

## Book Reviews

Naoko Taguchi (ed.). 2009. *Pragmatic Competence (Mouton Series in Pragmatics 5)*. Berlin/New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 364pp. ISBN 9783110218541

Reviewed by *Noriko Iwasaki*

*Pragmatic Competence* presents a collection of 12 papers (10 empirical studies, one historical overview, one commentary) edited by Naoko Taguchi. It is undoubtedly a welcome contribution to the study of interlanguage pragmatics (ILP), since it satisfies the need to update the study of pragmatic competence as it relates to Japanese, the language “next in line” to English of commonly studied languages in ILP as Gabriele Kasper states in “(Instead of a) Forward” (xiii). The previous collection of ILP studies focusing on Japanese was an edited volume by Kasper (1992), so this volume seems long overdue, especially considering the theoretical and methodological developments in ILP in the past couple of decades and the persistent dominance of English as the target language in ILP studies. (There were, of course, a number of significant ILP studies on Japanese that were published as individual articles or monographs, some of which Kasper summarizes in the first section in this volume.) The current collection, therefore, is not only of interest to specialists and students of Japanese ILP but also to ILP specialists across the disciplines for it affirms the significance of studying different languages in order to dig deeper into the universal and language-specific nature of (interlanguage) pragmatics. It also suggests fruitful directions for future ILP studies.

The 10 empirical study chapters cover diverse ILP topics on a range of linguistic resources in Japanese (e.g., interactional particles, honorifics, speech styles), broadly addressing the questions related to theoretical (construct definition), empirical (methods), and practical (application to teaching) issues. These chapters are preceded by Dina Yoshimi’s historical overview of the relationship between ILP and Japanese language pedagogy, which nicely situates the 10 empirical studies in Japanese pragmatics and pedagogy fields. The empirical studies are then followed by Mori’s commentary, in which Mori discusses important new developments in the related fields and suggests future directions for research and language teaching.

My main contentions, shared to a large extent by Junko Mori, is that many of the empirical studies in the collection, with the notable exception of the chapter by Noriko Ishihara and Elaine Tarone, do not reflect some of the more recent developments in studies of second-language acquisition from the 1990s and 2000s

that are pertinent to ILP research: the seminal work by Block (2003) and works (re)published in a special issue of the *Modern Language Journal* in 2007 (e.g., Firth and Wagner 1997/2007; Swain and Deters 2007; Kramersch and Whiteside 2007). The key topics, considered important in discursively grounded research, are noted by Kasper: “the complex interrelation of indexical orders, ideologies and identities” (xv) and learners’ agency/subjectivities with which they may resist the target language norm. The notion of a “native speaker” norm or model is also contestable, but it appears to be tacitly assumed as the learners’ target by many of the researchers in the current volume. Furthermore, the “dialogic aspect of communication” (2) mentioned by the editor in the overview of the recent development of theoretical models in pragmatic competence, such as interactional competence (Young and He 1998) and “symbolic competence” (Kramersch and Whiteside 2008), do not seem to be considered by many of the contributors. Yet, there are interesting observations mentioned in passing or discussed briefly that are pertinent to these key issues, which I wish they had explored further. Nevertheless, the studies used a variety of data that were collected in ingenious ways, and their findings are very interesting. Below, I summarize each chapter and conclude with my overall commentaries.

## **1 Dina R. Yoshimi. From *a!* to *zo*: Japanese pragmatics and its contribution to JSL/JFL pedagogy**

This chapter presents a very helpful historical survey of research on Japanese pragmatics and JSL (Japanese as a Second Language)/JFL (Japanese as a Foreign Language) pedagogy during the past five decades. Yoshimi first illustrates how the related fields advanced from the 1960s–1970s to the 1970s–1980s: from opportunistic treatments of pragmatic features in textbooks and anecdotal/intuitive sentence-level evidence in linguistic analysis to discourse-level pragmatic research that examines naturally occurring data. This shift was taken up by researchers/practitioners of JFL and might be best accomplished by Jordan and Walton (1987), who considered that the basic unit of learning needed to be sample discourse. Jordan with Noda (1987) adhered to this principle and provided thorough coverage of pragmatic usage in their textbook series, but according to Yoshimi, its thoroughness made their approach too time-consuming to effect a dramatic change in the instruction of JFL pragmatics. Yoshimi considers the 1980s as a significant decade for both Japanese pragmatics and JFL pedagogy with important publications (e.g., Maynard 1989; Mizutani and Mizutani 1987).

The expectations for JFL learners also shifted; the learners were expected to be able to develop pragmatic competence.

In the 1990s, other shifts took place. On the one hand, methodological and theoretical shifts took place toward a broader interest in joint actions and social activities (e.g., Mori 1999) in pragmatics research. On the other hand, JFL practitioners sought effective instructional approaches (e.g., Yoshimi 2001). While some studies showed the effectiveness of explicit instruction, research adopting language socialization demonstrated that pragmatic development may proceed through participation in pragmatic routines.

In the 2000s, there were a number of publications adopting critical approaches that explored “the dynamics and multiplicity of language phenomena” (Tai 2003: 22, cited by Yoshimi: 29) and questioned the simplistic, stereotypical understanding of the relationship between language and culture, which JFL classroom instruction was mired in. There was also a call for the updating of instructional materials so that they would reflect the real-life language use at the discourse level (Jones and Ono 2005), which coincided with publications of some innovative authentic materials such as Maynard (2005). But despite the advanced understanding of what to teach, the question of how to teach pragmatics has remained critical. Based on particular studies including one by the author (Yoshimi 2008), she lists three features common to the design of the instructional components from which successful pragmatic development stems; these are to provide a range of resources to accomplish the same action in different ways, information about moment-by-moment contextual features in interaction that affect the choice of pragmatic resources, and extended instruction including explicit instruction, practice opportunities, and feedback (30–31).

Yoshimi’s overview is concise and yet very informative. It undoubtedly helps readers to proceed to the following chapters with an understanding of a larger picture of the field.

