

**PRAGMATIC COMPETENCE IN THE TARGET LANGUAGE:  
A STUDY OF IRANIAN LEARNERS OF ENGLISH**

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**PRAGMATIC COMPETENCE IN THE TARGET LANGUAGE:  
A STUDY OF IRANIAN LEARNERS OF ENGLISH**

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## ABBREVIATIONS

CEFR	Common European Framework
CI	Conversational Implicature
CP	Cooperative Principle
DCT	Discourse Completion Task
ILP	Interlanguage Pragmatics
MDCT	Multiple-choice Discourse Completion Task
NS	Native Speaker
NNS	Non-native Speaker
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
TL	Target Language
WDCT	Written Discourse Completion Task

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## ABSTRACT

Despite the growing body of research on the importance of pragmatic competence in the target language as well the introduction of teaching methodologies about the inclusion of pragmatics in language classrooms in last two decades, there are a number of uncertainties which are associated with the concept of pragmatic competence in the target language. This research targets those understudied areas in this field to clarify this notion further, especially its measurability and teachability. This study demonstrates that, while current teaching theories and pedagogies refer to pragmatics as a teachable notion, there are some aspects of pragmatics which are non-linguistic and cannot be taught. Therefore, this study recommends a reconsideration of the existing methodologies on teaching pragmatics in the target language. Moreover, clarifications of the two concepts of pragmatic and communicative competence which are crucial to this subject has been another research objective. While pragmatic and communicative competence have been referred to and defined differently by a number of applied linguists and their views are also reflected in the main theories of communicative competence, like those by Canale and Swain (1980, 1981) and Bachman and Palmer (1996), this study argues that the initial definitions of these two concepts presented by Chomsky (1980) and Hymes (1972) share more similarities rather than differences. Consequently, these models should be approached more cautiously, especially when used as references for communicative competence in the target language. Also, another main focus of this study has been on the data collection methods in pragmatics research. While DCTs which are designed to study speech acts have dominated the realm of pragmatics research, this study develops a new questionnaire to measure the knowledge of conversational implicatures and presuppositions of Farsi learners of English. The results indicate that Iranian learners of English lack the knowledge of conversational implicatures and presuppositions in English.

# CHAPTER 1

## **1.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the motivation for conducting this research. It provides background information related to the main topics which are analysed in this study. This will contribute to a better understanding of the discussions provided in the following chapters. Also, the research background, the research objectives and the research questions will be explained and the general outline of the thesis will be introduced.

## **1.2 Research Background**

Humans are highly complex communicators. Perhaps one of the most evident manifestations of this delicate and complicated nature of human communication is the fact that speakers often intend to convey far more than the words they utter and hearers manage to go beyond what speakers have uttered to retrieve the intended interpretation of the utterance. Arguably, communication is one of the main purposes of learning a second language; nevertheless, the more generic learners are surprised when they realise that, despite having a perfect knowledge of grammatical rules of the target language (TL), they still face difficulties at interpersonal level when establishing a conversation in the TL. Learning of a second language was equated with linguistic or grammatical proficiency for many years, but with the emergence of the communicative approach (Candlin, 1976; Hymes, 1972; Savignon, 1971), this focus has passed to second place, giving primary importance to the achievement of functional abilities in the target language with the final purpose of understanding and producing language that is appropriate to communicative situations in accordance with specific sociocultural parameters. Failure to do so may cause misunderstandings and

sometimes communication breakdowns as well as the stereotyping of the second language learners as insensitive, rude, or inept (Thomas, 1983). Today, acquisition of functional knowledge has been regarded as an important aspect of L2 learning (Savignon, 1997). Also, the relationship between pragmatics and second language acquisition (SLA) has seen a great deal of study by researchers including Scarcella and Brunak (1981), Rintell (1981), Brown & Levinson (1987), Koike (1992, 1996), Saito & Beecken (1997), Félix-Brasdefer (2003, 2006) and Huth (2006).

Pragmatic competence, the ability to convey and interpret the contextual meaning, plays a major role in the communicative ability. According to Mey (2006), intercultural contacts always carry the risk of misunderstandings arising between users with different social and cultural backgrounds. Also, research into the pragmatic competence of L2 learners has demonstrated that, linguistic development does not guarantee a corresponding level of pragmatic development (Bardovi-Harlig and Dornyei, 1998) and that even advanced learners may fail to comprehend or to convey the intended intentions and politeness values. Also, Olshtain and Blum-Kulka (1985) mention that a competent second language learner should acquire socio-cultural rules appropriately as well as grammatical competence. They point out that communication failure may still happen when proficient L2 learners do not have sufficient socio-cultural knowledge. One of the most important skills associated with pragmatic competence is the ability to recognise the appropriateness of an utterance within a given context and to choose one possible form over another based on that understanding (Kasper & Rose, 2002). Thus, it can be argued that the ability to distinguish among different contexts in terms of their unique requirements of formality, politeness, etc., is an inseparable component of pragmatic knowledge.

While there have been many studies on the acquisition of pragmatic competence in the TL, a number of researchers like Thomas (1983), Kasper & Schmidt (1996) and Taguchi (2002),

have called for further studies in Interlanguage Pragmatics (ILP) area. The discipline of ILP is defined by Kasper and Dahl (1991) as “the study of non-native speakers’ acquisition, comprehension and production of pragmatics”. Bardovi-Harlig (2002, p. 185) comments that ILP “is not a new area, just an underdeveloped one”, and recommends that its central research theme should be the development of pragmatic knowledge. Nonetheless, in my opinion, the problems associated with the notion of ILP seem to be more than mere underdevelopment. For example, generalising some features to the whole area of pragmatics and taking lots of assumptions for granted are quite common among ILP theories.

Moreover, assessment of second language pragmatic knowledge is an understudied area of pragmatics. Despite the fact that a few studies have been done so far to explore this concept (Clark, 1978; Oller, 1979; Kasper & Dahl, 1991; Kasper, 2000), a number of researchers including Kasper & Rose (2001) and Roever (2005), have called for further research in the field of pragmatic competence assessment. To clarify the issues that are associated with current data collection instruments in this area, Discourse Completion Tasks (DCTs) as the main source of data collection in both cross-cultural and interlanguage pragmatics will be discussed and analysed in the forthcoming chapters.

While the theoretical and empirical study of interlanguage and intercultural pragmatics has grown significantly over the last two decades (Ellis, 1994), the majority of these studies are devoted to explore, how speech acts performed by non-native speakers of various linguistic and cultural backgrounds differ from the target language norms. On the other hand, other aspects of pragmatics including implicature and presupposition have been less studied by researchers who have been interested to measure the pragmatic knowledge of L2 learners. Also, studies investigating the cross-cultural and interlanguage pragmatics (ILP) among native speakers of Farsi are mainly associated with speech acts and there are no exceptions (Eslami-Rasekh, 2004; Afghari, 2007; Allami & Naeimi, 2011; Pishghadam & Shrafadini,

2011a, 2011b; Azarmi & Behnam, 2012; Samavarchi & Allami, 2012; Farnia et al., 2014). So far, there has been no real attempt by researchers to explore other aspects of pragmatics apart from speech acts among Iranian English learners.

The teachability of the concept of pragmatic competence has also been the core of several studies. Bardovi-Harlig (1996) argues that the classroom is a place where pragmatic instruction can occur. Bardovi-Harlig (1996) cautions against the over-use of textbooks in the classroom, as they represent speech acts either unrealistically or not at all. She suggests a variety of ways to promote pragmatic awareness. Kasper (1997) states that the simple answer to the teachability of pragmatic competence is ‘no’, as ‘competence’ whether linguistic or pragmatic cannot be taught. She believes that competence is a kind of knowledge that learners possess, develop, acquire, use or lose. The challenge for foreign or second language teaching is to try to create learning opportunities in such a way that they benefit the development of pragmatic competence in L2 (Kasper, 1997). So far, several studies on the teachability of pragmatics have compared explicit and implicit instruction and generally have found an advantage for explicit teaching. Roever (2009, p. 567) defines these two methods of teaching as follows: “explicit instruction means metapragmatic explanation being provided as rules of use, sometimes combined with examples, while implicit instruction generally means that examples of the use of the target feature are provided, but without metapragmatic explanation and often without telling the learners what the target feature is”. In another study, Rose and Kasper (2002) review a series of studies that tested the effectiveness of explicit teaching which Schmidt, in Kasper & Rose (2002, p. 255) calls ‘the noticing hypothesis’ (learners cannot learn the grammatical features of a language unless they notice them) versus no instruction. They conclude that explicit instruction of pragmatic rules of the target language is effective in acquiring pragmatic competence. In a study by Koike and Pearson (2005), it is reported that the rate of acquisition of pragmatic competence was faster when



English-speaking learners of Spanish received explicit instruction and feedback. Bardovi-Harlig and Griffin (2005) conducted a study in which one of the tasks consisted of noticing and repairing the speech act of apologising. The authors reported that explicit classroom instruction can benefit ESL learners from different backgrounds even if more advanced learners may develop awareness without instruction.

Finally, while two concepts of pragmatic competence (the ability to use language appropriately in a context) and communicative competence (the grammatical knowledge as well as the knowledge of when and how to use language appropriately) have been presented separately in the models of communicative competence, there is not a general agreement among scholars whether the two are simply the same or should be treated individually. Since its introduction, the notion of pragmatic competence has been interpreted differently by theoreticians. This has been also reflected in the current theories of communicative competence including those by Canale & Swain (1980) and Bachman & Palmer (1996). A critical analysis of these theories which have been used by many scholars and applied linguists in last two decades to make lots of assumptions about communicative and pragmatic competence, will provide a better understanding of the current status of this notion in literature. This will also highlight the shortcomings of these theories in addressing the main aspects of pragmatic competence.

### **1.3 Statement of the Problem(s)**

The emergence of the notion of communicative competence led to the introduction of several theories of communicative competence in the 1980s and the 1990s which have inspired many researchers in the field of applied linguistics in the last three decades. Despite that these theories were introduced around three decades ago or even more, they have highly influenced

the literature, even to date. Therefore, exploring these theories is essential and central to the research objectives.

Communicative and pragmatic competence have triggered lots of interest among scholars associated with language, and a group of applied linguists have had a major impact on the creation of the current literature in the field of communicative and pragmatic competence. Using Hymes' (1972) critical paper on Chomsky's (1965) views on linguistic competence and performance (this will be discussed in detail in chapter 2), and his definition of an idealised native speaker, Canale & Swain (1980, 1983) were among the first to introduce a model of communicative competence which was the starting point for the existing literature in this field (other models of communicative competence like that of Bachman & Palmer 1996, were built on this model). However, taking into consideration some features of pragmatics as well the notion of competence, we find lots of questions which have not been addressed by applied linguists in their theories of communicative competence. First of all, Canale & Swain's (1980, 1983) model is based on the inclusion of notions like pragmatic competence which have remained ambiguous, even to date. While controversial terms like *pragmatics & competence* are still at the centre of debate among scholars and linguists, and their main features are yet to be agreed, it seems that these theories of communicative competence have not looked into these notions very deeply and have been more appealed to the terms themselves rather than what these concepts actually are and what they are associated with. One of the main reasons behind this claim is that, current models of communicative competence have different interpretations of the concept of pragmatics. Therefore, in each model we find a different role for the concept of pragmatic competence as well as various relationships with other elements of that model.

Canale & Swain (1980, 1983) refer to pragmatic competence as sociolinguistic competence and define it as the mastery of the socio-cultural code of language use (this definition itself

includes ambiguous terms like, 'socio-cultural code'). In Bachman's (1990) initial model, lexical knowledge belongs to grammatical competence; nevertheless, this view is revised later and Bachman and Palmer (1996) introduce lexical, functional and sociolinguistic knowledge as three components of pragmatic knowledge. The inclusion of lexical knowledge as one of the components of pragmatic competence is in contrast to other models which are based on Halliday's (1985) theory in which he believes that lexicon and grammar cannot be easily separated, which means that 'lexico-grammar' is part of linguistic competence. This variation in placing the notion of pragmatic competence in these models and its relationship with other notions illustrate that, while the essence of pragmatic competence has not been clear enough, its presence in their theory and its role on communicative competence has been taken for granted. In another model of communicative competence developed by Celce-Murcia et al. (1995), they avoid using this notion of pragmatic competence and introduce the concept of 'actional competence' instead, which is defined as the ability to perform speech acts and language functions, to recognise and interpret utterances. Based on their definition, actional competence cannot be used as an alternative to pragmatic competence as speech acts are only parts of pragmatics, not the whole pragmatics. Replacing pragmatics with speech acts in the model of Celce-Murcia et al. (1995) means that they ignore other aspects of pragmatics like implicatures, hedges or presuppositions.

Moreover, the inclusion of pragmatic competence in the models of communicative competence introduced above, inspired many scholars and teachers in the second language domain to hypothesize the teaching of this notion as the solution to fill the gap between grammatical and communicative competence in the TL. Consequently, teaching pragmatics whether explicitly or implicitly has become the subject of several studies in last three decades. While, among different branches of linguistics, pragmatics is the only area which includes certain features that their teachability are yet to be agreed (like some aspects of

conversational implicatures), the existing theories on teaching pragmatics of the TL have been simply generalised to the whole realm of pragmatics.

One of the other areas that this study will focus on is the ignorance of the role of comprehension in theories of communicative competence. Current theories of communicative competence are based on the production of utterances rather than on the processes involved in the comprehension of utterances. This could be due to the difficulties associated with studying these processes. This has also been reflected in the studies being carried out to evaluate the pragmatic competence in the TL. Moreover, while any interaction in the TL involves at least two interlocutors, a non-native speaker and a native listener or vice versa, current theories only focus on the production of language by the former and ignore the role of interpretation that involves the latter. The majority of the current theories assume that native speakers who are involved in conversations by non-native speakers simply interpret any deviation from the the TL norms by non-native speakers as signs of impoliteness or rudeness, which I think this has been exaggerated to some extent.

Based on these discussions, this study will argue that these theories of communicative competence which have dominated the field of ILP in last three decades are based on wrong assumptions about one of their main components of their model, which is the essence of the notion of pragmatic competence. This study also aims at providing a clearer picture of the concept of pragmatic competence in order to introduce and develop those features of pragmatics which have been less explored so far.

Moreover, analysing Discourse Completion Tasks (DCTs) as the dominant instrument of data collection in ILP and cross-cultural pragmatics is one of the main concerns of this study. This study will focus on the main drawbacks of these tasks to reveal that, DCTs simply cannot measure pragmatic competence and what they are looking to achieve and what they are

actually achieving are two different things. One of the main issues related to the DCTs is that, while it is supposed to measure the pragmatic knowledge of the respondents, it involves their linguistic knowledge as well. Consequently, DCTs are unable to measure the pragmatic knowledge independently. Moreover, they are only designed to measure speech acts and cannot be used to explore other aspects of pragmatics. A critical analysis of one of the main DCTs developed by Beebe et al. (1990) which has been employed in several studies will contribute to explore the drawbacks of DCTs in measuring pragmatic competence.

To conduct my study, I will have a critical analysis of the literature relevant to my study which will contribute to challenge the current theories of communicative competence as well the weaknesses of current research methodologies attempting to measure the pragmatic knowledge of second language learners. I will also include a qualitative analysis of the dominant data collection tool in ILP (DCTs). In the second part, I will investigate the pragmatic knowledge of English among native speakers of Farsi who are studying in the UK universities. My study group who are all residents of Iran have not lived in any English-speaking country before coming to the UK, and all of them nearly share the same length of stay here. Arguably, any previous history of residing in an English-speaking country could contribute to Iranian language learners to perform better in this study and this factor has been considered.

