).

Strategy instruction in pragmatics learning has several benefits. For one, it helps develop learners' autonomy, helping them take initiative and responsibility for their learning. Pragmatic knowledge developed in class or through pedagogical intervention can also transfer to real-life situations outside of the classroom. In addition, independent learning accommodates individual differences in learning styles because learners prefer different ways of learning—some prefer direct engagement with materials, whereas others prefer more abstract applications of them. By having learners self-guide their learning process, teachers can appreciate individual preferences in cultivating knowledge, which will essentially maximize learning outcomes. For these reasons, Cohen's strategy taxonomies serve as useful guidelines. They echo earlier claims made about the benefits of autonomous learning where learners act as amateur ethnographers and collect information about pragmatics (Bardovi-Harlig, 1992) and expand these benefits in a more systematic manner. Whether strategy training proves a useful option for pragmatics teaching remains a question for future empirical investigation.

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Incidental Pragmatics Learning in the Classroom

A general consensus in the literature is that classroom learning is poor in opportunities for pragmatics learning. This results from the lack of both a range of representations of communication situations and registers within classroom discourse, as well as information about pragmatic norms of the given language in textbooks, and instead the presence of inauthentic language samples based on intuitions of textbook writers (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001; Kasper, 2001; Vellenga, 2004). However, there is also a small amount of evidence that learners do pick up pragmatic features through incidental exposure to input and repeated use of the target features in classroom, even when pragmatic features are not intended learning targets, suggesting that naturalistic development of pragmatic competence is possible in a formal classroom without explicit instruction (R. Ellis, 1992; Kanagy, 1999; Nikula, 2008; Ohta, 2001; Taguchi, in press; Tateyama & Kasper, 2008). A good example of this phenomenon is Ohta's (2001) study on acquisition of acknowledgment and alignment expressions in L2 Japanese. Acknowledgment is a feedback signal used to show attentiveness in conversations (e.g., *sodesuka desu ka,* meaning "oh really"), and alignment is an emphatic feedback signal (e.g., *ii desu ne,* meaning "That's great, isn't it?"). Naturalistic recordings of classroom interactions revealed that through recycled use of these expressions in peer conversations, learners gradually developed appropriate production. Collaborative peer–peer interaction created a range of opportunities for students to use targets that were not available in teacher-fronted exchanges. These findings tell us about the potential of opportunities for and outcomes of incidental pragmatics learning in various classroom practice and activities.

Although Ohta (2001) is perhaps the only existing study that explicitly links classroom resources to pragmatic-related learning outcomes. Several recent classroom observational studies have analyzed classroom discourse to identify opportunities for pragmatics learning. Tateyama and Kasper's (2008) analysis of naturally occurring requests in classroom revealed that, compared with interactions with students, requests from a class instructor to a native speaker classroom guest reflected a wider range of interactional sequences, linguistic resources, and speech styles. These different styles associated with requests potentially provided learners with opportunities to observe how request speech acts are structured differently in various situations. In another study, Nikula (2008) used the discourse-pragmatic approach to analyze pragmatic language use in a content-based L2 English classroom in Finland. Seventh-grade physics and biology lessons taught in English were recorded and analyzed for instances representing negotiation of misunderstandings, disagreements, and initiations. Although students' linguistic repertoire used to perform these functions was not as versatile as that of native speakers, they clearly attempted to monitor degrees of directness in potentially face-threatening situations. Students showed pragmatic proficiency not only in terms of avoiding threats to face but also in terms of recognizing how to participate in classroom interactions while also attending to interpersonal relationships. Various interactional accomplishments observed among students illustrate the nature of content-based classrooms as potential environments for practicing conversational participation.