## 2 Kazutoh Ishida. Indexing stance in interaction with the Japanese *desu/masu* and plain forms

Ishida demonstrated that an instructional approach that was equipped with the features that Yoshimi discussed was indeed effective in enabling beginning level learners to develop both awareness about style-shifting between two sets of forms (*desu/masu* and plain forms), which I refer to as “speech styles,” and their ability to use this shift to index affective stance in conversation. Over two semesters, he employed pragmatics-focused instruction regarding the use of the two speech styles (awareness-raising about contextual features that could signal them to

select one style rather than the other and the stances that were expected) followed by 10-minute conversation sessions with L1 Japanese speakers (native speakers of Japanese) in the classroom, and examined six learners' awareness and ability to use the styles. The data consisted of learners' comments on reflection sheets filled out after the conversation sessions (to assess their awareness of their own use of the styles) and the recording of the conversations (to assess the learners' ability to use the forms). Their comments and conversational performances were compared with six learners in a control group, who did not receive pragmatics-focused instruction. It was found that the learners in the experimental group were more aware of their speech styles than the control group learners and were able to shift to the plain forms for a range of purposes, but this was noticeable only in the second semester. Ishida's study is consonant with recent developments in the field reviewed by Yoshimi in that he was cognizant of the dynamic choice of speech styles by moment-by-moment contextual cues, and provided instruction on it. His finding that instruction made a difference for awareness and use of speech style shifts at the beginning level (if the instruction was given for an extended period of time) is noteworthy.

### 3 Keiko Ikeda. *Advanced learners' honorific styles in emails and telephone calls*

Ikeda examines the use of honorifics among 15 advanced learners of Japanese who reside in Japan in order to find the extent to which they use honorifics and what other linguistic resources they use to express politeness. She focuses on three types of honorific forms: exalted, humble-1 (*kenjoo-go*, referent honorifics), and humble-2 (*teechoo-go*, addressee honorifics). She devised two tasks that simulate authentic situations that the learners may encounter in real life. The participants first wrote an email message to a potential supervisor (for an internship or graduate study) and subsequently telephoned her to express their intention and to introduce themselves. Their use of honorific forms was compared to that of 15 L1 speakers' quantitatively (frequency of use of each type per t-unit in email data and per utterance unit in telephone conversation data) and qualitatively (how learners used available linguistic resources). It was found that advanced L2 (second language) speakers generally "underused" honorific expressions, especially in telephone conversations, but they spoke "politely" through other means: by complimenting the addressee, using formulaic expressions for opening and closing, and using discourse markers *nanka* 'some(how)' and *ichioo* 'tentatively' – though how the author reached the conclusion that L2 learners use these forms for politeness was not fully discussed. The role-plays were well thought-out, and

the investigation of alternative ways of expressing politeness that L2 speakers employ was original and insightful. However, I am slightly uncomfortable with a dissonance between the author's analysis and her discussion of honorifics in the background section in which it was made clear that honorifics were not necessarily used to express politeness but used to acknowledge one's place in relation to the others in a social activity in progress and/or to construct social selves, i.e., to "present themselves as a fully cultivated members of the community" (74). The analysis in which L2 learners' less frequent use of honorifics (compared to L1 speakers) is simply considered as "underuse" seems to disregard the agency of L2 speakers, who may potentially opt out of presenting themselves as a "fully cultivated member."

#### **4 Noriko Ishihara and Elaine Tarone. Subjectivity and pragmatic choice in L2 Japanese**

Ishihara and Tarone investigate L2 learners' resistance to native speaker pragmatic norms upfront and call for greater sensitivity to learners' cultures and their subjectivities. The authors conducted semi-structured retrospective interviews with seven participants who had earlier completed role-plays and oral DCTs for requesting, refusing, and responding to compliments both in their L1 (English) and in Japanese, and explored the reasons behind the learners' deliberate pragmatic choices to accommodate or resist native speaker norms. They report their findings on three of the seven participants due to space limitations. It was found that the learners' subjectivities guided their pragmatic choices, which were intertwined with their life experiences and their previous Japanese learning. Ishihara and Tarone's systematic investigation of the learners' accommodation and resistance is stimulating and their pedagogical implications are also insightful. I wish they had had space to report how they selected the three participants on whom they reported and at least a brief summary of the findings about the other four learners they examined.

#### **5 Yumiko Takeyama. Requesting in Japanese: The effect of instruction on JFL learners' pragmatic competence**

The study by Takeyama investigates the effect of instruction on pragmatic competence in making requests. She compared two groups of fourth-semester university

students: 22 students who received regular instruction including grammatical structures useful for making requests and 24 students who received pragmatics-focused “expanded instruction,” which included consciousness raising activities, oral communicative practice with native speakers, and a video feedback session. In Takeyama’s original study, the participants’ pragmatic competence during the 10-week time was assessed using four instruments (DCTs, telephone message tasks, role-plays, and video clip rating tasks); in this chapter, the results of three L1 Japanese speakers’ ratings on the learners’ performances in the telephone message and role-play tasks are reported. Despite a well thought-out design of the expanded instruction, no significant difference was found between the regular instruction group and the expanded instruction group either quantitatively or qualitatively. The significant difference found was between the learners’ performances on the telephone message tasks and on role-plays in both groups of learners. Given these results, I found a statement in the abstract rather misleading: “The results revealed a significant instructional effect . . .” (129). The title and premise of the article may lead one to believe that what is being investigated here is the effect of pragmatics-focused instruction (expanded instruction).

The finding that learners did better in role-plays and the author’s account for it (i.e., the interlocutor’s contribution in co-constructing the interaction) are worth noting in the light of development in pragmatics that consider interactions as social activities, as summarized by Yoshimi. But note that in Ikeda’s study, the participants used more honorific forms in email messages than in telephone conversation tasks, suggesting differential effects of tasks depending on the target of investigations and on the measurement of performances.