To collect my data, I will use a questionnaire which is developed to measure these two aspects of pragmatics, implicature and presupposition. The collected data will be analysed and these numerical data will complement the findings of the first part of my study and contribute to achieve my research objectives. Besides, in order to evaluate the most dominant data collection instrument in ILP studies and expose its weaknesses, the DCT developed by Beebe et al. (1990) which has been used in several studies in recent years will be also employed in line with the questionnaire.

## **1.4 Uniqueness of the Study**

This study is unique in the following aspects:

(a) While the majority of studies in this field employ DCT to collect their required data, this study develops a new questionnaire to assess the knowledge of pragmatics. This has been done for two main reasons. Firstly, to introduce and develop a data collection instrument which, unlike DCT, can be employed to measure different aspects of pragmatics. Secondly, to develop an instrument that, unlike DCT which involves the respondents' linguistic knowledge to a large extent, it can target the pragmatic knowledge of participants with the least involvement of their linguistic knowledge.

(b) This study is also different to previous studies as it is the first attempt to explore the pragmatics aspects of implicature and presuppositions among native speakers of Farsi in order to evaluate their pragmatic competence in English. Almost all studies which have investigated the pragmatics knowledge of native speakers of Farsi in the past have concentrated on the knowledge of speech acts, while other aspects of pragmatics have been neglected.

(c) Finally, while there have been several studies on the models of communicative competence developed by Canale & Swain (1980) and Bachman & Palmer (1990), the majority of them have accepted the basic theories introduced by these researchers on the relationship between the pragmatic and communicative competence; however, this study focuses on the real essence of pragmatics to demonstrate that these models have not considered some main features of pragmatics and they should be used more cautiously, especially when referring to them as a reference for pragmatic competence in the TL.

## **1.5 Purpose of the Study**

Considering the points raised above, this study has the following objectives.

Firstly, through challenging the current theories of communicative competence, it reveals the drawbacks of them in addressing the notion of pragmatic competence. Secondly, it explores the main data collection instruments in pragmatic research which exposes their shortcomings in measuring pragmatic competence, and develops a new questionnaire as an alternative. Finally, it concentrates on some aspects of pragmatics which have been less studied by researchers in this field. This will contribute to the further development of the concept of pragmatic competence in the TL. Considering all the discussions, this study aims at arguing that, the field of pragmatic competence is a realm to be demolished and rebuilt again as there are several crucial aspects which are the at the heart of the essence of pragmatic competence, but unfortunately they have not been addressed in previous studies.

## **1.6 Research Questions**

In order to achieve the research objectives and considering the gaps found in the literature of pragmatic competence, this study will aim to reply to the following questions. These questions will address the main concerns of this study and provide the layout for the discussions presented in the following chapters. They have been chosen to clarify the ambiguities surrounding the notion of pragmatic competence including its teachability and testability, and answers to them will contribute to introduce some new insights into the field of pragmatic competence. My four main research questions are as follow:

(a) Are current theories of communicative competence capable to address all aspects of pragmatics? If not, what do they miss to address?

(b) How is it possible to measure pragmatic competence independently?

(c) Is the whole area of pragmatics teachable? If not, what are those non-teachable aspects of pragmatics?

(d) To what extent DCTs can measure pragmatic competence?

### **1.7 Outline of the Thesis**

This thesis consists of six chapters. Chapter one introduces the topic of the study and provides a general overview of the research project. It also presents the main research questions and research objectives, and introduces the layout of this research. Chapter two reviews the literature in the field of interlanguage pragmatics (ILP) and provides different definitions of the key terms that are presented by main researchers in this area. Moreover, it introduces major models of communicative competence and discusses their drawbacks in detail. Chapter three focuses on the major data collection instruments in pragmatic research and challenges their ability to measure pragmatic competence independently. This chapter also presents the research methodology that is employed in this study to collect the required data. Besides, it analyses DCT as the main source of data collection in ILP and cross-cultural pragmatics. Chapter four provides the statistical findings of the study. Chapter five is about the teaching aspects of pragmatics and it presents some pedagogical implications for the notion of pragmatic competence in the TL. Finally, chapter six offers a discussion of my research findings and presents the conclusions and limitations of this study. It also offers some suggestions for future studies in this area.



## **CHAPTER 2**

### **A Review of the Literature**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter provides an overview of the main concepts of this study including the definition of communicative competence and pragmatic competence and the relationship between them. It also reviews the previous studies in the field of pragmatic competence and presents the reasons behind pragmatic failure in interlanguage pragmatics (ILP). Moreover, it presents current dominant communicative competence models and highlights their shortcomings in addressing some key features of pragmatics. The analysis of the models of communicative competence, especially the initial model developed by Canale & Swain (1980), will reveal that these models are based on wrong assumptions about the notion of pragmatic competence. These discussions will contribute to a better understanding of these notions and will introduce some aspects of pragmatics which have been less probed by researchers in previous studies, albeit their understanding is crucial to illustrate the true essence of the notion of pragmatic competence.

#### **2.2 Emergence and Development of Communicative Competence**

Until the mid-1960s linguistic competence was only defined in terms of the grammatical knowledge of an idealised native speaker introduced by Chomsky (1965). According to Chomsky (1965), in a completely homogeneous speech community, an idealised native speaker is someone who knows its language perfectly and is unaffected by such grammatically irrelevant conditions as memory limitations, distractions, shifts of attention and interest, and errors in applying his knowledge of the language in actual performance. Nonetheless, a group of linguists introduced the notion of pragmatic/communicative

competence which led to revolutionary changes in learning theories and teaching methodologies of the TL.

Hymes was one of the first scholars who used the term 'communicative competence' (1972, 1974). Hymes' (1972) introduction of communicative competence widely acknowledged that teaching and learning languages involves far more than targeting grammatical or lexical systems. He defined communicative competence not only as an inherent grammatical competence, but also as the ability to use grammatical competence in a variety of communicative situations. Therefore, Hymes (1972, 1974) brought the sociolinguistic perspective into Chomsky's linguistic view of competence. For Hymes, the ability to speak competently not only involves the grammatical knowledge of a language, but also knowing what and how to utter something in any circumstances. Hymes (1972, p. 45) states that "there are rules of use without which the rules of grammar would be useless". He was also one of the first to recognise the importance of communicative competence in language development.

Hymes states:

The importance of concern with the child is partly that it offers a favourable vantage point for discovering the adult system, and that it poses neatly one way in which the ethnography of communication is a distinctive enterprise, i.e., an enterprise concerned with the abilities the child must acquire beyond those of producing and interpreting grammatical sentences, in order to be a competent member of its community, not only what may possibly be said, but also what should and should not be said (Hymes, 1972, p. 26).

Another major contribution of Hymes was his introduction of the concept of cultural interference to second language acquisition theory. He argues that, people fall back to their native culture when communicate in another language. He believes that what is regarded as communicative competence in one speech community could be regarded differently in another:

Even the ethnographies that we have, though almost never focused on

speaking, show us that communities differ significantly in ways of speaking, in patterns of repertoire and switching, in the roles and meanings of speech. They indicate differences with regard to beliefs, values, reference groups, norms and the like, as these enter into the ongoing system of language use and its acquisition by children (Hymes, 1972, p. 33).

On the other hand, Grice (1957) was the first who pointed out the difference between the speaker's meaning and the linguistic meaning; while the former refers to the information that the speaker actually intends to communicate in a particular communicative act, the latter denotes the meaning that is conventionally associated with the produced linguistic form in the user's linguistic knowledge.

The introduction of communicative competence by Hymes (1972, 1974) on the one hand, and Grice's (1957) views on the difference between the speaker and linguistic meaning on the other hand, inspired many applied linguists and ESL specialists who were looking to find the gap between linguistic and communicative competence in the target language, to look for the solution in developing learners' pragmatic competence. Therefore, the discipline of pragmatic competence received intense interest from researchers in recent decades. Particularly, researchers like Thomas (1983), Kasper (1989), Bialystok (1993), Bardovi-Harlig (1996) and many others attempted to explore this notion and build on the existing studies in the area. Today, teaching pragmatic competence is seen as an integral part of learning and teaching a language, and has been widely investigated (Bardovi-Harlig 1996; Kasper and Rose, 2001; Bardovi-Harlig and Griffin 2005).

Also, the connection between pragmatics and SLA has seen a great deal of study by researchers including Scarcella and Brunak (1981), Rintell (1981), Brown & Levinson (1987), Koike (1992, 1996), Saito, Beecken (1997), Félix-Brasdefer (2003, 2006) and Huth (2006).

### **2.2.1 Definition(s) of Pragmatics**

Compared to phonology and syntax, pragmatics is a relatively new linguistic discipline. Linguistic pragmatics has its foundation in language philosophy and developed as a result of ideas concerning the functions and use of language by philosophers such as Wittgenstein (1953, in Bach, 2004), Austin (1962), Searle (1969, 1975, 1976) and Grice (1968, 1975). This term was originally placed within philosophy of language (Morris, 1938), but has developed from this field to be related to sociolinguistics. In the 1960s, pragmatics was not an established field and it covered issues that could not be placed into other areas of linguistics (Leech, 1983, p. 1). However, language use and context gained more interest in the 1970s and consequently, pragmatics as a field of linguistics was recognised.

As argued by Crystal (2010, p. 124), pragmatics is not a coherent field of study since it overlaps with many other linguistic areas and consists of various different aspects of language use. Thus, linguists tend to define the field according to their own interests and research aims. Kasper & Rose (2001) state that pragmatics has been defined in a variety of ways in relation to authors' theoretical orientation and audience. Defining what exactly pragmatics means has been one of the main concerns of many studies so far. As argued by Ariel (2010), the original definition of this notion dates back to Morris (1938) where he tries to distinguish pragmatics from grammar and semantics, and explains that a phenomenon is pragmatics if, in accounting for it, reference must be made to the language user (producer or interpreter). Since then, there have been many attempts to define this concept and going through the literature, we find various definitions based on different criteria.

Levinson (1983) was one of the first researchers who tried to resolve the issue of vagueness surrounding the concept of pragmatics. In an attempt to provide a precise definition of pragmatics, Levinson (1983) spent most of his first chapter defining this notion.

Nevertheless, instead of presenting one clear definition of the concept, he provided a set of possible definitions of pragmatics. Despite this, none of the definitions he has provided is satisfactory. His discussion even implies that it is not possible to agree on a coherent unifying conception of the notion of pragmatics. While pragmatics seems to be a notoriously difficult notion to define, several scholars including pragmatists, linguists and applied linguists have attempted to present their definitions of this concept considering their own perspectives.

According to Levinson (1983) defining a boundary between pragmatics and grammar could be the starting point to define the notion of pragmatics. He refers to two principles of pragmatics which have been proposed. The first principle is that pragmatics should be only concerned with principles of language use and has nothing to do with linguistic structure. The second principle was proposed by Chomsky (1965) in his distinction between competence and performance where he states that pragmatics is solely concerned with performance principles of language use. According to Levinson (1983) the pragmatics theory proposed by Katz (1977) are based on these two principles. Katz states (1977):

Grammars are theories about the structure of sentence types ....  
Pragmatic theories, in contrast, do nothing to explicate the structure of linguistic constructions or grammatical properties and relations...  
They explicate the reasoning of speakers and hearers in working out the correlation in a context of a sentence token with a proposition.  
In this respect, a pragmatic theory is part of performance (Katz, 1977, p. 19).

Katz's (1977) description of pragmatic theory was advocated by a number of scholars including Kempson (1975, 1977) and Smith & Wilson (1979). However, Levinson (1983) as one of the critics of this theory argues that there are certain aspects of linguistic structure which sometimes directly interact with the context. Therefore, it becomes impossible to draw a clear line between context-independent grammar (competence) and context-dependent interpretation (performance) (Levinson, 1983, p. 8). This problem is illustrated by Katz (1977) who points out that the pairs like *rabbit* and *bunny* differ in that the second word is

appropriately used by or to children. According to Katz (1977), to discover whether a linguistic feature is context-dependent or context-independent, we suppose the feature is taking place on an anonymous postcard. When the word *bunny* is written on a postcard, it gives the implication or inference that speaker or addressee is a child.

One of the other issues related to the definition of the notion of pragmatics is the term 'pragmatics' itself. Levinson (1983) points that the term pragmatics includes both context-dependent features of language structure as well as principles of language usage which according to Chomsky (1965) has nothing to do with linguistic structure. Therefore, while the term carries a conflict within itself, it is a difficult task to present a definition which addresses both opposite ideas. While trying to enhance the theory of pragmatics proposed by Katz (1977), Levinson (1983, p. 9) presents the following definition concerning pragmatics with aspects of linguistic structure as “pragmatics is the study of those relations between language and context that are grammaticalised, or encoded in the structure of a language”. The above definition can only address some aspects of pragmatics including deixis, presupposition and speech acts and is unable to explain the aspects of language usage like conversational implicatures.

Pragmatics has also been defined in terms of how it is related to the meaning. Leech (1983) defined pragmatics as the study of how utterances have meanings in situations. Gazdar (1979a, p. 2) stresses that “pragmatics has its topic of those aspects of the meaning of utterances which cannot be accounted for by straightforward reference to the truth conditions of a sentence uttered. Therefore, Pragmatics = Meaning – Truth Condition”. This definition not only does not contribute to a clear understanding of pragmatics, but also allows semantics in which causes even more puzzlement.

The role of context has also been the centre of many definitions of pragmatics. Levinson (1983, p. 21) provides a context-dependent definition as “pragmatics is the study of the

relations between language and context that are basic to an account of language understanding”. Also, Kasper and Blum-Kulka (1993) stress the role of context when they find pragmatics as the study of people’s comprehension and production of linguistic action in context. Moreover, Mey (2001, p. 6) believes that “pragmatics studies the use of language in human communication as determined by the conditions of society”.

In another attempt to define this notion, Crystal (1985, p. 240) stresses the importance of the speaker and defines pragmatics as “the study of language from the point of view of users, especially of the choices they make, the constraints they encounter in using language in social interaction and the effects their use of language has on other participants in the act of communication”.

Thomas (1995, p. 2) argues that Crystal’s main focus is on the producer of the message while interaction contains other important aspects including the hearer’s interpretation and the role of utterance which have been overlooked. Thomas (1995, p. 22) defines pragmatics as “the study of meaning in interaction”. According to Thomas, pragmatics is meaning in interaction since language use is a dynamic process, the speaker and the listener are both making meanings in communication and the physical, social and linguistic context influence those meanings.

Noveck & Sperber (2004), in their book titled *experimental pragmatics*, have provided a definition which seems to have included all aspects of pragmatics discussed above. They define pragmatics as “the study of how linguistic properties and contextual factors interact in the interpretation of utterances” (Noveck & Sperber, 2004, p. 1). Firstly, this definition addresses the issue of overlapping between language use and linguistic structure by including both aspects. Secondly, it considers the role of contextual factors and finally, it states that in pragmatics we deal with interpretation of utterances.

Recently, Ariel (2010) has listed ten different criteria which can be used to define pragmatics including context dependence, non-truth conditionality, implicit and secondary meaning, discourse unit, extra-grammatical accounts, acceptability judgements, naturalness, performance, right-hemisphere specialisation and inference. This long list of possible criteria to define pragmatics illustrates the difficulties that are associated with providing a clear and precise definition of this concept. It is not the focus of this study to evaluate Ariel's list whether they should all be considered in the definition of pragmatics or not; however, if we decide to provide a definition for pragmatics that involves all the elements listed by Ariel (2010), we probably need a long paragraph with several sentences which does not seem feasible. On the other hand, even with the inclusion of all these elements in our definition of pragmatics, it does not seem that the issue of clarity of the concept would be resolved. Instead, the inclusion of several other elements that each may need further clarifications will add more ambiguities to the concept of pragmatics.