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Taguchi's (in press) study, which examined the development of pragmatic comprehension and production among Japanese learners of English in an immersion setting, provided a rich opportunity to analyze the impact of classroom discourse in this environment. Quantitative data on learners' pragmatic gains were analyzed with qualitative data on their sociocultural experiences collected through interviews, classroom observations, journals, and field notes. The body of triangulated data generated an interesting portrayal of opportunities for pragmatic practice, learners' stance in accessing such opportunities, and context-specific factors that facilitated or constrained this access. For instance, class observation revealed a number of jokes, expressions of sarcasm, and indirect communication, all of which assumed shared context and background knowledge between teachers and students. These opportunities for nonliteral communication seemed to contribute to the learners' steady progress in the ability to comprehend implicature. In contrast, their ability to produce formal, high-imposition speech acts did not progress much over time. It was speculated that this resulted from learners' lack of attention to the sociocultural aspects of language use, reinforced through interactions with classroom instructors. Teachers rarely corrected students' inappropriate language use, putting politeness considerations behind encouragement of direct interaction. As a result, students seemed to have developed an inaccurate assessment of target form-function-context mappings, which constrained their progress in appropriately using formal speech acts.

As summarized above, observational classroom studies have revealed that pragmatics learning can be constructed through classroom interactions. Future research would benefit from focusing on a systematic analysis of classroom discourse and practice (i.e., teacher talk, routines, and peer–peer interaction) from a pragmatic perspective. This could unveil the facilitative potential of opportunities for incidental pragmatics learning within various classroom practice and activities. When linked with formative and summative assessment, such an analysis should yield meaningful information about which aspects of pragmatic competence develop naturally along with resources that are present in a given classroom, and which aspects do not progress quickly and thus require instructional intervention.

PRAGMATICS TEACHING IN THE ERA OF POSTSTRUCTURALISM AND MULTICULTURALISM

Although the framework of communicative competence has immensely influenced our understanding and practice of pragmatics in L2 teaching, the wave of poststructuralism that the applied linguistics field has embraced in the last decade, together with the surge of transnationalism and multiculturalism, has inevitably challenged the traditional notion of pragmatic competence. In the current society, multiple ethnic groups and languages form a demographic makeup of one place. People develop diverse perspectives through varieties of experiences stemming from racial and ethnic differences. In this new era, knowledge of socially appropriate language use (Bachman & Palmer, 1996; Canale & Swain,

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1980), which is the defining characteristic of the communicative competence models, is open to debate, as seen in the recent reconceptualization of communicative competence into interactional competence (Lee, 2006; Young, 2002; Young & He, 1998) and symbolic competence (Kramsch & Whiteside, 2008). The central problem in these definitions of communicative competence models relates to the homogeneous native speaker norms assumed in expressions like *socially appropriate language use* and *language functions appropriate to situations.* By whose criteria is appropriateness determined in a given language, and to what extent are these criteria valid? Do native speakers of different backgrounds operate under identical standards in judging and projecting appropriateness of behaviors? If the assumption of idealized native speakers is in question, can teachers still transmit ideological beliefs about community norms to students, and are students expected to conform to these norms? These questions have yet to be answered in the current era of globalization and multiculturalism.

Take English, the most researched language in pragmatics, for example. Only about 7% of the world population is composed of native English speakers. The vast majority of interactions involving English take place in the absence of native speakers, and English as a lingua franca is increasingly used as a means of international communication. House (2010) revealed that speakers of lingua franca bring their own pragmatic norms in communication, and various interactional norms, standards of politeness and directness, and cultural conventions are constantly negotiated among speakers. Speakers develop their own discourse strategies and communicative styles in their use of English as a lingua franca. In this communication venue, monolingual norms do not exist, nor are they relevant to evaluation of pragmatic competence, yet studying monolingual norms remains the mainstream practice in traditional interlanguage pragmatics research.