## **6 Takafumi Shimizu. Influence of learning context on L2 pragmatic realization: A comparison between JSL and JFL learners’ compliment responses**

Shimizu explores the influence of the learning context – i.e., learning Japanese as a second language (JSL) in Japan or as a foreign language (JFL) in their home countries – on the pragmatic development of responses to compliments by comparing response strategies (Positive [agreeing to the compliment], Negative [negating], and Avoidance) employed in oral DCT (Discourse Completion Tests) by 24 American learners of Japanese who had lived in Japan more than 6 months, 24 American learners of Japanese who had not lived in Japan, and L1 Japanese

speakers. There were eight DCT situations differing in social distance between the interlocutors, their social statuses, and self-evaluation (congruence or incongruence to the object of compliment). The two groups of American learners of Japanese were both enrolled in a third- or fourth-year level course. As Shimizu's review illustrates, the Japanese compliment strategies are generally believed by textbook authors and practitioners to diverge from the American strategies in favoring Negative strategies (e.g., disagreement to the compliment) despite empirical evidence that does not support the stereotypical view (instead it has been reported that Japanese speakers use Avoidance or Positive strategies more often than Negative strategies).

It was found that JSL learners' strategies (Avoidance 44.8% > Negative 34.4% > Positive 20.8%) were more similar to L1 Japanese speakers (Positive 48.3% > Avoidance 38.8% > Negative 12.9%) than JFL speakers (Negative 58.3% > Positive 24.0% > Avoidance 17.7%) both quantitatively and qualitatively. JFL speakers tended to use explicit denials to the compliments, relying on two specific words, *ie* 'no' and *ie* 'no.' The patterns of their strategies were attributed to transfer of training (instruction) based on their responses in follow-up interviews. Despite some methodological concerns noted by the author himself (e.g., the equivalencies of JFL and JSL learners' proficiency levels were not attested by any objective measurements), his findings are of great interest to those who are concerned with JFL pedagogy and those who are interested in the effects of study abroad.

## 7 Megumi Kawate-Mierzejewska. Refusals in Japanese telephone conversations

Kawate-Mierzejewska examines naturalistic request-refusal sequences among 20 L1 Japanese speakers and 20 American learners of Japanese in order to identify differences and similarities between L1 Japanese speakers and American learners of Japanese. All participants were friends or acquaintances of the author, who phoned them to make two requests (to tape-record phone conversations with their friends and to introduce their friends to the author). The author then analyzed the participants' refusals to her requests by first identifying units of analysis based on semantic formulas and then examining types of responses and the sequential organization. It was found that the L2 speakers used a wider variety of refusal strategies, while L1 Japanese speakers mostly used a combination of Delay (delaying responses by using such strategies as requesting information) and Excuse, which was also common among L2 speakers. The author attributes

the relative uniformity of the L1 speakers to formulaicity in their responses. The value of this research is the natural authentic data despite the potentially inappropriate merging of friends and acquaintances (but see my commentaries at the end), as also pointed out by Junko Mori in her commentary.

There were some interesting observations in the Discussion and Conclusion sections: an American female's resistance to change her style of refusal even if she knows that hers is different from L1 speakers', and the lack of any "representative patterns" in each group. There seems to be an underlying assumption that the use of formulaic expressions is preferred over creative, varied uses. While formulaic expressions may be less susceptible to misunderstanding, it may be premature to conclude that they are necessarily more desirable. What remains to be answered in the future research seems to be how successful the varied strategies of L1 speakers and L2 speakers may be, not only in performing the refusal act itself but also in maintaining interpersonal relationships and presenting their preferred social selves.

## 8 Akiko Hagiwara. Comprehending utterances in Japanese as a foreign language: Formulaicity and literality

Hagiwara's study is one of two studies (along with the next article by Naoko Taguchi) on the comprehension of pragmatic meaning. She examines comprehension of three types of utterances (literal, formulaic, and non-literal non-formulaic utterances) among 60 American learners of Japanese (who were enrolled in high-intermediate Japanese courses in U.S. universities and had not spent more than 6 months in Japan) and 60 L1 Japanese speakers, utilizing carefully constructed multiple-choice questions (based on five preliminary studies). She found that the greatest difference between the two groups was in the interpretation of formulaic utterances and suggested that L2 learners are more likely to misinterpret common formulaic expressions such as *Kyoo no fuku wa chotto* 'Your outfit today is a bit . . .' uttered by one's manager at a workplace.

Hagiwara's multiple-choice questions are rather challenging, even for L1 Japanese speakers as reflected in their correct scores of 66.67% for literal and 72.5% for non-literal non-formulaic utterances. I personally find the example given (on page 237) impossible to interpret without hearing how the utterance was said, and feel that giving the questionnaire by pencil and paper format might be problematic for this task since prosodic information matters greatly. But for L1 Japanese speakers, formulaic expressions were not as problematic (81.25%),



whereas L2 learners did poorly in interpreting the formulaic expressions (54.17%). The author attributes L2 learners' difficulty in interpreting formulaic expressions to their lack of experience with a wide range of situations in which the conventional expressions (e.g., *chotto* 'a little,' *gochisoosama deshita* 'thank you for the meal') were used. The expression *gochisoosama deshita*, when used after dining out, often means 'thank you for taking care of the bill.' Hagiwara suggests that the learners' difficulty with this expression in this context also stems from a lack of knowledge about the cultural convention that elders often pay the bill.

A discussion of the difficulty in interpreting *arigatoo gozaimasu* 'thank you' was also interesting. L2 learners could not interpret this simple expression uttered in an informal context to someone (in a close relationship) who just advised a person to stop smoking in ways L1 speakers would. When one utters a polite expression (i.e., *gozaimasu*), the intended meaning is likely to be a sarcastic one. This underscores how contexts matter for the enactment of meanings of "polite" expressions, whose meanings are not inherently polite.

## 9 Naoko Taguchi. Comprehension of indirect opinions and refusals in L2 Japanese

Taguchi conducted a cross-sectional study to examine JFL learners' inferential ability to comprehend indirect refusals, conventional indirect opinions, and non-conventional indirect opinions. A computerized listening test was given to three groups of JFL learners differing in the length of instruction, namely, 30 second-semester students, referred to as "Elementary" students, 33 fourth-semester "Intermediate" students, and 21 sixth-semester "Advanced" students. The indirect refusals were found to be the easiest to comprehend for all groups followed by non-conventional indirect opinions. The conventional indirect opinions were the most difficult to comprehend.