The ambiguities that are associated with the notion of pragmatics have influenced the understanding of pragmatic competence as well. Besides, the notion of competence itself is one of the most controversial terms in the field of linguistics. Since the association of this term with *linguistics* or *pragmatics* initiated by Chomsky and Hymes, the term *competence* has been the subject of several studies. Due to the difficulties that were associated with defining this term, a number of researchers like Widdowson (1983) suggested using alternative terms like *capacity*. Therefore, it comes as no surprise to see that the concept of *pragmatic competence* which includes two difficult terms to define, has created lots of debates among linguists and applied linguists.



### 2.2.2 Competence vs Performance

Chomsky (1965) was the first who proposed and defined the concepts of competence and performance. In his very influential book *Aspects of the theory of syntax*, he drew a classic distinction between competence (the monolingual speaker-listener's knowledge of language) and performance (the actual use of language in real situations).

In both linguistics and language learning, definitions of competence have shown a continual development from that first proposed by Chomsky. Underlying current interpretations of the term, three general hypotheses can be found. The first is the general acceptance that language is essentially a cognitive phenomenon and that the use of the linguistic code of a language (performance) is directed by tacit rule-based knowledge stored in the minds of speakers (competence). This view involves both a Chomskyan modular (language-specific) view of competence and those theories that can be categorised under the heading of 'Cognitive Linguistics' which find language and cognition in general as an integrated whole sharing similar systems of perception and categorisation.

The second theory is the recognition that the subject of linguistic description is not only the mental processes that direct language, but the speech community and culture in which a particular variety of language is used. The final view is that language analysis must include not only the systems and rules which direct the production of utterances, but also the interactional processes by which human discourse arises and is maintained which is language usage.

In the 1960s and 70s, Chomsky's proposal and definition of the concepts of competence and performance triggered an intensive debate among linguists and ignited the future discussions generated by applied linguists. The competence-performance debate began with Chomsky's (1965, p. 3) famous statement: "We thus make a fundamental distinction between

competence (the speaker-hearer's knowledge of his language) and performance (the actual use of language in concrete situations)". He further states that "observed use of language ... cannot constitute the actual subject matter of linguistics, if this is to be a serious discipline". Therefore, it is clear that in his view, it is competence that is to be at the centre of linguistic attention.

Linguistic theory is concerned primarily with an ideal speaker-listener in a completely homogeneous speech-community, who knows its language perfectly and is unaffected by such grammatically irrelevant conditions as memory limitations, distractions, shifts of attention and interest, and errors (random or characteristic) in applying his knowledge of the language in actual performance (Chomsky, 1965, p. 3).

Considering Chomsky's aim at describing the grammar of a language systematically, this statement does not seem to be unreasonable. Nevertheless, terms such as 'homogeneous speech community', and 'grammatically irrelevant conditions' were soon to produce a backlash among those whose descriptive aims lay in a different place.

Among the critics of his competence-performance theory, there were advocates for a communicative view in applied linguistics including Savignon (1972) who expressed their strong disapproval at the idea of using the concept of idealised, purely linguistic competence as a theoretical ground of the methodology for learning, teaching and testing language. They found the alternative to Chomsky's concept of competence in Hymes' communicative competence (1972) which they believed to be a broader and more realistic notion of competence.

Hymes (1972) was one of the first to attack Chomsky's views. In his popular paper *On Communicative Competence*, Hymes (1972) criticised Chomsky's view from different perspectives, the first being sociological: "It is, if I may say so, rather a Garden of Eden view.

(...) The controlling image is of an abstract, isolated mechanism, not, except incidentally, a person in a social world” (Hymes, 1972, p. 272).

The second criticism of Chomsky’s view of competence concerned the functional dimension of language. According to linguists and philosophers such as Halliday (1978), Austin (1962) and Searle (1969), language has a functional nature. As Halliday (1978) states, “Can mean is a ‘realisation of can do” (1978, p. 39). Among various functional theories proposed, it was Searle’s concept of *illocutionary act* (1969, p. 23-24) which seemed to have the most influence on language teaching and later, it became common for communicative textbooks to define teaching objectives in terms of ‘speech functions’.

Chomsky’s view on the role of sentence as the primary unit of linguistic analysis formed the basis for the final criticism of his theory. Halliday (1978, p. 2) argued that “Language does not consist of sentences; it consists of text or discourse– the exchange of meanings in interpersonal contexts of one kind or another”. A discourse perspective of competence focuses on the ongoing choices that speakers make while speaking or writing transmit, adapt and clarify a message, to make language use more efficient, to show the relevance of one information chunk to another etc.

While the notion of competence has opened lots of discussions, the role and the nature of performance has also been debated by linguists and applied linguists. As stated above, Chomsky dismissed performance as an imperfect demonstration of competence and not worthy of being incorporated into a serious discipline. However, Hymes is interested in performance, since he finds it “as the product of social interaction” (1972, p. 271). In an attempt to explain performance, Hymes recognises the following ambiguity in the use of the term:

When one speaks of performance, then, does one mean the behavioural data of speech? or all that underlies speech beyond the grammatical? or both? (...) The difficulty can be put in terms of the two contrasts that usage manifests:

1. (underlying) competence vs. (actual) performance;
2. (underlying) grammatical competence vs. (underlying) models/rules of performance (1972, p. 281).

Also, Halliday (1978, p. 38) makes the performance element more explicit by speaking of a behavioural potential. "When I say can do, I am specifically referring to the behaviour potential as a semiotic which can be encoded in language, or of course in other things too".

However, whilst introducing a behavioural element, it could be argued that reference to 'potential' means that this definition still lies in the area of communicative competence. A further statement by Hymes comes closer to describing performance: "It [performance] takes into account the interaction between competence (knowledge, ability for use), the competence of others, and the cybernetic and emergent properties of events themselves" (Hymes, 1978, p. 283).

The key words here are interaction and cybernetic. The inclusion of these two terms suggest that performance is more than a behavioural potential and is the actual using of language, mentioned earlier by Chomsky. Therefore, it seems that while the critics of Chomsky's views on competence-performance agree on the principles of his theory, they just attempt to explain it a different way.

Most of the theories discussed above influenced the language teaching pedagogy in the 1970s. The early attempts were made by Wilkins (1976) and Munby (1978) who tried to compile categories of linguistic competence based on a semantic and pragmatic, notional-functional axis. During the 1970s and 1980s, many applied linguists contributed to the further development of the concept of communicative competence. In order to clarify the concept of communicative competence, Widdowson (1983) made a distinction between competence and

capacity. In his definition of these two notions, he applied insights that he gained in discourse analysis and pragmatics. In this respect, he defined competence, i.e. communicative competence, in terms of the knowledge of linguistic and sociolinguistic conventions. Under capacity, which he often referred to as procedural or communicative capacity, he understood the ability to use knowledge as means of creating meaning in a language. According to him, ability is not a component of competence. It does not turn into competence, but remains ‘an active force for continuing creativity’, i.e. a force for the realisation of what Halliday called the “meaning potential” (Widdowson, 1983, p. 27). Based on his definition, it has been said that Widdowson is one of the first who in his reflections on the relationship between competence and performance gave more attention to performance or real language use.

Canale and Swain (1980) and Canale (1983) understood communicative competence as a synthesis of an underlying system of knowledge and skill needed for communication. In their concept of communicative competence, knowledge refers to the (conscious or unconscious) knowledge of an individual about language and about other aspects of language use. According to them, there are three types of knowledge: knowledge of underlying grammatical principles, knowledge of how to use language in a social context in order to fulfil communicative functions and knowledge of how to combine utterances and communicative functions with respect to discourse principles. In addition, their concept of skill refers to how an individual can use the knowledge in actual communication. According to Canale (1983), skill requires a further distinction between underlying capacity and its manifestation in real communication, that is to say, in performance. Savignon (1972, 1983) put more emphasis on the aspect of ability in her concept of communicative competence. She described communicative competence as “the ability to function in a truly communicative setting – that is, in a dynamic exchange in which linguistic competence must adapt itself to the total informational input, both linguistic and paralinguistic, of one or more interlocutors”

(Savignon, 1972, p. 8). According to her and many other theoreticians (e.g. Canale and Swain, 1980; Skehan, 1995, 1998; Bachman and Palmer, 1996), the nature of communicative competence is not static but dynamic, it is more interpersonal than intrapersonal and relative rather than absolute. It is also largely defined by context. To differentiate competence from performance, Savignon referred to competence as an underlying ability and to performance as an open manifestation of competence. In her opinion, competence can be observed, developed, maintained and evaluated only through performance. Like many theoreticians in the field of language learning and teaching (e.g. Stern, 1986), Savignon equates communicative competence with language proficiency. Due to this, as well as to the controversial use of the term 'competence', Taylor (1988) proposed to replace the term 'communicative competence' with the term 'communicative proficiency'. Bachman (1990) suggested using the term 'communicative language ability', claiming that this term combines in itself the meanings of both language proficiency and communicative competence.

Bachman (1990) defined communicative language ability as a concept comprised of knowledge or competence and capacity for appropriate use of knowledge in a contextual communicative language use. In elaborating on this definition, Bachman devoted special attention to the aspect of language use - that is, the way how language is used for the purpose of achieving a particular communicative goal in a specific situational context of communication.

### **2.2.3 Communicative Competence or Pragmatic Competence**

Today, the term 'pragmatics' is extensively used in the TL acquisition as 'pragmatic competence' which is one of the abilities subsumed by the overarching concept of communicative competence. The notion of pragmatic competence was defined by Chomsky

(1980, p. 224) as the “knowledge of conditions and manner of appropriate use (of the language), in conformity with various purposes”. Applied linguists like Canale & Swain (1980) found this view in opposition to grammatical competence that in Chomskyan terms is “the knowledge of form and meaning”. Therefore, in a more contextualised fashion, Canale & Swain (1980) included pragmatic competence as one important component of their model of communicative competence. In this model, pragmatic competence was identified as sociolinguistic competence and defined as the knowledge of contextually appropriate language use (Canale & Swain, 1980; Canale, 1983). Later on, Canale (1988) expanded this definition, and stated that pragmatic competence includes “illocutionary competence, or the knowledge of the pragmatic conventions for performing acceptable language functions, and sociolinguistic competence, or knowledge of the sociolinguistic conventions for performing language functions appropriately in a given context” (Canale, 1988, p. 90).

Since the introduction of the notion of pragmatic competence, it has created different views and interpretations among the language experts. Some scholars including Candlin (1976, p. 246) and Schmidt & Richards (1980, p. 150) tried to use the term 'pragmatic competence' as a synonym for 'communicative competence', while others like Bell (1976) and Thomas (1983) referred to it as social competence. Other researchers have also tried to provide definitions of the concept of pragmatic competence. For instance, Fraser (1983) emphasizes the role of the listener and finds pragmatic competence as “the knowledge of how an addressee determines what a speaker is saying and recognises intended illocutionary force conveyed through subtle attitudes in the speaker’s utterance” (Fraser, 1983, p. 29).

One of other scholars who has explored this concept is Bialystok (1993) who believes that pragmatic competence will be acquired in three phases. According to Bialystok (1993), pragmatic competence includes: firstly, the speaker’s ability to use language for different purposes; secondly, the listener’s ability to get past the language and understand the speaker’s

real intentions (e.g. indirect speech acts, irony and sarcasm); and finally the command of the rules by which utterances come together to create discourse. Bialystok's definition takes into account the different aspects of pragmatics including the knowledge of various speech acts (ability to use language for different purposes), the knowledge of implicature (ability to understand speaker's real intentions) and the knowledge of conversation structure (commands of the rules by which utterances are strung together to create discourse). Pragmatic competence entails that speakers have different options in order to function in interaction and they are able to select the appropriate act in a particular context. Therefore, as Bialystok's definition indicates, pragmatic competence is the knowledge of a pragmatic system as well as the ability to use this system appropriately.

Thomas (1983, p. 94) defines pragmatic competence as "the ability to use language effectively in order to achieve a specific purpose and to understand language in context". She also distinguishes between pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic competence which was initially introduced by Leech (1983). Leech (1983, p. 11) states that, "pragmalinguistics is the more linguistic end of pragmatics where we consider the particular resources which a given language provides for conveying particular illocutions". On the other hand, he refers to sociopragmatics as "the sociological interface of pragmatics" (Leech, 1983, p. 10). Moreover, Thomas (1983) argues that, pragmalinguistic competence refers to the appropriate language to accomplish a speech act, whereas sociopragmatic competence refers to the appropriateness of a speech act in a particular context. Later, Bardovi-Harlig (1999, p. 686) extends this distinction to the notion of pragmatic competence, explaining that "pragmalinguistic competence [is] the linguistic competence that allows speakers to carry out the speech acts that their sociopragmatic competence tells them are desirable". Drawing a border between pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic had also been debated. According to Roever (2005), it is rather difficult to draw a clear line between what belongs to each domain when analysing



performance data. Pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic competencies are intrinsically intertwined for two main reasons. Firstly, language use is invariably contextual. Secondly, both competencies are involved in producing and comprehending speech intentions. Nonetheless, Roever (2005) suggests that this division is theoretically and empirically useful and that research shows that learners can be more advanced in one of these competencies than in the other. Roever (2005) refers to the following two items that play a role in the development of pragmatic competence in the TL:

The task for the learner consists of building up a knowledge base of conventional strategies and forms for expressing speech intentions on the paralinguistic side, discovering the social rules of that target language community on the sociopragmatic side, and mapping pragmalinguistic conventions on the sociopragmatic norms (Roever, 2005, p. 4).

To become effective communicators, it is necessary for language learners to acquire true communicative competence. Communicative competence, according to Hymes (1967), includes not only knowledge of linguistic forms but also knowledge of when, how and for whom it is appropriate to use these forms. Likewise, Ellis (1994, p. 696) states that, communicative competence “entails both linguistic competence and pragmatic competence”. Watts (2003) proposed that pragmatic competence includes both the conversational maxims proposed by Grice (e.g., 1975) and rules of politeness; so, when trying to understand pragmatic competence, we should consider both speakers and listeners in conversational interaction in order to obtain an accurate view of the tension that is missing while researchers mostly focus only on either the speaker or the listener alone.

There have also been a few studies on the relation between pragmatic competence and grammatical competence. Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei (1998, p. 233) find pragmatics in contrast with grammar as they argue that, “grammar relates to the accuracy of structure, including morphology and syntax, whereas pragmatics addresses language use and is

concerned with the appropriateness of utterances given specific situations, speakers, and content". Kasper (1997), however, points out that pragmatic competence is neither isolated from nor subordinated to grammar but co-ordinated to formal linguistic and textual knowledge and interacts with organisational competence in complex ways. In her comprehensive review, Kasper (2001) distinguishes between two scenarios of the correlation between grammatical and pragmatic development of learner's interlanguage: 'grammar precedes pragmatics' (as shown by Robinson, 1992; Salsbury and Bardovi-Harlig, 2000; Takahashi and Beebe, 1987) and 'pragmatics precedes grammar' (as examined by Schmidt, 1983; see also Cameron and Williams, 1997). By interlanguage, she refers to a linguistic system used by non-native speakers having features of both the first and the target language. Concluding the review, Kasper (2001) points out that most of the reviewed studies consider pragmatic ability an autonomous component of communicative competence. Kasper (2001, p. 506) argues that "this approach does not tell us how a particular pragmalinguistic feature is related to the particular grammatical knowledge implicated in its use" and claims that there is an urgent need for studies of this nature (see Belz & Kinginger, 2003; Kinginger & Belz, 2005 for a response to this call).

