

Many of our readers working in Japan are teaching language skill courses one way or another. Being one of them, I have always had a problem matching the findings from pragmatic research with reality. I am sure I am not the only one asking this question: how can we ever teach the pragmatics of a language to our students? Pragmatics deals with everyday subtleties of linguistic or even non-linguistic communication. Since native speakers and nonnative speakers belong to different cultural groups, their communication styles are, and should be, different. Therefore, I agree with ideas that explicitly state that L2 pragmatics is fundamentally different from L1 pragmatics, and conforming to the L1 norm may not be the goal of learning a language. As the findings from pragmatic research do not solve our everyday problems as a language instructor, then, what should we teach? This time, I have looked at some of the studies that deal with teaching pragmatics.

Cohen, Andrew E. 2008. Teaching and assessing L2 pragmatics: What can we expect from learners? *Language Teaching*, 41:2, 213-235.

Cohen's paper is from his plenary speech at AAAL held in 2007. It provides clear guidelines for language teachers who are engaged in teaching in a foreign language environment. It first reviews recent pragmatic research, and then it goes on to provide a more practical guide for language teachers, based on the belief that explicit teaching of pragmatics is possible and should be encouraged. This paper is very informative as it not only introduces many studies on L2 pragmatics, ranging from acquisition to pedagogy, but also describes some specific examples of pedagogical tools.

Wigglesworth, Gillian and Yates, Lydia. 2007. Mitigating difficult requests in the workplace: What learners and teachers need to know. *TESOL Quarterly*, 41:4, 791-803.

One of the most heavily studied speech acts in L2 pragmatic research may be the speech act of request. This study seems to have been conducted because of a rather serious need arising from the many migrant workers currently in Australia. The authors used role plays to investigate how L1 and L2 speakers of English perform requests in workplace situations, examining sociopragmatic aspects and pragmalinguistic aspects. In terms of sociopragmatic factors, while L1 speakers "asserted solidarity rather than acknowledged hierarchy" (p. 793), L2 speakers marked more hierarchy in interaction. The researchers further analyzed different patterns of linguistic devices used in requests. Although this paper is a brief summary of findings, it offers some implications for language teaching.

Explicit teaching and exposure to the target cultural norms seem to be two different ways of acquiring pragmatic competence. The following study specifically studied the relationship between length of residence and pragmatic proficiency.

Xu, Wei, Case, Rod E. and Wang, Yu (in press). Pragmatic and grammatical competence, length of residence, and overall L2 proficiency. *System*, doi:10.1016/j.system.2008.09.007

Using two proficiency levels of L2 speakers of English, the authors studied how length of residence and overall proficiency are related to achieving pragmatic and grammatical competency. The results

reveal that while both factors have an effect on acquiring pragmatic competency, overall proficiency has a more significant effect. Also, pragmatic competency and grammatical competency are strongly correlated. The participants in these studies were international students from various cultural backgrounds studying in the U.S. The tasks used were grammatical and pragmatic error detection tasks in a written format, where the participants were asked to judge whether the given utterances were correct or needed revision. They rated the degree of inappropriacy of the utterances and were asked to revise them when necessary. This type of

study, a replication of the Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei's study (1998), exemplifies the possibility of pragmatic assessment in written format. However, as many studies report that participants' native languages positively affect pragmatic competence, ignoring that factor seems to be problematic.

Reference

Bardovi-Harlig, K., Dörnyei, Z. 1998. Do language learners recognize pragmatic violations? Pragmatic vs. grammatical awareness in instructed L2 learning. *TESOL Quarterly* 32, 233-259.

Call for Contributors

The Language Teacher is seeking papers (1,500-2,000 words) for a special issue on discourse and identity in second language contexts, including language learning settings and/or language-in-use beyond the classroom. Papers should be research based and focus on the discursive accomplishment of identity through the application of participant-centred methodologies such as Discursive Psychology, Conversation Analysis or Membership Categorization Analysis. We are looking for articles that document the negotiation of identity in instances of naturally-occurring interaction, particularly studies that feature original collections of interactional practices. Transcripts should conform to Jeffersonian conventions and be limited to 35 characters per line, including spaces. If you are interested in writing a paper for this special issue or have suggestions which might fit with the above themes, please contact Tim Greer at tim@kobe-u.ac.jp and Keiko Ikeda at ikedakeiko@nagoya-u.jp. The deadline for manuscript submissions is 30 July 2009. Please see the TLT submissions guidelines at <http://jalt-publications.org/tlt/submissions/> for further details on formatting.