These conventional opinions in this study were expressions with three types of pragmalinguistic features: adverbs of reservation such as *amari* 'not very,' *chotto* 'a little,' and *doomo* 'all the way' (as in *ano sensei wa doomo . . .* 'That teacher is not very . . .') to express one's opinion about a teacher), and indirect sentence endings such as *kana* 'I wonder,' *kamoshirenai* 'maybe,' and *to iu ki ga* 'I feel like' and a questioning strategy used as expressions of disagreement. The verbal reports by 15 randomly selected students revealed that Elementary students had difficulty with basic comprehension ability due to unfamiliarity with some of the linguistic items used in the test. In fact, the list of linguistic items above makes me wonder if the Elementary and Intermediate (and even Advanced) students encountered items such as *doomo*, *kana*, and *to iu ki ga*. To my

knowledge, these are not among items typically introduced in textbooks commonly used in the first to fourth semester JFL courses in the U.S. If most of the students are unfamiliar with these items, and if these items are used in many of the conventional opinion items, then the difficulty of interpreting conventional opinions predictably lies in the learners' limited linguistic knowledge rather than their inferential ability.

A comparison between Hagiwara's and Taguchi's test formats reveals their respective strengths and weaknesses. Hagiwara's did not provide audio stimuli and were lacking paralinguistic cues, but her test might have assessed the learners' ability to infer the non-literal intended meanings since she provided a glossary for the vocabulary which learners may not be familiar with and allowed the learners to consult a dictionary. But the paper and pencil task without any time limit diverges from authentic comprehension tasks, which Taguchi's test format more closely simulates. Despite the differences in formats, however, some of Taguchi's findings about the learners' difficulty echo those of Hagiwara's. Some familiar expressions were difficult to interpret since JFL learners are exposed to a limited range of use of those items (i.e., *V-te shimau*, which indicates completion of action, often with negative connotation) and could not interpret extended meanings. Moreover, as in Hagiwara's study, the interpretations of some expressions also closely related to the understanding of cultural conventions (i.e., one's statement that he drank too much at a party might indicate that the speaker had a good time). The development of pragmatic comprehension requires exposure to familiar expressions in a range of contexts and cultural expectations associated with those contexts.

## 10 Takafumi Utashiro and Goh Kawai.

### **Blended learning for Japanese reactive tokens: Effects of computer-led, instructor-led, and peer-based instruction**

Utashiro and Kawai present the CALL program, DiscoureWare, that they designed to help Japanese learners use reactive tokens such as *soo desu ka* and *naruhodo* (roughly 'Is that so?' and 'I see,' respectively) and a study that examines the effectiveness of the combination of self-paced learning (the use of DiscoureWare), instructor-led learning (e.g., explanation of reactive tokens with examples, video, and fill-in-the-blank quizzes), and peer-based learning (a series of role-plays). Twenty-four university students in Japan, mostly Chinese speakers, participated.

According to the authors, DiscourseWare helps learners to understand conversational situations and forms and functions of reactive tokens and to engage in production practice by providing explanation about situational features (e.g., settings and interlocutor relationships). It also provides explanation of various reactive tokens depicted in video clips and audio-visual fill-in-the-blank quizzes. The participants' learning was assessed by recognition tests in which they wrote the meaning of reactive tokens that they viewed on four video clips, and by production tests (one-on-one interviews) that were later rated by the interviewers on eight aspects of their performances at four different points of time. The participants improved their performances at the delayed post-test as compared to the pre-test.

The most interesting and useful aspect of this study is the syllabus for teaching reactive tokens that the authors designed. Based on previous studies on reactive tokens, they first identified five categories of reactive tokens as the students' targets: backchannel, repetition, paraphrase, predictive completion, and gestures. They then determined objectives and instructional methods for three proficiency levels. Many researchers and practitioners are aware of the importance of reactive tokens; the authors' syllabus presents a comprehensive and systematic approach to teach them.

What is not entirely clear is how useful the courseware is beyond what the instructor-led instruction can provide, especially because the activities in the self-paced learning and instructor-led sessions somewhat overlap and because the language used in the courseware appeared to be English despite the fact that the student population consisted mostly of Chinese. Given the fact they critiqued the only other CALL program for teaching Japanese reactive tokens (Saita et al. 2003) as lacking automatic speech recognition to evaluate the students' production, I was expecting to see such a mechanism in the courseware they presented. It is also not clear how such reactive tokens as repetitions, paraphrasing, and gestures are dealt with in the multiple choice format quizzes and in recognition tests. Yet, the focus on reactive tokens in instruction is very valuable since they play important roles in interactive and interpersonal aspects of communication.

## **11 Tomomi Kakegawa. Development of the use of Japanese-final particles through email correspondence**

Kagegawa presents her longitudinal study spanning 12 weeks on the use of sentence-final particles (SFP) such as *ne* ('to request confirmation or agreement'),

*yo* ('for conviction or assertion'), *yone* ('to mitigate assertion') and *no[da]* ('to provide or seek explanation') on email messages among 11 American learners of Japanese enrolled in a third semester Japanese course, who exchanged email messages with Japanese students in Japan. Each of the learners was paired with two L1 Japanese speaker students and started email communication with them in the fifth week of the semester and continued until the end of the semester. In the ninth and 11th weeks, the author provided brief (15–20 minutes) pragmatics-focused instruction (consciousness raising, explicit metapragmatic explanations, and feedback) utilizing SFPs used in L1 Japanese speakers' email messages as examples. The learners increased the frequency and range of SFPs after the instruction, and there were some moderate gains in accuracy as well. In addition, some learners started to use SFPs productively beyond the use in formulaic expressions. The author attributed the learners' development to the pragmatics instruction.