An equally important consideration in native speaker norms is learners' subjectivity in the emulation of and resistance to the norms in social interaction (Ishihara, 2010). Some learners may want to conform to the pragmatic norms of the given culture, but others elect not to use these forms, perhaps signaling a desire to maintain their identity. Recent studies provide empirical support for this observation Davis (2007) study. In Davis's study, Korean learners of English in Australia showed a preference toward routines in American English over their counterparts in Australian English because of the fascination with American culture that they developed in their home country. Ishihara and Tarone (2009) found that learners of Japanese tended to resist pragmatic use of honorifics or gendered language because of their beliefs in egalitarian social relationships coming from their home culture norms.

These findings reiterate the uniqueness of pragmatics. Learning pragmatics involves learning linguistic behaviors that are reflective of values and norms of a given culture. When learners' L1 and L2 cultures do not operate under the same values and norms, or when learners do not agree with L2 norms, linguistic forms that encode target norms are not easily acquired. While in terms of grammar and lexis, those cases are treated as instances of negative transfer or L1 interference

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that are largely unconscious, in pragmatics, learners are considered to make conscious decisions on whether to accept or resist target pragmalinguistic forms and sociopragmatic norms, and these decisions are thought to be guided by their subjectivity, beliefs, and experiences in their L1. These characteristics of pragmatics bring about a range of unique challenges in pragmatics teaching. For instance, echoing Ishihara and Tarone (2009), we need to assess who the students are in the classroom and what needs they have for their language study in order to take into consideration individuals' subjectivity in making pragmatic choices. Similarly, possible consequences of selecting pragmatic behavior should be made clear to learners, although the selection should be left to them according to their own learning goals (Judd, 1999). Adding to Judd, however, we should recognize that learners' pragmatic choice reflects not only their goals, but also their level of L2 proficiency, which might constrain their ability to perform pragmatic functions.

The poststructuralist movement is also an impetus in the shifting view of pragmatic competence as a monolithic trait within individual learners to an emergent state jointly constructed among participants in discourse. Traditionally, pragmatic competence has been operationalized as the ability to use appropriate speech act formulae, comprehend indirect meaning, or choose proper speech styles, and these features have been considered target features in instruction. However, such practice begs the question of whether pragmatics can be reduced to a set of isolated linguistic systems used to index social functions and other styles and behaviors associated with politeness. This reductionist view has been challenged by the recent poststructuralist perspective, which argues that pragmatic acts are dynamic in nature, constructed and negotiated through interaction among participants (Kasper, 2006). Under poststructuralism, language is considered fundamentally unstable and subject to change across settings and through interaction. Meaning is produced within discourses and regulated by all forms of semiotic activity, including texts, images, gestures, and spaces (e.g., Pennycook, 2001). This poststructuralist perspective has recently been adopted for pragmatics. Corresponding to Kasper's (2001) approach to discursive pragmatics, an increasing number of recent studies have applied conversation analysis (CA) to the analysis of action, meaning, and context in pragmatic acts. CA utilizes the *emic* approach in analyzing talk-in-interaction to reveal how participants coconstruct actions sequentially turn-by-turn and design their turns to jointly accomplish the activity at hand. Together with CA, an emerging body of studies in interactional linguistics and discourse-functional linguistics has focused on analyzing ongoing social activities and sequential contexts where specific linguistic forms are used (e.g., M. Ishida, 2009; Mori, 2006). These studies have revealed how particular linguistic forms emerge from the "moment-by-moment unfolding of talk-in-interaction, in conjunction with other types of multimodal semiotic resources available for interactional participants" (Mori, 2009, p. 344).

The challenge of future pragmatics teaching then involves reconceptualizing the goal of instruction to reflect this new epistemology. Pragmatic competence could be promoted in more authentic, less structured dialogic activities where learners have choices to adapt their pragmatic resources to ongoing

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interactions. Likewise, in identifying target pragmatic features, we can apply performance-based analysis that involves examination of wide-ranging features of interactional competence, without limiting these to traditional linguistic elements such as directness of syntactic forms and semantic strategies. Some interactional features we could analyze include fluency, discourse, and conversation-management skills; the ability to accomplish mutual understanding; and the ability to recover from communicative breakdowns. These features are suggested in recent literature that proposed application of CA-informed materials to pragmatics instruction (Felix-Brasdefer, 2007; Huth & Teleghani-Nikasm, 2006).