Most researchers agree that pragmatic competence includes the components of pragmatic performance (production) and meta-pragmatic awareness (see Kasper & Dahl, 1991). According to Kasper & Rose (2002), pragmatic performance is typically associated with learners' ability to generate pragmatically appropriate speech acts (or actions) in their L2 speaking and writing. Meta-pragmatic awareness is defined as "knowledge of the social meaning of variable second language forms and awareness of the ways in which these forms mark different aspects of social contexts" (Kinger & Farrell, 2004). Nonetheless, to clarify these two concepts and understand their differences, it is important to demonstrate the relationship between linguistic and pragmatic competence.

#### **2.2.4 Relationship between Linguistic and Pragmatic Competence**

The relationship between grammatical and pragmatic competence has been neglected in interlanguage pragmatics research (Ruoda, 2004). While pragmatic competence was discussed earlier in detail, linguistic competence can be defined as the portion of knowledge that native speakers possess of the linguistic system of their mother tongue. It encompasses knowledge of grammar, phonology and lexis, all essential areas for the production and understanding of any sentence in any language. The relationship between linguistic competence and pragmatic competence has been the core of many studies so far which will be briefly discussed here.

Researchers such as Bardovi-Harlig and Dornyei (1997) and Niezoda and Roever (2001) conducted studies concerning ESL and EFL learners' grammatical and pragmatic awareness, and their findings revealed that EFL learners recognised more grammatical errors than pragmatic errors, while the opposite trend was observed among ESL learners. Other studies conducted by Bardovi-Harlig (1999, 2001) have indicated that language learners with high levels of grammatical competence do not necessarily exhibit high levels of pragmatic competence. The findings suggest that performance on measures of grammatical ability would not significantly predict performance on communicative tasks.

Two claims have been made regarding the relationship between the development of pragmatics and knowledge of grammar. One states that the speakers of the TL cannot learn pragmatics without also learning the underlying grammar for appropriate expression, and the other argues that learners can manage to be pragmatically appropriate without fluent knowledge of the grammatical structures that native speakers demonstrate. The first claim disregards the fact that adult learners of the TL are already pragmatically competent in their L1, and thus are likely to be able to transfer this ability to the TL. This claim also ignores the

existence of universal pragmatic competence, by which L2 and FL learners distinguish principles and practices related to turn taking, are able to discriminate between the use of various speech acts, to recognise conversational implicature and politeness conventions, and to identify major realisation strategies for communicative events. As argued by Kasper and Rose (2002), universal pragmatic competence allows speakers to notice sociopragmatic variability and make linguistic choices accordingly. The hypothesis that grammar precedes pragmatics is supported by research that found that advanced L2 learners employed perfect target language grammar in a pragmatic fashion. According to the researchers, the dependence of pragmatics on grammar can take three forms: (a) language learners demonstrate knowledge of a particular grammatical structure or element but do not use it to express or modify illocutionary force (Salsbury and Bardovi-Harlig, 2001; Takahashi, 1996); (b) language learners demonstrate knowledge of a grammatical structure and its pragmalinguistic functions, yet use the pragmalinguistic form-function mapping in non-native like sociopragmatic forms (Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 1991; Scarcella, 1979); and (c) language learners have knowledge of a grammatical structure and use it to express pragmalinguistic functions that are not conventionalised in the TL (Bodman & Eisenstein, 1988; Beebe & Takahashi, 1989).

The second claim, that grammatical competence is independent of pragmatic competence, is supported by several studies. Schmidt (1993) demonstrated that a restricted interlanguage grammar does not necessarily prevent pragmatic competence from developing, especially when language learners acculturate in the TL. Results from other studies also confirm this finding (Eisenstein & Bodman, 1986, 1993; Salsbury & Bardovi-Harlig, 2001; Walters, 1980). These studies demonstrated that when L2 or FL learners do not have the grammatical knowledge to perform an action in the TL, they rely on a pragmatic mode, which supports the claim that pragmatics precedes grammar. The contradictions between these two hypotheses

can be reconciled when they are considered under a developmental perspective in which adult L2 or FL learners initially rely on L1 pragmatic transfer and universal pragmatic rules to communicate linguistic action in the TL (Ruoda, 2004). As language learners' interlanguage development progresses, their learning task changes and they start to figure out not only the primary functions of the target-language grammatical forms they have achieved, but also the meanings.

There have also been several studies on the relationship between the level of linguistic proficiency and pragmatic competence. Eisenstein and Bodman (1986) point out the difficulty of L2 learners who show strong proficiency levels in attaining pragmatic competence. Takahashi and Beebe (1987) argue that pragmatic failure is more likely to occur among advanced foreign language learners, possibly because they are better able to express their ideas in words than learners showing a poor proficiency level. Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford (1990) show that, even at the advanced level (i.e., graduate students enrolled at a North American university), linguistic competence is not a sufficient criterion to guarantee pragmatic competence. Hoffman-Hicks (1992) explores the pragmatic competence of intermediate-level learners in the foreign language setting and concludes similarly that linguistic competence is a pre-requisite to pragmatic competence but that such linguistic competence does not guarantee pragmatic competence. Harada (1996) finds that advanced learners of English in her study are not always closer in their judgment to native speakers of English than are intermediate learners, suggesting that, there may not be much difference between advanced and intermediate learners of English in levels of pragmatic competence. However, some researchers find that exposure to the culture of the target language (e.g., through living or working in an environment where English is spoken as a first language) would help to bridge the gap between L2 or FL learners and NSs of English in terms of the development of pragmatic competence. For example, Tanaka (1988) finds that her Japanese

students in the United States have perceptions of politeness more similar to those of American students rather than those in Japan. Clankie (1993, p. 54) finds that 53% of the responses to fifteen situations made by ten Japanese male students in his study are of native speaker quality and that the ten female Japanese students have a higher percentage of native-like responses than do male students. Clankie (1993, p. 52) attributes the native-like performance of the male students to their exposure to American speech norms and to their education (having met the minimum English standard, 450 points on TOEFL, set by the university to be qualified to be exempted from taking English courses). For the higher percentage of female native-like responses, Clankie (1993, p. 61) speculates that the female students might be stronger in their skills in English than male students. Nakajima (1997) finds that, in business settings, male speakers of American English and of Japanese perceive politeness strategies in a similar way. In her study, she asked seventeen native speakers of Japanese and five native speakers of American English, both working for large companies, to rank some English expressions involving refusing, giving embarrassing information and disagreeing. All native speakers of Japanese had experienced living in the target culture, ranging from four months to four years. Nakajima concludes that living experience in the target culture helps learners to acquire target-like pragmatic knowledge.

Another main concern of many studies in this field has been whether pragmatic competence will be acquired in parallel with linguistic competence or not. Some studies seem to indicate that pragmatic competence is not necessarily acquired in parallel with linguistic competence. For example, Kasper and Schmidt (1996) argue that proficiency might have little impact on the range of realisation strategies used by learners. Similarly, Harada (1996) does not find any proficiency effects on pragmatic competence in the TL. Harada (1996) concludes that the impact of proficiency in the TL is not always as expected. The results of her study in which pictures of people representing different ages, social status and familiarity in terms of relation

to each other were used as cues to elicit data indicate that advanced learners are not always closer to the native speakers in the researcher's judgment, suggesting that there is not a great deal of difference between advanced and intermediate learners in terms of levels of pragmatic competence. In another study, Fouser (1997) finds that an advanced learner of Japanese, who is a Korean-speaking student, draws on his L1 heavily in completing the tasks and his pragmatic areas of language deviate from the generally accepted Japanese linguistic norms. Fouser (1997) concludes that, although language transfer would help learners attain a high level of global proficiency in a closely related target language, it might be less effective in helping them attain a similar level of pragmatic competence. In their study of the speech act of chastisement produced by native Turkish speakers learning English, Dogancay-Aktuna and Kamisli (1997) find that advanced ESL learners could diverge significantly from target language norms. Also, in a longitudinal study carried out by Bouton (1994, 1999) it is shown that learners' comprehension of formulaic implicature does not develop over time through increases in world knowledge and L2 proficiency, unlike their comprehension of idiosyncratic implicature. Ideosyncratic implicature is common conversational implicature which is characterised by an utterance appealing to the listener's ability to draw inferences rather than conveying information directly. While formulaic implicature follows the same basic principle as ideosyncratic implicature, it is more patterned which makes it easier to be decoded. Bouton's findings are supported by Roever (2005), who finds some positive effect of proficiency on comprehension of formulaic implicature; nonetheless, this tendency was not as noticeable as in the case of idiosyncratic implicature, and learners' scores on formulaic implicature items were below the scores on idiosyncratic implicature items at almost all proficiency levels. Moreover, Roever (2009, p. 564) states that, one of the other areas where even quite advanced learners have shown persistent deficits is sociopragmatic knowledge in foreign language settings. This claim has been verified in several studies too. For example,

Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei (1998) found that their Hungarian group had less awareness of pragmatic infelicities than grammatical errors. Also, Rose (2000) showed that his L1 Cantonese-speaking learners of English in Hong Kong developed pragmalinguistically, but not sociopragmatically, producing more complex requests and apologies but with little contextual sensitivity. In a similar study, Matsumura (2001) found that Japanese ESL learners had clearly more native-like judgments of the appropriateness of advice after one year of study abroad in Canada than a comparable group of Japanese EFL learners. Therefore, it seems that learning of sociopragmatic rules is harder outside the target language setting, as learners living in the target language setting are exposed to a greater range of social roles and situations and have more opportunity to experience them in real life rather than in the foreign language learning context. Besides, Bardovi-Harlig (2001) carried out a study in which she stated that, the pragmatic knowledge of L2 learners with very good grammatical knowledge would also differ from target-language pragmatic norms.

While all these studies seem to suggest that linguistic competence does not guarantee pragmatic competence and some areas of pragmatics like sociopragmatics is even more difficult to improve among NNSs, other studies suggest otherwise. For example, Scarcella (1979) finds that higher-level learners differ from lower-level learners in the use of imperatives. According to her, when making requests, higher-level learners showed sensitivity to status, using imperatives only with equal familiars and subordinates, while the low-level students always used imperatives. Similarly, Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1986) state that the use of external modifiers in L2 Hebrew increases with linguistic proficiency, as does the number of words used. Besides, Takahashi and Beebe (1987) find that low and high proficiency learners differ in the order and frequency of semantic formulae they use. The lower proficiency group is also more direct in their refusals than are higher proficiency learners. Koike (1996) also finds a proficiency effect in the recognition of the intent of speech



acts. The third- and fourth-year English-speaking learners of Spanish were significantly better at identifying the intended force of the suggestions than were the first- and second-year students. In another study, Cenoz and Valencia (1996) find that, the use of mitigating supportive moves is more common among advanced NNSs and that the use of mitigating supportive moves is closely related to linguistic competence. Caryn (1997) finds that the NNSs of English in her study always rely on direct request strategies until their proficiency and competence begin to improve gradually. The adult NNSs – university students coming from nine levels of language proficiency with different cultural and linguistic backgrounds did not begin to use more complex request strategies until they had achieved higher language proficiency.

### **2.3 Theories of Second Language Acquisition (SLA)**

In order to understand how pragmatic competence develops, especially, in a foreign language (FL) context, it is key to expound the theories that look to explain second language acquisition, and explore their status amongst linguists and EFL teachers. From that, it will be interesting to examine whether there are ideas around how differently grammatical and pragmatic competences are treated. There is a number of theories that attempt to account for how learners learn a new language and the most popular ones are described here.

'Behaviourism', relies on rote learning and the idea that repetition will eventually lead to an automatic behaviour in language if the right stimulus is received and identified. The behaviorist theory of stimulus-response learning, particularly as developed in the operant conditioning model of Skinner (1938), considers all learning to be the establishment of habits as a result of reinforcement and reward. Therefore, learning process implied by this view is mechanistic, which means acquiring a language is equal to acquiring the automatic linguistic

habits. However, Larsen-Freeman and Long (1991, p.226) consider that stimulus-response models offer “little promise as explanations of SLA, except for perhaps pronunciation and the rote-memorisation of formulae.”

Another theory, 'Acculturation' relies on “the social and psychological integration of the learner with the target language (TL) group” (Schumann, 1978, p.29). Schumann (1978) came to this conclusion when he observed that within the group of language learners he was studying “the subject who acquired the least amount of English was the one who was the most socially and psychologically distant from the TL group” (p.34). According to this theory, the acquisition of a second language is directly linked to the acculturation process, and learners’ success is determined by the extent to which they can orient themselves to the target language culture. Considering the relationship between pragmatic competence and cultural awareness, it seems that acculturation can potentially explain some reasons behind the lack of pragmatic competence among foreign language learners.

Proposed by Chomsky, 'Universal Grammar' (UG) asserts every human being is biologically endowed with a language faculty, the language acquisition device (LAD), which is responsible for the initial state of language development. The UG theory considers that the input from the environment is insufficient to account for language acquisition as speakers are able to create new sentences never seen or heard before that, by consensus, do not contravene the rules of the language. The language itself is constrained by a set of rules that the mind imposes, and even though different languages exhibit variations e.g. word order rules, all languages exhibit common features and limitations shaped by the way the mind is able to apprehend the world.

Influenced by Chomsky’s ideas, Krashen (1987) developed one of the most influential theories of SLA, which, in fact, is a collection of ideas, popularly known as the 'Monitor

Model Theory'. One central concept is the distinction between sub-conscious acquisition, such as when a learner is exposed to an authentic input in a L2 setting, and conscious learning, which takes place in a classroom context, where the language is being formally presented, such as when grammar rules are explained. Acquisition takes place when the input is just beyond the learner's current proficiency, but it is still comprehensible because the learner is able to apprehend meaning from the context and associate it with the new language. Krashen warned that, even with these ideal conditions, acquisition can be compromised by 'Affective Filtering', whereby social and psychological factors, such as low motivation or poor self-esteem will get in the way of language acquisition. Another aspect of Krashen's model is the way learners will monitor or self-correct their language output. Finally, a more controversial component of Krashen's view is the idea that there is a natural order to the language that learners acquire, and that learning cannot be forced to contravene that natural order.

Another theory, the 'Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis' (CAH), suggests that by focusing on potential errors through comparing and contrasting the L1 and the TL, it is possible to determine what should be included and excluded in a learning situation, as it is natural for a learner to transfer elements of L1 to L2 language (Saville-Troike, 2006). Mitchell and Myles (1998) say that the predictions of CAH, that all the errors made in learning L2 are due to interface from L1, were shown to be unfounded. They claim that many studies and research explain convincingly that the majority of errors could not be attributed to L1. In other words, CAH might not predict learning difficulties, and was only useful in the retrospective explanation of errors. This point considerably weakened its appeal. However, the heightened interest in this area led to the development of 'Error Analysis', which makes a distinction between errors, arising due to a lack of systematic knowledge of L2 language and mistakes,

which are made when that knowledge has been made aware – but not fully acquired and production automatic.

The notion of ‘Interlanguage’ has also been central to the development of the field of research on SLA. Introduced by Selinker (1972), it refers to the linguistic system evidenced when an adult second language learner attempts to express meanings in the language being learnt. The interlanguage is viewed as a separate linguistic system, clearly different from both the learner’s L1 and the TL being learnt, but linked to both L1 and TL by interlingual identifications in the perception of the learner. A central characteristic of any interlanguage is that it fossilises, that is, it ceases to develop at some point short of full identity with the target language. Thus, the adult second language learner never achieves a level of facility in the use of the target language comparable to that achievable by any child acquiring the target as a first language.