In my view, the role of interaction with L1 speakers may have played a more significant role than acknowledged in the study. The author considered the L1 speakers' emails as authentic input, but beyond being authentic materials, the fact that the learners interacted with them possibly for the purpose of establishing interpersonal relationships with them might have made a difference in the ways they analyzed the authentic input from their partners. The graph depicting the frequencies of SFPs among L1 and L2 speakers by week (Figure 1 on page 310) is very telling in this respect in that the learners' frequency of use of SFPs largely corresponds to that of L1 speakers. For instance, L1 speakers did not use many SFPs initially and neither did L2 speakers. When L2 speakers abruptly increased their use, so did L1 speakers. It is highly likely that both L1 speakers and L2 learners' use of SFPs was affected by each other's use. The author observed that some of the learners who used the SFP *yone* had L1 speaker partners who used *yone* and that most of the learners who did not use *yone* had partners who never used *yone*. The learners' change in use of SFPs seem to be the result of the combination of the effects of instruction, interaction with L1 speakers, and the enhanced interpersonal relationship between them.

The variation both among L1 speakers and L2 learners is also intriguing. Among 17 L1 speakers, seven did not use any *ne* at all throughout, five did not use any *yo*, and four did not use any *no*. The use of SFPs may depend largely on the users' communicative styles, communicative goals, and personalities. This suggests that quantitative analysis of SFPs would be meaningless without qualitative analysis. The author indeed provides qualitative analysis and determines the "accuracy" of use of each SFP used by L2 learners. But having tried such classification of SFPs myself, often without reaching agreement with my collaborator (Kizu et al. 2010), I wonder how one can determine accuracy or

appropriateness of the use of SFPs with confidence, especially by a single researcher.

This study suggests a number of fascinating potential areas of study of pragmatic development: dialogic and microgenetic development of pragmatic features of language, which may be more easily assessed on computer mediated communication such as emailing and language users' ways of negotiating their social identities and interpersonal relationships.

## **12 Junko Mori. Commentary: The social turn in second language acquisition and Japanese pragmatic research: Reflection on ideologies, methodologies and instructional implications**

From the perspectives inspired by “the social turn” (Block 2003) in the field of second-language acquisition research, Mori comments on theoretical assumptions, research design, and instructional implications seen in the studies in this volume, and suggests future directions in ILP research.

She first points out that most of the studies in the volume adopt traditional, essentialist assumptions such as native vs. non-native speakers and Japanese vs. American cultures. As a consequence, L2 speakers, whose use of language diverges from that of L1 speakers, are regarded as “deficient communicators.” Mori suggests that in intercultural communication, both parties “attempt to interpret the other’s behaviors based on what they know of the others’ cultures, or create a whole new milieu, or the third space” without assuming the standards typically set for members of their own cultural or linguistic community (340). In such communication, creative use of available communicative resources, rather than adherence to the monolingual native speaker norm, may become important.

With the renewed, non-essentialist understanding of “native speaker,” “culture,” and “intercultural communication,” Mori considers alternative approaches of research methods and the learning and teaching of pragmatics. She calls for a shift in the balance between psycholinguistically oriented studies aiming for generalizable findings and studies focusing on individual language users in context, and suggests alternative approaches to research participants, target forms, and processes of data collection.

Mori calls for reconsideration of categorizing research participants without much regard to individual differences and an expansion of the population of

participants. Participants in the studies in the volume are primarily university students who receive formal Japanese instruction, and their pragmatic development as a result of instruction is examined in many of the studies. But learning also occurs outside the classroom; hence, Mori argues for the importance of studying the processes in which L2 speakers' learn L2 pragmatics through experiences outside the classroom.

The focal forms and pragmatic actions selected for investigation in the volume also reflect disciplinary tradition. Mori suggests the reexamination of linguistic and non-linguistic phenomena – e.g., by considering the reconceptualization of politeness (Arundale 1999; Eelen 2001) and by incorporating the insights gained in studies in interactional linguistics (the convergence of conversation analysis, discourse functional linguistics, linguistic anthropology). The use of linguistic items is contingent upon the moment-by-moment unfolding of interaction and needs to be understood in conjunction with other semiotic resources.

Mori questions the validity of data collected by DCT or role-plays employed by most of the studies in the collection. This is because the imaginary roles and situations in the tasks do not necessarily guarantee the participants' involvement and investment in the task unlike in real life in which pragmatic choice may lead to a certain consequence. Underscoring the importance of collecting authentic, naturally occurring discourse, she calls for new kinds of research paradigms and different types of research questions to address the alternative approaches to research participants and focal forms described above.

On the teaching and learning of pragmatics, Mori recommends Kubota's (2003) proposals – Four D's – for teaching culture: (1) Descriptive (rather than prescriptive understanding), (2) Diversity within culture, (3) Dynamic or shifting nature of culture, and (4) Discursive construction of culture. Further, Mori notes the existence of field-specific discourse practices that cannot be tested by a generic test, and cautions about the limitation of one-size-fits-all types of curriculums.

She concludes her commentary with a list of questions to explore in future IPL studies, suggesting that the readers reexamine what has been taken for granted and explore possible alternative approaches. I concur with many of the comments made in Mori's commentary. Below, I will elaborate on some of the points she raised and discuss the challenges for future ILP studies.

## 13 Conclusion

Clearly this volume is an invaluable contribution to ILP studies, both for those who are primarily interested in Japanese-specific ILP and those who are inter-

ested in general or universal issues in ILP, especially because studies with languages other than English as L2 learners' target language are still limited. This is partially the case because research reports written in languages other than English are sometimes invisible to a wider audience. This volume demonstrates the progress Japanese ILP scholars have made so far and, at the same time, is suggestive of the challenges ILP specialists are facing in order to make further advancement.

This collection written in English on Japanese ILP studies was made possible because many of the contributors were trained and/or are affiliated with institutions in the U.S. This, however, has an unfortunate consequence. Not only are L2 learners in the studies primarily limited to university students in formal educational settings (as pointed out by Mori), but also mostly limited to (American) English speakers. American English speakers account for only 3.9% of L2 Japanese learners across the world, according to the 2009 survey by the Japan Foundation. Together with Canadian and Australian learners, learners in the English-speaking countries account for 12.3% of L2 Japanese learners. The majority of the learners are in Asia (Korea 26.4%, China 22.7%, and Indonesia 19.6%). If we are interested in ILP across different L1-L2 combinations in the world, we definitely have a long way ahead of us. But the accomplishment of this volume is certainly an important step forward.