CONCLUSION

Thanks to the rapidly growing literature in L2 pragmatics over the last few decades, we have witnessed a rich array of empirical studies that have collectively presented a variety of options for pragmatics teaching and learning in formal classrooms as well as in less traditional learning environments (e.g., online social media). A veritable explosion of instructional intervention studies in the last two decades has certainly helped us situate pragmatics teaching within the larger scope of SLA research, while also drawing explicit connections to psycholinguistic-oriented theories that explicate cognitive underpinnings for pragmatics learning. Research in the same period on pedagogical resources has continuously expanded options of pragmatics teaching from teacher-directed instruction toward more individualized, self-paced learning through use of technology and strategy training. Studies under the social constructivist view have taken an ecological approach to data by adapting rich, qualitative analyses of classroom input and interaction in terms of resources for pragmatics learning. A recent addition to this area is the expressed consideration to the practitioners of pragmatics teaching or teachers who inevitably influence how instructional methods and materials are implemented.

Whether we refer to instructional methods, materials, or classroom opportunities, a body of select literature reviewed here suggests a variety of possibilities and challenges involved in teaching pragmatics. Pragmatics addresses a wide range of elements—forms, functions, contexts, social relationships, cultural conventions, and norms—and this complexity has made teaching pragmatics a demanding task. Likewise, in the era of transnationalism and poststructuralism, pragmatics has identified additional issues to consider, such as target pragmatic norms for instruction, learners' subjectivity in emulating norms, and pragmatics as a discourse activity. Although these assorted issues have generated more questions than answers in terms of optimal instructional conditions for pragmatic development, the unique challenges and opportunities that are inherent to the nature and practice of pragmatics will continue to expand future scholarship in the area of interlanguage pragmatics and in the wider field of applied linguistics.

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ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Belz, J. (2008). The role of computer mediation in the instruction and development of L2 pragmatic competence. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics, 27*, 45–75.

This article discusses the role of computer mediation in pragmatic teaching and the development of L2 pragmatic competence. Based on existing literature, potential contributions of CMC to pragmatic instruction are examined in four areas identified as problematic or unexplored in pragmatics pedagogy: authenticity of instructional materials, opportunities for meaningful interactions, longitudinal documentation of pragmatic competence, and efficacy of CMC-based pedagogical intervention. This article also reviews a range of options for technology-aided pragmatic teaching, including self-accessible Web sites, use of corpora, and synthetic immersive environments and virtual spaces.

Ishihara, N., & Cohen, A. (2010). *Teaching and learning pragmatics: Where language and culture meet*. Harlow, UK: Pearson Longman.

This 16-chapter resource book provides comprehensive guidelines for teachers about how to deal with pragmatics issues in classroom. The book begins with an introspective analysis of teachers' knowledge about pragmatics and then moves on to a variety of practical tips for teaching pragmatics: gathering pragmatic data to be used for classroom purposes, understanding common causes of students' pragmatic failures, understanding benefits of an awareness-raising approach, developing lesson plans and assessment tools for pragmatic skills, and analyzing textbook materials for pragmatic use. Hands-on activities and discussion questions embedded throughout the book are designed to equip teachers with practical techniques on pragmatics teaching, which can assist them in making informed instructional decisions in the classroom.

Taguchi, N. (2009). *Pragmatic competence*. Berlin, Germany: Mouton de Gruyter.

This book is an edited collection of empirical studies that examine pragmatic competence in Japanese as a second language. This volume offers insights about pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics related to Japanese language and culture. By documenting use of pragmatic forms and norms by learners of Japanese, the book informs practitioners about potential ease and difficulties related to learning Japanese pragmatics and presents pedagogical implications in terms of dealing with these pragmatic targets in the classroom.

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