The ‘Interaction Hypothesis’, mainly formulated by Hatch (1978), almost turns Krashen’s theory of Input Hypothesis on its head, stating that rather than a learner processing a structure prior to use, she will use language in conversation and out of this process an understanding of syntactic structures will develop. When learners interact with native speakers, there is a tendency for the latter to notice the shortcomings of what is produced by the non-native speaker and make modifications to assist in a negotiation of meaning, pointing at ways in which inadequacies can be addressed. In a similar vein, Swain (2006) postulated the idea of *lingualisation* as the central process at work during acquisition, which disregards Krashen’s focus on input, and substitutes it with a focus on output, and the idea that production is key. She claims that, practising the language helps learners observe their own production, which is essential to SLA. It is her contention that “output may stimulate learners to move from the semantic, open-ended non-deterministic, strategic processing prevalent in comprehension to the complete grammatical processing needed for accurate production” (Swain, 1995, p. 128).

She explains that “learners may notice a gap between what they want to say and what they can say, leading them to recognise what they do not know, or know only partially” (p.126). She highlights that ‘noticing’ is essential to SLA and also hypothesises that output has other two functions: to test hypothesis and to trigger reflection, a metalinguistic function. She explains that learners “may output just to see what works and what does not” (p. 132) and that they reflect upon the language they produce when negotiating meaning because the content of negotiation is the relation between the meaning they are trying to express and the language form.

The sociocultural theory regards the view that people are part of a social community as the driver in language acquisition. Mitchell and Myles (2004, p.200) stated that “from a social cultural perspective, children’s early language learning arises from processes of meaning making in collaborative activity with other members of a given culture” and that “the individual emerges from social interaction”. It is in the social world that the language learners observe others using language and imitate them. It is also with the collaboration of other social actors that learners move from one stage to another. A key concept here is ‘scaffolding’, the notion that all ‘actors’ in the social community play a role in assisting the learners to build up their language competence.

Finally, within the framework concept of 'Connectionism', it is postulated that SLA takes place, like all learning, due to connections that occur in neural networks, where simultaneous and parallel processing occurs (rather than just sequential), alluding to the fact learning is a complex process that occurs at different levels, from the individual brain to society. Language learning is understood as the processing of experience and the repetition of experiences causing the strengthening of the connections. Ellis (2007, p.82) explains that “our neural apparatus is highly plastic in its initial state” during L1 development but that “the initial state of SLA is no longer a plastic system; it is one that is already tuned and committed

to the L1”. These theories are not exhaustive, and neither are they all-encompassing. The notions they contain cannot claim to explain all the process involved in SLA, and Menezes (2013) regards them all as having some theoretical validity, even if not supported by empirical evidence, stating that they approach SLA at different levels and contexts. She goes on to say that SLA is a complex process that should include all theories in SLA framework.

## **2.4 Existing models of communicative competence**

Recent theoretical and empirical research on communicative competence is largely based on the following models of communicative competence which will be introduced and discussed below:

- (a) The model of Canale and Swain (1980, 1981)
- (b) The model of Bachman and Palmer (1990, 1996)
- (c) The model of Celce-Murcia et al. (1995)
- (d) The description of components of communicative language competence in the Common European Framework (CEFR) (2001).

### **2.4.1 Model of Canale & Swain (1980)**

The first comprehensive model of communicative competence that was intended to serve both instructional and assessment purposes is that of Canale & Swain (1980), which was

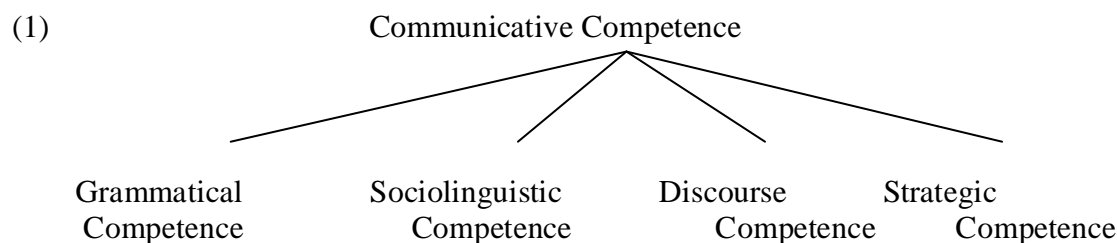
further developed by Canale (1983).<sup>1</sup> In this model, communicative competence has the following four components:

(a) Grammatical competence - the knowledge of the language code (grammatical rules, vocabulary, pronunciation, spelling, etc.).

(b) Sociolinguistic competence - the mastery of the sociocultural code of language use (appropriate application of vocabulary, register, politeness and style in a given situation).

(c) Discourse competence - the ability to combine language structures into different types of cohesive texts (e.g., political speech, poetry).

(d) Strategic competence - the knowledge of verbal and non-verbal communication strategies which enhance the efficiency of communication and where necessary, enable the learner to overcome difficulties when communication breakdowns occur.



Source: Canale (1983)

In Canale and Swain (1980, 1981), grammatical competence is mainly defined in terms of Chomsky's linguistic competence. According to Canale and Swain, grammatical competence is concerned with mastery of the linguistic code (verbal or non-verbal) which includes vocabulary knowledge as well as knowledge of morphological, syntactic, semantic, phonetic

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<sup>1</sup> In the model introduced by Canale & Swain (1980), communicative competence consists of four components; however, the initial model proposed by Canale and Swain (1980, 1981) had three main components and the fourth component (discourse competence) was developed later by Canale (1983, 1984).

and orthographic rules. This competence enables the speaker to use knowledge and skills needed for understanding and expressing the literal meaning of utterances.

In line with Hymes's belief about the appropriateness of language use in a variety of social situations, the sociolinguistic competence in their model includes the knowledge of rules and conventions which underlie the appropriate comprehension and language use in different sociolinguistic and socio-cultural contexts.

In the model of Canale and Swain, strategic competence is composed of knowledge of verbal and non-verbal communication strategies that are recalled to compensate for breakdowns in communication due to insufficient competence in one or more components of communicative competence. These strategies include paraphrase, circumlocution, repetition, etc. Swain (1984, p. 189) defines strategic competence as "the mastery of communication strategies that may be called into action either to enhance the effectiveness of communication or to compensate for breakdowns in communication"; however, Yule & Tarone (1990) argue that defined in this way, strategic competence is not going to be amenable to be investigated.

Schachter (1990) was one of the first critics of Canale & Swain (1980), who questioned the validity of the constituent components, and particularly the separation of discourse and sociolinguistic competencies. Schachter (1990, p. 43) states that "unity of the text involves appropriateness and depends on contextual factors such as status of the participants, purpose of the interaction, and norms or conventions of interaction". The second issue involved in their theory as pointed by Schachter (1990) is that they failed to provide a clear definition for each component which presents a vague picture of each notion.

Scarcella and Oxford (1992) accept Canale and Swain's framework of communicative competence with two major revisions. Firstly, Scarcella and Oxford (1992, p.72) extend the notion of discourse competence to refer to "verbal, nonverbal, and paralinguistic knowledge



underlying the ability to organise spoken and written texts meaningfully and appropriately”. The authors emphasize that, some researchers favour the term conversational competence to refer to this broader definition of discourse competence related to conversations. Secondly, they expand the original concept of strategic competence to include all types of compensation strategies that make up for missing knowledge such as guessing from context in reading and listening and paraphrasing and circumlocution in speaking and writing.

Hymes’ (1972) introduction of communicative competence was the basis of Canale and Swain’s paper; nevertheless, we find some disagreements between the two. Therefore, it seems to be worthwhile to start with the main concepts argued by Hymes (1972). Hymes (1972) who had reacted to Chomsky’s characterisation of the linguistic competence of the ideal native speaker, proposed the term ‘communicative competence’ to represent the ability to use language in a social context and to observe sociolinguistic norms of appropriateness. Chomsky (1965) defined competence as the knowledge of the speaker-hearer of his language and performance as the actual use of language in concrete situation. He claimed that in actual fact, performance could not directly reflect competence. “A record of natural speech will show numerous false starts, deviations from rules, changes of plan in midcourse, and so on” (Chomsky, 1965, p. 31). This argument provided the basis for Hymes’ (1972) paper on communicative competence and he called for the critical analysis of competence and performance. “The existence of competency for use may seem obvious, but if its study is to be established, and conducted in relation to current linguistics, then the notions of competence and performance must themselves be critically analysed, and a revised formulation provided” (Hymes, 1972, p. 61). In his analysis, Hymes introduces two kinds of performance: actual performance and underlying performance; while the former is based on Chomsky’s definition which is equal to language use, the latter is the underlying speech beyond grammatical competence. In an attempt to clarify the notion of ‘competence’, he

finds the word too general (Hymes, 1972, p. 64) and breaks it down to two components of 'knowledge' and 'ability for use'. So, he refers to the 'competence' underlying a person's behaviour as a kind of 'performance' that he calls it performance (A) which after being actually performed would be performance (B). Nevertheless, presenting this new image of competence and performance, not only does not seem to clarify these notions, but also it leads to more ambiguity.

To define the notion of 'competence', Canale & Swain (1980) rely on Hymes (1972) where he finds Chomsky's (1965) description of competence as incomplete as it only includes grammatical aspects but not contextual and sociolinguistic factors. Chomsky (1965) finds socio-cultural aspects in performance rather than competence. In other words, in Chomsky's view, a theory of communicative competence is a theory of performance. This view has the support of linguists like Kempson (1997), Dresher and Hornstein (1977). On the other hand, Hymes (1972) and Canale and Swain (1980) differentiate between communicative competence and communicative performance as they argue that "communicative competence refers to the relationship and interaction between grammatical competence, or knowledge of rules of grammar, and sociolinguistic competence, or knowledge of the rules of language use" (Canale & Swain, 1980, p. 6). They also refer to communicative performance as the realisation of these competencies and their interaction in the actual production and comprehension of utterances (Canale & Swain, 1980, p. 6).

Canale & Swain (1980) do not agree on all aspects of communicative competence with those of Hymes (1972) and there are at least two differences between the two. While Hymes (1972) believes that the notion of competence not only refers to tacit knowledge, but also to 'ability for use', Canale and Swain hesitate to include the 'ability for use' in their definition of communicative competence due to the lack of research in the area and the linguistic deficit that this inclusion would provoke (Canale & Swain 1980, p. 7). Moreover, Hymes (1972) has

included general psycholinguistic factors like memory in communicative competence; while, Canale and Swain (1980) assume that such factors are nonspecific to communicative competence and should be treated as aspects of communicative performance as suggested by Campbell and Wales (1970).

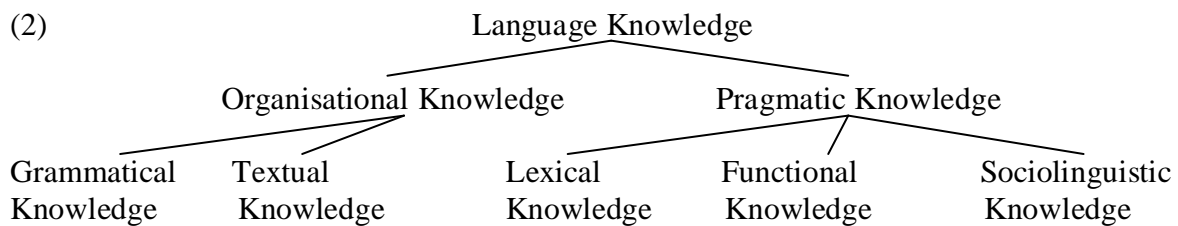
On the notion of assessment of communicative competence, they theorise an integrative method which involves both competence and performance. Canale and Swain (1980, p. 34) state that, “communicative testing must be devoted not only to what the learner knows about the second language and about how to use it (competence), but also to what extent that learner is able to actually demonstrate this knowledge in a meaningful communicative situation (performance)”.

#### **2.4.2 Model of Bachman & Palmer (1990, 1996)**

This model was initially proposed by Bachman (1990) as a new model of communicative competence; however, it was slightly altered by Bachman and Palmer in the mid-1990s. According to Bachman and Palmer (1996), many traits of language users such as some general characteristics, their topical knowledge, affective schemata and language ability influence the communicative language ability. The crucial characteristic is their language ability which is comprised of two broad areas: language knowledge and strategic competence. In their view, language knowledge consists of two main components: organisational knowledge and pragmatic knowledge which complement each other in achieving communicatively effective language use. In Bachman and Palmer’s model, organisational knowledge is composed of abilities engaged in a control over formal language structures, i.e. of grammatical and textual knowledge. Grammatical knowledge includes

several rather independent areas of knowledge such as knowledge of vocabulary, morphology, syntax, phonology, and graphology.

On the other hand, according to them, pragmatic knowledge refers to abilities for creating and interpreting discourse. It includes three areas of knowledge: knowledge of pragmatic conventions for expressing acceptable language functions and for interpreting the illocutionary power of utterances or discourse (functional knowledge), knowledge of sociolinguistic conventions for creating and interpreting language utterances which are appropriate in a particular context of language use (sociolinguistic knowledge) and knowledge of the meaning of the words and their usage (lexical knowledge). Bachman & Palmer's (1996) model with a brief description for each component is presented below:



Source: Bachman & Palmer (1996, p. 68)

(I) Organisational knowledge or the knowledge of the components involved in controlling the formal structure of language for producing or recognising grammatically correct sentences and for ordering these to form texts.

(a) Grammatical knowledge which is similar to Canale & Swain's grammatical competence.

(b) Textual knowledge which is similar to Canale and Swain, but it is more elaborate on discourse competence.

(II) Pragmatic knowledge, or the knowledge of the components that enable us to relate words and utterances to their meanings, to the intentions of language users and to relevant characteristics of the language use contexts.

(a) Lexical knowledge, as the knowledge of the meanings of words and the ability to use figurative language.

(b) Functional knowledge, which is the knowledge of the relationships between utterances and the intentions, or communicative purposes of language users.

(c) Sociolinguistic knowledge which is similar to Canale & Swain's sociolinguistic competence.

This model separates knowledge of language from the general cognitive skills involved in language use (strategic competence) which are better understood as ability, or capacity, rather than as knowledge. While Bachman & Palmer's model seems to be superior to Canale & Swain's for language testing purposes, partly because of their attempt to distinguish between knowledge (competence) and skills (proficiency), there is still some overlap between their interpretation of illocutionary/functional component (which is conceived as knowledge), and that of their strategic component (which is considered to be a kind of processing ability/skill). Also, in contrast to Canale & Swain's (1980, p. 66) view of communicative competence, Bachman & Palmer (1996) call for the necessity to define language ability in a way that is appropriate for each particular testing situation. Another difference between the two models is replacing the term 'competence' in Bachman & Palmer (1996) with 'knowledge' to avoid the ambiguities surrounding the notion of competence. According to Bachman & Palmer (1996, p. 69), pragmatic knowledge "enables us to create or interpret discourse by relating utterances or sentences and texts to their meanings, to the intentions of language users, and to relevant characteristics of the language use setting". In Bachman's original framework (1990), pragmatic competence comprises two features of illocutionary competence and sociolinguistic competence. According to Bachman & Palmer (1996), illocutionary

competence contributes to the interpretation of the relationships between utterances or sentences and texts and the intention of language users.

Illocutionary competence or functional knowledge, as revised by Bachman & Palmer (1996, p. 69-70), comprises knowledge of four categories of language functions:

(a) Ideational: functions which enable us to express or interpret meaning in terms of our experience of the real world and include the use of language to express or exchange information about ideas, knowledge or feelings. Utterances performing these functions include descriptions, classifications, explanations, and expressions of anger and sorrow.

(b) Manipulative: functions which allow us to affect the world around us. They include instrumental functions (getting other people to do things, like requests and suggestions), regulatory functions (controlling what other people do, for like rules and regulations) and interpersonal functions (establishing, maintaining and changing interpersonal relationships like greetings and compliments).