Reflecting the diversity of L1 languages of L2 Japanese learners in Japan (and in some U.S. universities), some studies in the volume had L2 learners whose first language were other languages (all participants in Ikeda's and Utashiro and Kawai's studies, and 40% in Taguchi's study), but the learners' L1 cultures are not taken into account, perhaps due partially to a scarcity of studies accessible to the researchers, reaffirming the need for more studies on pragmatics in a diversity of languages. It would be useful to know whether Chinese speakers' refusals are indirect as compared to Japanese, for example. For that matter, I found Kawate-Mierzejewska's literature review on refusal strategies very informative as she includes studies on L2 Japanese learners with various L1s and a number of studies written in Japanese as well as in English.

Some of the participants are clearly multilingual (i.e., university students in the U.S. whose first language is not English), but their multilingualism or multicompetence (Cook 1992) is not considered, either. Multilingual, multicompetent speakers possess more resources (multiple cultural norms, speech act realization strategies) to make reference to and accordingly make their pragmatic choices. L2 learners' multilingualism is but one factor that may lead to individual differences. Their agency is influenced by their experiences in and outside the classroom and their personal preferences and communication styles guide their pragmatic choices in resisting or accommodating the target native norm, as illustrated by

Ishihara and Tarone. Given also the heterogeneity among L1 speakers (seen, for example, in refusal strategies in Kawate-Mierzejewska's study, compliment response strategies in Shimizu's study, and use of SFPs in Kakegawa's study), the studies in the volume are suggestive of the problem of the adoption of an (imagined) native speaker norm in evaluating L2 speakers' pragmatic competence. Mori cites House (2008: 16) who stated, "intercultural speakers' deliberate cultural alternation needs to be regarded as evincing not cultural 'transfer' or ignorance of a second culture but as a clear sign of the intercultural competence they possess [*sic*]" (340).

However, while recognizing the potential problems associated with the native speaker at the conceptual level is viable, devising a measurement of pragmatic competence may pose a major challenge. Quantitative studies such as experimental studies with control groups are just as important as qualitative studies, and they should complement each other. But if "accuracy" or "appropriateness" based on the similarity to L1 performances or L1 judgment is not the most desirable quantifiable measure, what are the alternative methods of measurement? Another major challenge is the collection of naturally occurring data, whose importance Mori underscores. Kawate-Mierzejewska's data is the closest to natural data. Yet, even her data may be artificial when we consider the fact that the L2 speakers' interlocutor was the researcher herself who desired to elicit refusals. This relates to another challenge that I would like to discuss – the examination of pragmatic competence that considers the dialogic, interactive aspects of communication.

Some of the observations made by Kakegawa are indicative of the other party's influence on the L2 learners' use of SFPs (which are also called "interactive particles," and are reflective of the interactive nature of these pragmatic markers). Concurring with Mori, I also feel that it is fascinating and promising to consider interactive linguistics' insights about the dialogic nature of talks between participants who are engaged in social activities. But some of the studies in the volume that adopted role-plays or interviews did not discuss the use of pragmatic features in question by the other party (except for Ishida, who included the interlocutors' language as a contextual cue for L2 learners when selecting their speech styles for expressing affective stance). However, once we acknowledge the other party's influence, measurement of L2 learners' competence becomes a formidable task since it implies that their performance depends on their interlocutor's performance. I will make a modest, tentative proposal on the measurement of L2 learners' competence below after commenting on another related issue, the role of innovation or creativity versus formulaicity.

There is absolutely no denying that the role of formulaic expressions is significant in L1 and L2 pragmatics, but considering heterogeneity among L1



Japanese speakers (and the problem with a “native-speaker norm”) and L1 and L2 individuals’ agencies, we might need to be cautious when concluding that L2 learners’ use of formulaic routines that is similar to what is often used by L1 speakers indicates more highly developed pragmatic competence. In this regard, Ikeda’s finding that some L2 learners’ deployment of pragmatic markers such as *nanka* ‘something/somehow’ and *ichioo* ‘tentatively’ possibly to express politeness in their own ways is very interesting. Rather than dismissing them as nonnative-like use, analyzing them as L2 speakers’ innovations (which Mori encourages to study), as Ikeda did, is very revealing. But not all L2 innovations may be effective in accomplishing their (social) goals. For instance, I would personally have an objection to some of the L2 uses of *ichioo* shown in the excerpt (91) if I were the potential supervisor (the imagined interlocutor in the task given by Ikeda). The question, then, is not whether L2 use of pragmatic features resembles that of L1 speakers, but how effective their communicative action is in accomplishing their goals.

An alternative measurement that I would like to suggest is the rating of L2 performances by people who represent the likely target audience (i.e., professors or company supervisors in the case of the participants in Ikeda’s task) of the social actions that L2 learners are performing on such scales as that of the effectiveness in accomplishing their goals (i.e., a likelihood for the rater to offer the L2 speaker an internship position) and perhaps related scales such as the one on social identities (e.g., the impression that the speaker is formal, professional, friendly, etc.). (One potential challenge is how to deal with the differences in the content of the messages conveyed by the L2 learners, which obviously also matters.) Those who represent the L2 speakers’ target audience may include L1 monolingual speakers, multilingual speakers including L1 Japanese, and L2 Japanese speakers. I would be interested in both the aggregation of ratings and the variability in ratings. Further, data based on audio clips from L2 speakers as compared to data based on video clips may be revealing. It might tell us how L2 users deploy non-linguistic resources (e.g., facial expressions, postures, gestures) to supplement their verbal performances and how effective they are. (A major challenge here is the influence of the L2 speakers’ appearance, but such influence is apparent in real life. It is even foreseeable that some audiences may evaluate the degree of the match between the L2 speaker’s appearance and verbal performance.) The quantitative measurement may be qualitatively supplemented by the raters’ comments.

This volume has not only provided interesting findings but also given me useful materials on which to base future directions of research. I would certainly recommend this book to my colleagues and graduate students interested in ILP in a variety of languages.

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Reviewed by *Nicole Delbecque*

The monograph *Cultural conceptualizations and language: Theoretical framework and applications* is the first volume of a new book series, viz., *Cognitive Linguistic Studies in Cultural Contexts* (CLSCC). Its author is at the same time co-editor of this series, together with Ning Yu (University of Oklahoma). The book has benefited from the author's personal linguistic and cultural background: Having grown up in Iran, with Persian as his first language, he learned English as his second language. In 1998, he migrated to Australia, where he undertook several applied projects and acquainted himself with the Aboriginal Australian culture.

The book draws on a multidisciplinary background in fields such as cognitive psychology, cognitive linguistics, cognitive anthropology, distributed cognition, complexity science, and anthropological linguistics. Its aim is to enhance our understanding of the ways in which language, conceptualization and culture interact with each other. Its main interest regards the nature of group-level cultural cognition.

The volume is divided into six parts. Part I consists of Chapters 1 through 3 and is devoted to the presentation of the trans-disciplinary theoretical framework. Chapter 4 through the end of the book illustrate the application of the theoretical model of cultural conceptualizations to areas such as dialectal variation (in Aboriginal English in particular), intercultural communication and

cross-cultural pragmatics, political discourse, and English as an International Language. These studies indicate the potential applicability of the theoretical framework.

The point of departure of the book is that human conceptualization is as much a cultural as it is an individual phenomenon. Members of a cultural group constantly negotiate “templates” for their thought and behavior in exchanging their conceptual experiences. The thesis is that, often, complex cognitive systems emerge out of somehow concerted conceptualizations that develop among members of a cultural group over time. Such conceptualization is considered to give rise to the notion of cultural cognition.

Chapter 1 situates conceptualizations at the cultural level of cognition. The conceptualizations to be explored are represented as being “distributed” across the minds of the members of a cultural group. The author develops a model of cultural conceptualizations in terms of “distributed representation.” He is less concerned with metaphors and conceptual blends than with categorization and schemas. He briefly introduces the following types of schemas: event schemas, role schemas, image schemas, proposition schemas, and emotion schemas. These conceptualizations, it is argued, may be instantiated in various cultural artifacts such as paintings, rituals, and narratives. The general approach to identifying such conceptualizations in discourse is based on the ethnographic notions of *emic* and *etic*. Several examples are provided, mainly from research among Aboriginal Australians.

Chapter 2 places cultural conceptualizations within the broader context of cultural cognition. The latter is defined as a heterogeneously distributed system with emergent properties that arise from the interactions between the members of a cultural group. Group-level conceptualization is posited as an integral part of cultural cognition. Next to an individual basis, models, schemas, and categories are also considered to have an emergent basis at the cultural level of cognition. As a distributed system, language is also viewed as a repository for cultural conceptualizations. Various aspects of human languages may therefore encode conceptualizations that reflect cultural experiences of their speakers.

Chapter 3 explores the role of language in cultural cognition. Among the group-level conceptualizations, which are constantly negotiated and renegotiated across time and space by members of a cultural group, the author distinguishes micro-level cognitive structures, which characterize the cognition of the individual, and macro-level cognitive structures, which cumulatively emerge from the effects of the micro-level cognitions during the communicative interactions. With its emergent properties that are nested and “open,” dynamic and self-organizing, cultural cognition is seen in consonance with complex, adaptive systems thinking. As a primary mechanism for communicating cultural con-

ceptualizations, language serves as a “collective memory bank” for cultural conceptualizations that have prevailed at different stages in the history of a speech community. The author mentions various linguistic features and devices that are entrenched in the cultural conceptualizations of the speakers. For example, following Yu (2007, 2008)<sup>1</sup>, the Chinese language is shown to encode the conceptualization of the heart as the locus of affective and cognitive activities (which are covered by the “heart” and the “mind” in English). Sharifan further maintains that within a speech community, people understand implicatures or illocutionary forces of each other’s communicative acts in the light of the cultural schemas and categories that characterize the cultural cognition of the community in question. When it comes to intercultural communication, the understanding of pragmatic meanings may, of course, be facilitated or debilitated depending on differences or similarities between the cultural cognitions of the cultural groups involved.

Chapters 4 and 5, which constitute Part II, present various case studies. Relying on the framework of cultural conceptualizations, the objective is to explore Aboriginal cultures as they are reflected in Aboriginal languages and Aboriginal English, thus legitimating the premise that human language is largely grounded in human cultural experience. Chapter 4 presents a number of features in Aboriginal languages that reflect Aboriginal conceptualizations of kinship, e.g., compounds such as “cousinbrother” or “cousinsister.” In contact varieties, various features of the English-based varieties are shown to continue to instantiate the dynamic Aboriginal cultural conceptualizations, thus warranting the conclusion that language users employ various elements of their languages to instantiate their cultural conceptualizations.

Chapter 5 goes into the cultural conceptualizations associated with English words. The author describes the empirical investigation he conducted in three metropolitan primary schools in Western Australia. The results corroborate the hypothesis that there is a difference in the conceptualizations Aboriginal children and Anglo-Australian ones draw on. The patterns of response obtained in a word association task reveal that the members of each cultural group do not equally and totally share the same conceptualizations, thus confirming that cultural conceptualizations are heterogeneously distributed within a cultural group. At

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1 Yu, Ning. 2007. The Chinese conceptualization of the heart and its cultural context: Implications for second language learning. In F. Sharifan & G.B. Palmer (eds.), *Applied cultural linguistics: Implications for second language learning and intercultural communication*, 65–85. Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

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the same time, however, there appears to exist two distinct though overlapping conceptual systems that parallel the Aboriginal English dialects, on the one hand, and the Australian English ones, on the other. The results commented upon concern stimulus words such as “shame,” “family,” and “home.”

Attention is paid to the educational implications of these findings. Non-Aboriginal teachers, unaware of the mismatch of cultural conceptualizations, place the same expectations on the Aboriginal students as on those who speak Australian English as their first dialect. This study shows that assessment tools are needed that enable the teachers to track divergent cultural conceptualizations and to avoid misunderstandings, e.g., making sure whether “You have a deadly family” means that your family is “dangerous” or “fantastic,” whether “home” is only where the parents live or extends to aunts’ and uncles’ houses, etc.