(c) Heuristics: functions which help us to use language to extend our knowledge of the world around us, for instance, when using language for teaching and learning, for solving problems.

(d) Imaginative: functions which enable us to use language to create an imaginary world or extend the world around us for humorous or aesthetic purposes such as jokes, figures of speech and poetry.

Bachman and Palmer (1996) conclude that these four categories of language functions are by no means mutually exclusive. They do not usually occur only in individual or isolated utterances. On the contrary, most language use involves the performance of multiple functions in connected discourse. The following quote summarises Bachman's original views on these functions and how they relate to sociolinguistic competence:

While illocutionary competence enables us to use language to express a wide range of functions, and to interpret the illocutionary force of utterances or discourse, the appropriateness of these functions and how they are performed varies from one language use context to the next, according to a myriad of sociocultural and discorsal features (Bachman, 1990, p. 94).

Bachman (1990, p. 94) defines sociolinguistic competence as “the sensibility to, or control of the conventions of language use that are determined by the features of the specific language use context”.

#### **2.4.3 Model of Celce-Murcia et al. (1995)**

In an attempt to address the drawbacks of the other two models, Celce-Murcia et al. (1995) developed their own model of communicative competence. Their model comprises a triangle which encloses a circle in the middle, while surrounded by another circle. The circle within the triangle is discourse competence, and the three points of the triangle are sociolinguistic competence, linguistic competence, and actional competence. Therefore, their model gives a central role to discourse competence. In their model, the surrounding circle represents strategic competence. They argue that “our model is more detailed than Canale and Swain's in that actional competence has been specified in its own right. We differ from Bachman and Palmer in that our model places lexical knowledge within linguistic knowledge” (Celce-Murcia et al., 1995, p. 16). They also state that, actional competence in their model is similar to Bachman & Palmer's (1990) functional knowledge, but it's been labelled differently just to show their different perspective. They declare that “actional competence can be described as the ability to perform speech acts and language functions, to recognise and interpret utterances as (direct or indirect) speech acts and language functions, and to react to such utterances appropriately” (Celce-Murcia et al., 1995, p. 18). In their model, actional competence has two main components, performing language functions, and interpreting

illocutionary meaning and indirect speech act. They categorise language functions to seven areas: interpersonal exchange, information, opinions, feelings, suasion, problems, and future. They argue that, this categorisation is a helpful organisational construct and a practical guide for teachers, materials writers and language testers. The second main component of actional competence concerns the interpretation of illocutionary meaning and especially indirect speech acts.



(3)

Source: Celce-Murcia et al. (1995)

The components of the model of communicative competence developed by Celce-Murcia et al. (1995) can be explained as:

(a) Discourse Competence: For Celce-Murcia et al. this competence is at the centre and consists of the union of Cohesion and Coherence, which was separated by Bachman and Palmer. Like Bachman and Palmer, there is no discussion of topical knowledge or affective factors.

(b) Actional Competence is viewed as the knowledge of speech acts needed; firstly, to engage in interpersonal exchange; secondly, to impart information; and finally to express information and feelings.



(c) Socio-cultural Competence refers to the knowledge of context that decides what is said, and how it is said. The contextual factors include the participants and the situational variables. Stylistic appropriateness relates to politeness conventions and stylistic variation of register and formality. It also includes the knowledge of social conventions and awareness of values, beliefs and living conditions of the target language community. Finally, it includes non-verbal or paralinguistic communication like body language, proxemics and the use of the silence.

(d) Strategic Competence consists of avoiding strategies, achievement strategies, stalling strategies, self-monitoring strategies, and most importantly, interactional strategies. Celce-Murcia et al. believe that the interaction of all these competencies takes place in the Strategic Competence. Moreover the model contains both the ‘knowledge’ and ‘ability for use’ components elaborated by Hymes.

Their definition of sociolinguistic and discourse competence remain close to those of previous models. Therefore, the only main difference between the model of Celce-Murcia et al. (1995) and those by Canale & Swain (1980, 1981) and Bachman & Palmer (1990, 1996) is the inclusion of actional competence.

Celce-Murcia (2007) refined this functional-relational model of communicative competence and added two more concepts, namely, interactional competence and formulaic competence. While interactional competence integrates two the concepts of actional competence and conversational competence, formulaic competence emphasises the importance of routines, collocations, idioms and lexical frames in discourse.

#### **2.4.4 Model of Communicative Language Competence in the CEFR (2001)**

The last model I will refer to is the model or description of communicative language competence in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (2001). This model is intended for assessment as well as for learning and teaching of languages. The publication of the CEFR in 2001 was a major step in foreign language learning and teaching. Its main aim is to:

... describe[s] in a comprehensive way what language learners have to learn to do in order to use a language for communication and what knowledge and skills they have to develop so as to be able to act effectively. The description also covers the cultural context in which language is set. The Framework also defines levels of proficiency which allow learners' progress to be measured at each stage of learning and on a life-long basis (CEFR, 2001, p. 1).

In the CEFR, communicative competence is conceived only in terms of knowledge. The CEFR defines competences as "the sum of knowledge, skills and characteristics that allow a person to perform actions" (9). By including skills, this definition goes beyond mere knowledge and reflects the 'behaviour potential' of Halliday (1978), which was discussed earlier. Communicative language competences are described in the following three main components: language competence, sociolinguistic competence and pragmatic competence. The CEFR refers to language competence or linguistic competence as the knowledge and ability to use language resources to form well-structured messages. Linguistic competence has four sub-categories including lexical competence, grammatical competence, phonological competence and orthographic competence. One controversy in this model is the inclusion of grammatical elements as lexical competence, while there is a sub-category as grammatical competence. Unfortunately, the CEFR does not provide any reason for separating the two or any elaboration on what grammatical elements are part of lexical competence, rather than grammatical competence. The CEFR refers to sociolinguistic competence as the possession

of knowledge and skills for appropriate language use in a social context, while pragmatic competence involves two subcomponents: discourse competence and functional competence.

(4)

Communicative language competence (CEFR, p.13)	
Linguistic competences: (subdivided into)	‘lexical, phonological, syntactic knowledge and skills and other dimensions of language as system’ (13).
Lexical competence (CEFR 5.2.1.1)	‘knowledge of, and ability to use, the vocabulary of a language, consists of lexical elements and grammatical elements’ (110)
Grammatical competence (CEFR 5.2.1.2)	‘knowledge of, and ability to use, the grammatical resources of a language’ (112)
Phonological competence (CEFR 5.2.1.4)	‘a knowledge of, and skill in the perception and production of: the sound-units (phonemes) of the language and their realisation in particular contexts (allophones), etc. (116)
Orthographic competence (CEFR 5.2.1.5)	a knowledge of and skill in the perception and production of the symbols of which written texts are composed’ (117)
Sociolinguistic competences	‘refer to the sociocultural conditions of language use’ (...) ‘rules of politeness, norms governing behaviour between generations, sexes, classes and social groups, linguistic codification of certain fundamental rituals in the functioning of a community’ (13)
Pragmatic competences: (subdivided into)	
Functional competences, (p.123)	‘relating to the communicative function of utterances’ (production of language functions, speech acts)
Discourse competences	‘the mastery of discourse, cohesion and coherence, the identification of text types and forms’ (13) ‘relating to the organising and structuring of texts’ (...) ‘drawing on scenarios or scripts of interactional exchanges’ (123).

#### 2.4.5 Pragmatic competence in the four models of communicative competence

One of the main controversies in the four models discussed above is their interpretation of the notion of pragmatic competence which will be discussed and analysed in this section.

In Canale & Swain's (1980, 1983) model, pragmatic competence is part of sociolinguistic competence; while, the knowledge of discourse is recognised as a separate competence. The separation of pragmatic competence and discourse competence is in contrast with one of the key definitions of pragmatics which finds the knowledge of context (discourse) to be part of pragmatic knowledge.

In Bachman & Palmer's (1996) model, pragmatic knowledge consists of lexical, functional and sociolinguistic knowledge. The first difference between the two models is that, while in Canale & Swain (1980, 1983) it is the sociolinguistic knowledge which includes pragmatic competence, in Bachman & Palmer (1996), pragmatic knowledge includes sociolinguistic knowledge. This is due to the different interpretations of the essence of pragmatic competence by researchers. Also, the inclusion of lexical knowledge as a component of pragmatic competence is in contrast to all previous theories of communicative competence proposed by Hymes (1972) and Canale & Swain (1980, 1983) who find lexical competence as a component of grammatical competence.

In Celce-Murcia et al.'s (1995) model, the notion of pragmatic competence has been dissolved into three notions of sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence and actional competence. Introduction of the new notion of actional competence is the main difference between this model and the others; however, as argued by Celce-Murcia et al. (1995), actional competence is only capable of addressing speech acts among all several aspects of pragmatics.

In the CEFR, all categories are reminiscent of those of Canale and Swain (1980); nonetheless, the more general term 'linguistic competences' is preferred to 'grammatical competences'. Also, in the CEFR model, we face a different categorisation of the notion of pragmatic competence. In contrast to Canale & Swain (1980, 1983) who find pragmatic competence as

a component of sociolinguistic competence, and that of Bachman & Palmer (1996) who categorise sociolinguistic competence as a component of pragmatic competence, in the CEFR they have been categorised separately.

The difference in the relationship between pragmatic competence and other components in all four models confirms the issues that are associated with the inclusion of the concept of pragmatic competence in any model of communicative competence. These models all present different relationships between pragmatic and sociolinguistic competence and it is yet to be agreed whether it is pragmatic competence which is a part of sociolinguistic competence or it is the sociolinguistic competence which as a broader area includes the other.

## **2.5 Interlanguage Pragmatic Transfer**

While interlanguage transfer is bi-directional and relates to transfer from one language to another, the notion of interlanguage pragmatic transfer usually refers to the use of one's L1 rules of speaking when conversing in the target language. Fossilisation, which is the process of 'freezing' of the transition between the L1 and L2, is regarded as the final stage of interlanguage development. It can occur even among motivated learners who are continuously exposed to their L2 or have adequate learning support. Therefore, language transfer has been a central issue in SLA and the area of pragmatic competence is no exception. Occurrences of pragmatic transfer may be influenced by various factors including L2 learners' perception of language distance between their L1 and L2 (e.g. Takahashi, 1996), learning context (e.g. Takahashi & Beebe, 1987), instructional effect (e.g. Bardovi-Harlig, 2001; Kasper, 1982), L2 proficiency (e.g. Olshtain & Cohen, 1989; Takahashi & Beebe, 1987), and length of time in the L2 community (e.g., Félix-Bradsefer, 2004).

Transfer effects have been noted at both sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic levels. Sociocultural transfer appears to govern learners' perceptions of contextual factors such as interlocutors' relative social distance (Beebe, Takahashi & Uliss-Weltz, 1990), and assessment of appropriateness in carrying out a particular speech act (Blum-Kulka, 1982; Olshtain & Cohen, 1989). For example, Beebe et al. (1990) found that L1 influenced patterns of style shifting for Japanese learners of English in contexts where speakers were of higher or lower status than the hearer, whereas for Americans, the decisive distinction was between status-equal and status-unequal relationships, irrespective of the direction. On the other hand, pragmalinguistic transfer appears in learners' use of conventions of means and form, affecting the illocutionary force and politeness value of interlanguage utterances (Bodman & Eisenstein, 1988; Eisenstein & Bodman, 1986, 1993; House & Kasper, 1987).

Learning context and learners' proficiency may be factors for pragmatic transfer. Takahashi and Beebe (1987) investigated the refusals of Japanese learners of English and American English native speakers through discourse completion tasks (DCT) to examine differences in language production and the extent of L1 pragmatic transfer. They reported that the transfer of Japanese refusal strategies was more prevalent among EFL than ESL learners. Several studies support the intuitive claim that as learners' proficiency develop, the occurrence of negative pragmatic transfer from their L1 decreases (Bouton, 1994; Trosborg, 1987). However, Takahashi and Beebe's (1993) study of Japanese refusals found that transfer was greater among high proficiency learners than low proficiency learners at the discourse level. They hypothesized that second language proficiency is positively correlated with pragmatic transfer because low proficiency level learners do not have the linguistic ability to transfer L1 forms such as indirect request strategies. Thus, it was concluded that transferring pragmatic aspects requires learners to possess sufficient TL resources.

In addition to linguistic proficiency, other factors such as learners' familiarity with the target situational context can cause pragmatic transfer. For example, Eisenstein and Bodman (1986) found that the familiarity with a particular situation was a significant factor in L2 learners' performance of target-like expressions of gratitude. Moreover, length of stay in the target culture and the amount of interaction with native speakers may be another influential factor affecting interlanguage pragmatic behaviour. Olshtain & Blum-Kulka (1985) reported that the politeness perceptions of L2 requests and apologies of learners of Hebrew were based on their L1; however, the learners' tolerance for directness and positive politeness was increased with length of residence in the target community. Learner's transferability judgment is also influenced by the context in which the speech act takes place. Specifically, Takahashi (1996) points out the effects of imposition on Japanese EFL learners' overuse of a particular L1 strategy, 'Would you please do X'; learners perceived the strategy as more transferable in high-imposition situations. This indicates their 'playing-it-safe' (Takahashi, 1996; p. 212) strategy that mitigated request forms as more polite and more appropriate to the high-imposition situations.

## **2.6 Pragmatic Failure in ILP**

Interlanguage pragmatics (ILP) is a relatively young area in linguistics that originated from pragmatics theory, developments in L2 pedagogy and research in the 1970s. ILP is based on pragmatic theories, principles and frameworks to examine how foreign/second language learners encode and decode meaning in the TL. ILP research is also heavily influenced by Hymes's (1971, 1972) concept of communicative competence.

Interlanguage pragmatics is defined by Kasper & Dahl (1992, p. 216) as "referring to non-native speakers' comprehension and production of speech acts, and how that L2-related

knowledge is acquired”. However, the word ‘acquisition’ was removed in later definitions. Also, Kasper (1992, p. 203) defines ILP as “the branch of second language research which studies how non-native speakers ... understand and carry out linguistic action in a target language, and they acquire L2 pragmatic knowledge”. A year later, Kasper and Blum-Kulka (1993, p. 3) referred to ILP as “a second generation hybrid”, deriving from the two research traditions of L2 acquisition research and pragmatics. They argued that,

As a branch of Second Language Acquisition Research, ILP is one of several specializations in interlanguage studies, contrasting with interlanguage phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics. As a subset of pragmatics, ILP figures as a sociolinguistic, psycholinguistic, or simply linguistic enterprise, depending on how one defines the scope of pragmatics (Kasper and Blum-Kulka, 1993, p. 3).

This definition was further developed by Kasper & Rose (2002):

As the study of second language use, interlanguage pragmatics examines how non-native speakers comprehend and produce action in a target language. As the study of second language learning, interlanguage pragmatics investigates how L2 learners develop the ability to understand and perform action in a target language (Kasper & Rose, 2002, p. 5).

The importance of pragmatic competence in target language has been stressed by many researchers. Bardovi-Harlig (2001) states that, if learners do not have pragmatic competence in their target language, then they may dive into conversations without all the tools needed to engage in a smooth interaction in the L2 and therefore may increase their risk of encountering discouraging miscommunications. Thomas (1983) argues that learners must be instructed in pragmatics because when learners interact with target language speakers outside the classroom, while their grammatical errors may be recognised as such and accepted by their interlocutors, pragmatic failure may not be as easily identified or forgiven:

If a non-native speaker appears to speak fluently (i.e. is grammatically



competent), a native speaker is likely to attribute his/her apparent impoliteness or unfriendliness, not to any linguistic deficiency, but to boorishness or ill-will. While a grammatical error may reveal a speaker to be a less than proficient language user, pragmatic failure reflects badly on him/her as a person (Thomas, 1938, p. 97).

Second and foreign language comprehension studies have shown that learners often rely on their native cultural notions of appropriate behaviour when attempting to use their target language to interact with others in a given social situation. Thus, misunderstanding, communication breakdown, or pragmatic failure often occurs. Several studies (Eisenstein & Bodman, 1986; Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993; Liu, 1995) have evidenced the pragmatic transfer from learners' native language to a second language. For example, Olshtain and Blum-Kulka (1985) found that, regardless of language proficiency, learners may reach native-like speech act (requests and apologies) acceptability patterns as a function of the length of stay in the target community.

Thomas (1983) also argues that pragmatic failures in cross-cultural communication may be a factor that leads to negative stereotypes about various linguistic groups, and learners may risk their reputation when communicating in L2. It often occurs in cross-cultural and intercultural communication, and it plays an important role in foreign language acquisition. Language learners may be competent in the linguistic forms of the target language, but they may not be aware of the different functions and meanings of those forms in the target language. Pragmatic failure may not only cause ineffective communication, but may also cause native speakers to form misjudgements or misperceptions about the personality, beliefs and attitudes of the learner. Thomas (1983, p. 91) defines pragmatic failure as "the inability to understand what is meant by what is said". She prefers the term 'pragmatic failure' to 'pragmatic error' because she thinks that a grammatical error can be explained by means of prescriptive rules, while the nature of the pragmatic ambivalence is such that we cannot say that the pragmatic

force of a sentence is incorrect, but that has not been able to reach the speaker's communicative intention. In another study, Hoffman-Hicks (1999) states that learners can be negatively evaluated as a result of their pragmatic failures, noting that such a negative evaluation can be discouraging to a learner and can restrict the number and depth of relationships with target language speakers, thus limiting the interactions available to the learner and potentially stunting further linguistic development. Moreover, Blum-Kulka & Olshtain (1986, p. 166) believe that pragmatic failure takes place "whenever two speakers fail to understand each other's intentions".

In an attempt to find the reason behind communication breakdowns, Bialystok (1993, p. 54) states that "adults make pragmatic errors, not only because they do not understand forms and structures, or because they do not have sufficient vocabulary to express their intentions, but also because they choose incorrectly". While all learners are open to potential misunderstanding, advanced learners are actually more at risk than lower proficiency learners since for these learners, grammatical proficiency is no longer seen as an excuse for impoliteness. In a study carried out by Enomoto and Marriott (1994), six Japanese native speakers were asked to assess two Australian tour-guides' pragmatic competence in Japanese. Enomoto and Marriott (1994) found that the native speaker judges were more critical of the advanced speakers' level of politeness than of that of the lower proficiency speakers. In other words, it appears that when grammatical competence is not seen as a relevant explanation, native speakers generally attribute any deviations from conventional usage to personality issues, rather than to issues of language use.

In a study carried out by McNamara & Roever (2006) to investigate the origin of pragmatic failure they argue that it can be difficult to define the origins of pragmatic failure, because it is often impossible to determine whether the speaker does not know the appropriate rules (sociopragmatic failure) or whether the speaker is missing the appropriate knowledge of how

and when to use these rules (pragmalinguistic failure). Since sociopragmatics refers to social aspects such as different variables of politeness, namely imposition or social distance, sociopragmatic failures result from different assessments of these factors (Thomas 1983, p. 104). Consequently, sociopragmatic decisions are more delicate than pragmalinguistic choices because the former deals with human relationships while the latter involves linguistic aspects.

Research in the two components of pragmatic competence has shown that in L2 classrooms, pragmalinguistic failures are often due to either transfer from learners' first language or teacher-induced errors (Thomas 1983, p. 101). Amaya (2008, p. 13) expressed the pragmatic failure as:

Pragmalinguistic failure takes place when the pragmatic force of a linguistic structure is different from that normally assigned to it by a native speaker. An important source of this type of error is pragmalinguistic transfer, where speech-act strategies are inappropriately transferred from L1 to L2. For example, using 'Can you pass the salt?' in Russian to make a request, since this would be interpreted as a question to know if the listener has the physical ability to pass the salt. Sociopragmatic failure, on the other hand, stems from the different intercultural perceptions of what constitutes appropriate linguistic behaviour. This type of pragmatic failure is more difficult to correct and overcome by the students since this involves making changes in their own beliefs and value system (Amaya, 2008, p. 13).

Challenges of sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic development in the TL have been discussed by several researchers. According to Kasper and Rose (2002, p. 255), learners tend to struggle more with sociopragmatic than with pragmalinguistic aspects of language. Similarly, Thomas states that pragmalinguistic failures are easy to overcome since pragmalinguistic competence involves the knowledge of conventions which is quite straightforward to teach and learn (Thomas, 1983, p. 91). Sociopragmatic failures in contrast,

are more serious because they deal with the student's system of beliefs as much as his/her knowledge of the language.

Researchers also have different opinions about possible causes of pragmatic failure in the TL. Takahashi and Beebe (1987) find pragmatic transfer as one of the reasons behind pragmatic failure. Rubin (1983) suggests that L2 learners need to know the values that speakers in a speech community hold. Also, several researchers (e.g., Cohen, 1997; Kubota, 1996; Siegal, 1996) believe that some L2 learners are just simply unwilling to follow the norms of the target language which this might be another factor that contributes to their deviation from native-like pragmatic performance.

In an attempt to explain L2 learners' failure to achieve communicative competence, Scarcella (1992) listed several reasons:

- (a) Learners may not receive enough exposure to the second language;
- (b) Learners may not have enough direct experience conversing with native speakers;
- (c) Some conversational features may be acquired late in the language acquisition process since they are neither perceptually salient nor easily understood;
- (d) Learners may inappropriately transfer L1 routines to L2 contexts;
- (e) Speakers may wish to maintain their own cultural ties;
- (f) The target culture may discourage learners from mastering the language too completely;
- (g) L1 community members may consider learners who speak 'too fluently' in L2 as linguistic renegades or traitors;
- (h) Learners may feel that prejudice rather than linguistic differences prevents them from gaining socio-economic power in the target language community.

Consequently, Scarcella (1992) argues that, providing learners with positive learning experiences including motivating them to acquire the second language despite communication difficulties would be more beneficial to improve their communicative competence.

## **2.7 Pragmatic Competence and Convention**

Arguably, it is a fundamental assumption in linguistics that languages are governed by rules. Language can be defined as a set of rules that have developed to respond to the communicative needs of its members in a particular speech community. Nonetheless, usually these roles are associated with social conventions and separating these two aspects would be hard if not impossible. These conventions make the speech habits of the speakers of that language. Each speech community creates its own linguistic and non-linguistic conventions which are unique to that society. Hymes (1972) states that for any speech community, there are preferred ways of formulating and expressing certain ideas that involve a familiarity with the language conventions shared by the members of the speech community. Coulmas (1981) refers to the conventionalised forms as routine formulae which are the occurrences of highly conventionalised pre-patterned expressions that are closely associated with communicative situations. Routine formulae are a part of speakers' pragmalinguistic knowledge because they have specific illocutionary discourse organisation and politeness functions associated with them. They are also a part of speakers' sociopragmatic knowledge in that their use is governed by contextual factors of the speech situations. Coulmas (1981) also states:

Only knowledge of the relevant dimension of social situations and their relative weight guarantees an understanding of the meaning of formulas which are tied to them. The ability to identify and differentiate standard communicative situations and their proper association with routinised linguistic means for their mastery, thus constitutes an essential

part of common sense knowledge of social situations  
(Coulmas, 1981, p. 242).

Coulmas (1981) further indicates that routine formulae are a serious problem for non-native speakers, and this has been supported by the majority of interlanguage pragmatic studies (e.g., Eisenstein & Bodman, 1986; House, 1988). The study of the form and structure of language use is inseparable from the study of pragmatic competence because it is through the various linguistic codes that one displays their pragmatic competence.

Non-linguistic conventions or culture not only affect linguistic conventions, but also will be reflected in them as well and it is generally accepted that culture plays a role in language behaviour. According to LoCastro (2003), in cross-cultural communication, the successful interpretation of speakers' intended meanings largely depends on each interactant's own cultural norms of interpretation. Therefore, cultural schemata, i.e. pre-existing knowledge structures based on experience in their first-language culture, affect the interpretation and production of pragmatic meaning of utterances. LoCastro (2003) also argues that manifestations of cultural models of thought are embedded in talk both at micro and macro levels. LoCastro (2003) believes that micro-level behaviour includes prosodic features, listener behaviour, turn-taking, conversational routines, conventional indirectness and speech act realisation, while macro-level perspective consists of features which have an impact on cross-cultural communication like attribution of illocutionary force, perception of politeness, and violation or adherence to Grice's co-operative principle. Aspects such as mismatches between form and function, the transfer of socio-pragmatic norms from the first language culture and unawareness of taboo topics in a second language culture can hinder cross-cultural communication (LoCastro, 2003).

The possibility of teaching non-linguistic conventions has been the core of many studies so far and EFL teachers who have been aware of the crucial role of contextual knowledge in the

TL interactions have tried to include what they refer to as the cultural knowledge of the target language in their lesson plans; however, including non-linguistic conventions in teaching materials of the TL is not an easy task. The initial problem arises from the concept of culture itself as it is a notoriously difficult term to define. In 1952, the American anthropologists Kroeber and Kluckhohn, critically reviewed concepts and definitions of culture, and compiled a list of 164 different definitions. So, when we talk about cultural knowledge it is really difficult to say what we actually mean.

Interlocutors' familiarity with the cultural norms and conventional rules of a particular language is highly important for successful communication in the TL. This does not mean that speakers using a particular language automatically have to adhere to these norms at all times, but if they wish to react in a polite or appropriate manner towards their interlocutors, they need to be aware of what actually constitutes appropriate behaviour not to violate it. What is considered appropriate or inappropriate by speakers of a particular language is closely related to their cultural norms. Therefore, without knowledge of the target language's cultural norms and conventions, a person will not be able to adapt his or her utterances according to the cultural framing. According to Yule (1996, p. 87), "we all develop what is referred to as cultural schemata. These schemata are based on background knowledge structures and will be culturally determined". Müller (1981 in Kasper 1997, p. 13) presented a similar concept. He referred to what he called cultural isomorphism, "which is an interpretive strategy used to make sense of the world (...) [and] can be described as a combination of assimilation and spot-the difference". We use our background knowledge and previous experience to classify new experiences as familiar or unfamiliar. According to both Yule and Müller, our interpretation of the world around us and the situations that we encounter are thus linked to our cultural background. If L1 culture is different from the one of

the target language, this might pose a challenge to the development of pragmatic competence in the TL. Gudykunst and Kim illustrate the relationship between culture and language as:

The development of human culture is made possible through communication, and it is through communication that culture is transmitted from one generation to another. Culture and communication are intertwined so closely that Hall (1959) maintains that 'culture is communication' and 'communication is culture'. In other words, we communicate the way we do because we are raised in a particular culture and learn its language, rules, and norms. Because we learn the languages, rules and norms of our cultures by a very early age (between 5 and 10 years old), however, we generally are unaware of how culture influences our behaviour in general and our communication in particular (Gudykunst & Kim, 2003, p. 4).

The teachability of pragmatics has been stressed by several researchers (House & Kasper, 1981; Wildner-Bassett, 1984, 1986, 1994; Billmyer, 1990; Olshtain & Cohen, 1990; Bouton, 1994; Kubota, 1995; Bardovi-Harlig, 1996; House, 1996; Morrow, 1996; Tateyama et al., 1997) and Kasper & Schmidt (1996, p. 160) state that "pragmatic knowledge should be teachable". As discussed earlier, several studies have also investigated the effect of explicit and implicit instruction of pragmatics and found a positive correlation between instruction and pragmatic competence. While the majority of the existing pedagogies on teaching pragmatics do not differentiate between different elements of pragmatics and simply refer to the whole domain, the reality is that there are some aspects of pragmatics that cannot be taught. Therefore, despite the existing fair amount of literature on teaching pragmatics, the following questions have remained unanswered:

- (a) How is it possible to teach all aspects of pragmatics, including cultural norms, and are all aspects of culture teachable?
- (b) If we include the cultural aspects of the target language as one of the requirements of a lesson plan in an English classroom, can we still call it a language lesson?



(c) There are some aspects of culture which cannot be recognised as cultural norms in a different country. Socialising and meeting friends at a local pub is part of the British culture, but it is against the norms of some other countries. Is it possible to include these norms in EFL textbooks targeting worldwide market? Or the solution is to simply avoid it?

While researchers and ESL teachers have called for teaching pragmatics to improve the communicative competence of learners of the TL, the truth is that we have to leave an important part of this notion of pragmatic knowledge aside which are these conventions and cultural norms. This issue could be also related to Grice's work on conversational implicatures which formed a general theory for human communication that has largely been accepted as universal and applicable to any language. However, there exists a great deal of debate over the cross-cultural implications of Grice's maxims and since their introduction, many authors have felt that he ignored a cultural component which makes its application to certain non-Western languages and cultures difficult.

Moreover, while these studies focus on teaching the first part of the concept, which is pragmatics, teachability of the notion of competence is yet to be agreed. Kasper (1997) is among the researchers who believe that competence cannot be taught. She argues that "competence, whether linguistic or pragmatic, is not teachable. Competence is a type of knowledge that learners possess, develop, acquire, use or lose. The challenge for foreign (...) language teaching is whether we can arrange learning opportunities in such a way that they benefit from the development of pragmatic competence in L2" (Kasper (1997, p. 1). In addition, Kasper (1997) argues that adult learners receive a considerable amount of L2 pragmatic knowledge for free for two main reasons. Firstly, some pragmatic knowledge is universal as "competent adult members of any community bring a rich fund of universal pragmatic knowledge and abilities to the task of learning the pragmatics of another language"

(Kasper & Rose, 2002, p. 164). Consequently, adult learners are usually aware of the following universal pragmatic features, among others (Kasper & Rose, 2002, p. 165):

(a) Turn-taking conventions, repair, the sequential accomplishment of actions and preference organisation (conversation analysis features);

(b) Acts of speaking, writing, and using hybrid modalities such as the main categories of illocutionary acts;

(c) Specific communicative acts: greetings, leave takings, requests, suggestions, invitations, offers, refusals, acceptances, (dis)agreements, apologies, complaints, compliments, expressions of gratitude;

(d) Conversational implicature (Grice, 1975), inferencing heuristics and indirectness;

(e) Indexicality as an implicit expression of epistemic, affective and social stance and contextualisation;

(f) Politeness as a mutually face-saving strategy (Brown & Levinson, 1987);

(g) Major realisation strategies for communicative acts, such as levels of directness in requesting;

(h) Routine formulae for managing recurrent communicative events;

(i) Sociopragmatic variability in actional and linguistic choices.

If we accept Kasper's views that the above features of pragmatic competence are universal and transferable between languages, we should expect all L2 learners to have the mastery of these features even before teaching them the pragmatic rules of the TL. Considering Kasper's view, the only difference between native and non-native speakers in terms of their pragmatic competence in the TL would be their level of linguistic competence. Therefore, in

order to improve the language learners' pragmatic competence in the TL, we should focus on raising their linguistic abilities.

On the teachability of pragmatic competence, Kasper (1997) states that teachers should raise learners' awareness of what they already know in terms of pragmatic knowledge and encourage them to transfer this knowledge to L2 contexts.