Part III, then, tackles intercultural communication in three short chapters. Chapter 6 examines naturalistic discourse by Aboriginal Australians. Their use of English words and phrases is shown to instantiate schemas and categories that are rooted in Aboriginal people’s view of the world, including its strong spiritual basis. As the author argues, not acknowledging the fact that for them spirituality impregnates almost any aspect of life, may increase the chance of miscommunication between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal speakers with a potentially damaging impact on Aboriginal people’s lives.

Chapter 7 draws attention to communicative events in English as an International Language (EIL) in which speaker may too easily assume that they mean the same thing when they use the same or similar words, e.g., when responding to compliments. While the author sketches a few communicative strategies allowing for the explication of the underlying conceptualizations – e.g., by asking for clarification – he admits the need for further and more systematic research.

Chapter 8 exemplifies some Persian cultural schemas. One of them is the notion of *sharmandegi* (shame) that surfaces; e.g., in *sharmandeam* ‘I am ashamed’ and similar expressions that are frequently used with interlocutors that are not very close. In Persian, these formulas instantiate a cultural schema that is associated with several speech acts such as Expressing Gratitude, Requesting Goods and Services, Offering Goods and Services, and Apologizing. It is suggested that unfamiliarity with such schemas may lead to discomfort or misunderstanding during the process of intercultural communication.

Part IV moves on to the domain of cross-cultural pragmatics, with two more substantial chapters. Chapter 8 dwells on the Persian cultural schema of *shekasteh-nafsi* (modesty), which is rooted in certain spiritual traditions of Iranian society and motivates the speakers to negate or scale down compliments, downplay their talents, skills achievements, etc., and return the compliment to the complimenter. Adopting an ethnographic perspective, Sharifan focuses on

Persian speakers' replies to compliments. A Discourse Completion Test and its translated version in English were submitted to a group of 30 Iranian speakers of Persian; the English version allowed the author to collect comparable data of a group of 30 Anglo-Australian speakers. Beyond their expected "heterogeneous distribution," the results reveal that the Persian speakers largely stick to the *shekasteh-nafsi* cultural schema in both English and Persian; and while the Australians do not follow a similar schema, their responses display a certain degree of overlap with the Persian ones, especially in downplaying any trait that was the target of a compliment.

With this kind of study, the author hopes to contribute to an increase in intercultural understanding, more particularly to the awareness that English is associated with a multitude of conceptual systems that are culturally constructed. He suggests that training courses in English as an International Language should integrate such findings, thus developing the meta-cultural competence of the language learners, i.e., the abilities needed for successful communication in contexts in which English functions as an international language.

In Chapter 10, Sharifan analyzes the norms of Persian English, considered an emerging variety of English, in the light of Persian cultural conceptualizations. He shows that the use of a number of words and expressions in Persian English, e.g., greetings and the expression of emotions, cannot satisfactorily be accounted for in semantic-pragmatic terms without invoking cultural schemas such as *âberu* (corresponding to the notion of face, comprising respect, credit, prestige, honor, reputation) and *târof* (covering myriad (ritualized) verbal and non-verbal deferential behaviors). Interestingly, in intercultural communication, Persian speakers sometimes translate the latter as 'compliment' or 'courtesy.'

This chapter thus makes another case for the study of World English from the perspective of cultural perspective. The methodology to be developed, he suggests, could be the elaboration of comparative cultural maps showing how deeply rooted cultural concepts are instantiated in different varieties of English.

Part V is entitled "Culture, body, self, and language." The exploration proposed in Chapter 11 centers around conceptualizations of the "self" in Persian as they manifest themselves in a few key words, viz., the native Persian *khod* (pronominal 'self'), the Arabic loanword *khod* ('personhood'), the Sufi *nafs* ('lower self') and the Sufi *del* ('spiritual heart'), *ruh* ('spirit'), and *serr* ('inner consciousness'). Much attention is paid to the importance of the Sufi tradition for contemporary Persian conceptualizations. The examples discussed also point to the interconnection between the conceptualization of 'self' and those of emotion, thinking, politeness, and other forms of social behavior in Persian.

Chapter 12 is devoted to the conceptualization of *cheshm* ('eye') and perception in Persian. The analysis of everyday expressions containing this body-part

term shows that they primarily relate to emotions, including love, envy, greed, as well as character traits such as naivety or willfulness. *Cheshm* ('eye'), as the seat both of love and of envy, is further shown to be associated with a cultural schema that equates 'casting an eye' with 'casting a charm or spell,' strongly connoted as influential action on somebody. Although some words that refer to the process of visual perception are associated with thinking, it turns out that in Persian the conceptual metaphor UNDERSTANDING IS SEEING is not at all central.

Part VI presents two short chapters on political discourse. Chapter 13 is concerned with figurative language in international political discourse. The point of departure is that as metaphors are a component of cultural conceptualizations, they are hard to translate without producing conceptual shifts. However, the examples discussed are rather cases of metonymic shifts that reflect the inferential reading by the translators, e.g., from the "regime" to the "nation" or "state" "to be wiped off the map," from a threatening statement issued by a "government official" to one emanating from the "government." More convincing is the case of the Persian expression "punch in the mouth" implying "not recognise as legitimate" (and possibly "attempting to overthrow"), which happened to be unduly re-framed in English as a warning of a possible nuclear attack against the US. The author is of course right in stressing the importance of re-contextualization and reformulation.

Chapter 14, finally, highlights some of the complexities involved in translating key concepts in international politics. By examining how concepts such as 'concession,' 'compromise,' and 'jihad' may be rendered into Persian, the author shows how these culturally constructed concepts are subject to significant influence from the socio-political contexts in which they are used. He notices that, over time, these terms may present semantic shifts or expansions that are socio-politically motivated.

As a matter of fact, the whole book makes a plea for paying greater attention to the role of language and conceptualization, not only in inner- and intercultural communication in general, but also, more specifically, in negotiating processes aimed at conflict resolution and in debates on the international scene.

The book presents a clear overall structure and is well written. It would probably have read as easily without the reiteration of key concepts across the chapters. This is only a minor drawback, however, in the light of the promising perspectives offered by the framework that attempts to ground language in cultural conceptualization and cultural cognition. It can be foreseen that this work will generate similar studies across a variety of languages and cultures, and allow for the investigation of as yet uncharted domains.

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