## **2.8 The Role of Native Speaker in Pragmatic Competence Research**

One of the drawbacks of all four models of communicative competence is that they do not present a clear picture of a pragmatic competent native speaker. Also, there is no mention of the role of the native speaker in current literature in ILP and cross-cultural pragmatics. Therefore, this makes it even harder to scale a non-native speaker's pragmatic knowledge when we do not have a clear definition of a pragmatic competent person in the target language. When we assess the linguistic knowledge of non-native speakers, we can idealise a native speaker who has the mastery of language proficiency and can be used as a model to measure L2 learners' knowledge of phonology, syntax and semantics in the target language. In contrast, the question is that who can take the role of an idealised model when measuring pragmatic competence? Is every native speaker an ideal person to become our model? What qualities should a native speaker have to become a suitable candidate? In other words, who is a pragmatically competent person in L1? Obviously and regrettably, previous studies carried out so far have underestimated this concept and there is rarely any mention of the role of native speaker in assessing pragmatic competence in the TL.

Despite the questions raised above which have not been responded by researchers in the area of pragmatic research so far, there have been many studies in both cross-cultural and

interlanguage pragmatics which have investigated the pragmatic knowledge of non-native speakers, using native speakers' responses as the medium of comparison. Current assessment methods in this area include the native speakers' responses as an evidence to assess the success or failure in pragmatic competence among the examinees. Any deviation from the native speakers' answers will be used as a reason to label the TL learners as pragmatically incompetent. Therefore, native speakers' responses are assumed to be the best answer in the context regardless of their social background, level of education, profession, etc.; nevertheless, any of these variables have a major impact on the communication strategies employed by these native speakers in their daily interactions, but they have been less discussed and considered in previous studies.

## **2.9 Production vs. Comprehension**

Pragmatic comprehension includes the understanding of speaker meaning and utterance meaning; it entails the comprehension of words and sentences and the speaker's assigned meaning to them (Taguchi, 2007, p. 314). While pragmatic comprehension is an important ability for L2 learners, its development has received the least attention within L2 pragmatic studies (Kasper & Rose, 2002, p. 118).

Current studies in the interlanguage pragmatics domain are mainly devoted to target the final outcome rather than the developmental processes involved in pragmatic comprehension (e.g. Hill, 1997; House, 1996; Hudson, Detmer, & Brown, 1995; Maeshiba, Kasper, & Ross, 1996; Rose, 2000; Sasaki, 1998; Takahashi, 1996; Trosborg, 1995; Yamashita, 1996). On the other hand, even those few studies on pragmatic comprehension do not give any precise description of the developmental processes involved in the comprehension of pragmatics. While production has been at the centre of attention in the existing studies, comprehension has been

less investigated by researchers and those few studies which focus on the comprehension of pragmatic functions are relatively underrepresented in the field. This ignorance can be related to the difficulties associated with the concept of pragmatic competence. Furthermore, as argued by Kasper & Rose (2002), issues related to developmental processes or relationships with the TL proficiency have not been studied substantially in the area of pragmatic comprehension. Pragmatic comprehension involves the ability to understand implied speaker intention by using linguistic knowledge, contextual clues, and the assumption of relevance (Grice, 1975; Levinson, 1983; Sperber & Wilson, 1995; Thomas, 1995). Moreover, considering 'Relevance Theory' (Sperber & Wilson, 1995), it is argued that communication not only depends on decoding of linguistic stimuli, but also it requires interpreting contextual cues and using them as evidence towards the correct inferencing of speaker intentions. Therefore, according to the Relevance Theory, inferential process is a global process as the hearer employs all conceptual information available in his/ her cognitive environment. Van Dick (1977) has been one of the few researchers who has investigated the concept of comprehension in speech acts. In his paper, 'Context and Cognition' he argues that:

Pragmatic comprehension is the series of processes during which language users assign particular conventional acts, i.e. illocutionary forces, to each other's utterances. The problem thus is: how does a hearer actually *know* that when a speaker utters such or such a sentence, that the speaker thereby makes a promise or a threat? What information must be available to the hearer in order to be able to make such assignments? Obviously this information may come from various sources and through various channels (Van Dick, 1977, p. 213).

Also, in an attempt to clarify the comprehension of speech acts, he introduces four stages:

Firstly, we have typical speech act sequences of which the structure has a more or less conventional or ritual character, such as giving lectures, preaching. Secondly, speech acts are interpreted on the basis of frame-like world knowledge because they are part of such frames. Thirdly, the interpretation of speech acts requires knowledge of what might be called meta-frames: we know the general conditions under which actions are accomplished, when they are successful. Finally, the interpretation of

speech acts involves world knowledge more in general. Speech acts often pertain to past or future activity of the speaker or the hearer: they are essentially functioning as expedient ways in which such activities are planned, controlled, commented upon, etc., or they are intended with the purpose to provide information for such actions. Hence, they basically require knowledge about what is necessary, plausible or possible in the real world (Van Dick, 1977, p. 216).

To date, only few studies have explored this area, although the majority of them have only focused on the comprehension of implied meaning (Bouton, 1992, 1994; Carrell, 1981, 1984; Kasper, 1984; Koike, 1996; Taguchi, 2002; Takahashi & Roitblat, 1994; Ying, 1996, 2001). Among these studies, only Bouton's (1992, 1994) study targeted the comprehension of implicature, while the others have only focused on speech act comprehension in the TL. Other studies in this field usually focus on the relationship between pragmatic comprehension and other elements. For example, Taguchi (2007, 2008) carried out further studies to explore the role of learning environment in the development of pragmatic comprehension.

According to Kasper and Rose (2002), the most influential findings on the development of pragmatic comprehension come from Bouton's (1988, 1994) series of studies. Bouton (1988, 1994) who investigated the impact of stay in an English-speaking country on the achievement of pragmatic comprehension, found a positive relationship between the length of stay and pragmatic comprehension. Bouton who had repeated his study on the same group after seventeen months of stay and then after four and a half years' period to explore the relationship between length of stay and pragmatic comprehension concluded that seventeen months is not enough to become competent in pragmatic comprehension while after four and a half years, learners' pragmatic comprehension resembles that of native-speakers even though some items of pragmatic knowledge remain challenging to learners. Bouton (1988, 1994) also found that language background and nationality of the L2 participants can affect pragmatic comprehension.

In a more recent study on pragmatic comprehension, Taguchi (2007) investigated the development of speed and accuracy in pragmatic comprehension. Taguchi's subjects were Japanese university level learners who had enrolled in an intensive English programme. Unlike Bouton's studies, Taguchi examined students in a foreign language environment and not in the target language country. Through a pragmatic listening task and a word recognition task which measured participants' speed in classifying individual words, he investigated L2 learners' ability to comprehend implicature (Taguchi, 2007, pp. 321-323). Taguchi's findings demonstrate that, after seven weeks, L2 learners developed significantly in the accuracy and speed of pragmatic comprehension; nevertheless, the development of accuracy was greater than the development of speed.

The main theories which underlie the domain of pragmatic comprehension have been introduced by Schmidt (1993), Bialystok (1993), and Sperber and Wilson (1995) which will be discussed below.

In an attempt to analyse the role of conscious awareness in pragmatic competence, Schmidt (1993) refers to consciousness as something that we are aware of, something that we do intentionally with our senses. The two terms consciousness and awareness have been also used synonymously. Therefore, conscious awareness can be referred to as our ability to be aware of our awareness. According to a critical examination of diary report, Schmidt found pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic information crucial and necessary to achieve pragmatic competence in a target language. Based on his findings he argued that pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic features should be taught explicitly to second language learners to achieve pragmatic competence in the target language. In fact, many theoretical and pedagogical accounts of pragmatics are based on the concept of 'awareness' developed by Schmidt (1993, 1995). Several pedagogical studies including House (1996), Rose & Ng (2001) and Takahashi (2001) explored how learners are likely to notice the input ranging from implicit to

explicit. According to Bardovi-Harling & Griffin (2005, p. 402), “in order for learners to adopt a target-like realisation of pragmatics, they must notice how the target language realises a pragmatic feature”. Nevertheless, most studies in ILP have employed production tasks (Bardovi-Harling, 2001), with less focus on perception of speech events.

A review of literature in the field of ILP reveals that studies conducted on the awareness aspects of pragmatics have predominantly explored the influence of a variety of different variables including motivation (e.g. Takahashi, 2005), language proficiency (e.g. Matsumura, 2003; Takahashi, 2005), learning environment (e.g. Matsumura, 2001; Schauer, 2006), target language exposure (e.g. Matsumura, 2003), length of residence in target language country (e.g. Bella, 2012), and emotional intelligence (e.g. Rafieyan et al., 2014b) on the development of pragmatic awareness.

Matsumura (2003) carried out a study to explore the effects of target language proficiency and exposure to target language on the development of language learners’ pragmatic awareness. 187 Japanese learners of English, who were on an eight-month academic exchange programme at a university in Canada, participated in this study. Using a multiple-choice questionnaire focusing on offering advice, their pragmatic awareness was measured, while language learners’ TOEFL marks were deployed to evaluate their English proficiency. Also, through a self-report questionnaire, amount of exposure to English was obtained. The findings revealed that the amount of target language exposure can potentially improve the pragmatic awareness.

In another study, Schauer (2006) investigated the effect of the learning environment on the development of pragmatic awareness among language learners. Two participant groups consisting of 16 German learners of English enrolled at a university in England, and 17 German learners of English in a higher education institution in Germany participated in the



study. Using the combined video-and-questionnaire instrument developed by Bardovi-Harlig and Dornyei (1998), the required data were collected. This study revealed that learning environment plays a substantial role in priming language learners' pragmatic awareness. As reported by Schauer (2006), the ESL learners' awareness of pragmatic infelicities surpassed that of the EFL participants.

In a more recent study, Bella (2012) explored the effects of length of residence in the target community on the development of pragmatic awareness in language learners. Two groups of participants with differing lengths of residence in Greece, one group with 1.6 years mean length of residence and the other group with 3 years mean length of residence, participated in the study. The instrument for data collection was the contextualised pragmatic and grammatical judgment test developed by Bardovi-Harlig and Dornyei (1998). The findings of the study revealed that increase in the length of residence does not result in the development of pragmatic awareness.

The second view was proposed by Bialystok (1993). She included two groups including adult second language learners and child first language acquirers in her study. Bialystok (1993) devised a two dimensional model with two kinds of descriptions: the description of the learner's competence and the description of the task's demands. Her aim to employ this model was to use the cognitive strategies involved in learning and using language to describe the processing ability of learners. She concluded that there are different processes involved in acquiring pragmatic competence in the first and second language. While children in L1 need to develop their linguistic resources to different context with different aims and to expand their pragmalinguistic knowledge, adult L2 learners need to learn the social rules of the target language and to focus on linguistic forms which are related to a particular social situation. According to Bialystok (1993), the main cause of pragmatic failure is the inability to select the appropriate strategy according to the communicative and social needs of the situation.

Studies in child language acquisition have proved that early knowledge of language use among children appears even before they start to speak (Aitchison, 1987) and pragmatic knowledge develops thereafter alongside other elements of language without any conscious awareness. Despite that we acquire and develop our pragmatic knowledge of our L1 throughout our lives by being exposed to experience different contexts on a daily basis, we cannot expect second language learners to achieve native-like pragmatic competence of the target language without being exposed to experience different strategies employed by native speakers in social situations. Another issue arises from the differences between children and adult learners. In a theoretical account of pragmatic development, Bialystok (1993) proposes that children and adults face different learning tasks. Whereas basic socialisation and the acquisition of pragmatic strategies are happening at the same time in the L1, L2 learners “do not begin with a childlike naivety about the social uses of language” (Bialystok, 1993, p. 47).

The Relevance Theory by Sperber & Wilson (1995) also attempts at explaining the processes involved in pragmatic comprehension though stressing the relationship between the context and the processing effort. The Relevance Theory argues that humans process information as productive as possible. Therefore, to interpret a message, people face different assumptions from diverse sources. Using the assumptions, they can choose the most relevant interpretation that has the greatest contextual impacts for the smallest processing effort. According to this theory, processing effort is reflected in the number and intensity of contextual signals to be interpreted. In a study by Taguchi (2005) it is stated that the level of conventionality encoded in utterances may reduce the processing effort required for understanding the implicatures.

In his attempt to distinguish between conversational and conventional implicatures, Grice (1975) explained the notion of conventionality. He argues that, in conventional implicatures, the listener draws inferences from the utterance based on the conventional meanings encoded

in lexical items. On the other hand, conversational implicatures are only understandable if the hearer has contextual knowledge (Grice, 1975).

One of the other research gaps in this field is the ignorance of the role of the listener in pragmatic comprehension in the TL. To communicate effectively, we rely on both our speaking and listening abilities to produce and comprehend accordingly. Therefore, to have a successful communication, we need someone being able to comprehend our language (the listener), when producing an utterance (the speaker). While with the existing literature, the field of pragmatic comprehension seems to be far from to master, and very few studies have investigated the processes involved in the transaction of the intended meaning, the question is that if we can relate any conversation breakdown between a native and non-native speaker to the latter's lack of pragmatic knowledge or not. If we do not know what processes are involved in the comprehension of an utterance, how is it possible to blame the non-native speaker? Conversation breakdown may occur for several other reasons, like the native speaker was simply not interested in the conversation, or he/she might be not educated enough to understand a complicated grammatical sentence which has been uttered correctly by a non-native speaker. Unfortunately, current studies in ILP and cross-cultural pragmatics have not addressed these issues in their theories which are crucial in understanding the real reasons behind communication breakdowns in the TL.

Despite the existence of few theories and studies in the area of pragmatic comprehension, there are still many ambiguities surrounding the processes involved in the acquisition of pragmatic competence (if the word 'acquisition' is the right word to refer to pragmatic competence) which have not been addressed so far. Therefore, carrying out studies that can only target the production of utterances in the TL, not only does not contribute to a better understanding of this notion, but also leads to the creation of a pile of literature based on wrong assumptions and misunderstandings of the essence of pragmatic competence.

## **2.10 Speech Acts vs. Other Aspects of Pragmatics**

As stated by Levinson (1983), among all the issues related to the theory of language use, speech acts theory has probably attracted the most interest. Scholars with different backgrounds including psychology, philosophy and anthropology have shown their interest in studying this notion from their own point of view and linguists are no exception. This has also been reflected in the studies being carried out by researchers investigating the notion of pragmatic competence. Roever (2006, p. 231) states that, due to the difficulty of researching a comprehensive construct like pragmatic competence, certain aspects of it have received particular attention in ILP research. According to Kasper (2000), the most commonly investigated speech acts are requests and apologies, followed by refusals, complaints, and compliments. Consequently, assessing the knowledge of speech acts has become the normal method of pragmatic knowledge evaluation in recent years and as discussed earlier, DCTs developed by Blum-Kulka (1982) and Beebe et al. (1990) are only capable to assess the speech acts knowledge. According to Levinson (1983), though the scope of pragmatics is far from easy to define, the variety of research interests and developments in the field share one basic concern, which is the need to account for the rules that govern the use of language in context.

On the other hand, while once implicature and presupposition were regarded as unruly and suspiciously non-logical (Horn 1996, p. 299), they have recently occupied a prominent place in pragmatics and are now among the most trusted and widely explored sources of insight into how language and context interact, the role of social cognition in shaping linguistic behaviour, and the nature of linguistic meaning itself (Potts, 2014, p. 2). However, this growing interest in implicature and presupposition is not extended to the field of pragmatic competence, and recent studies in this area still use the DCTs developed by Beebe et al. (1990) or the modified versions of them which can only target the knowledge of speech acts.

Considering the lack of effort to use other aspects of pragmatics when evaluating the pragmatic knowledge of non-native speakers in the TL, using a new questionnaire developed in this study, the knowledge of conversational implicatures and presuppositions in English of a group of native speakers of Farsi will be measured.

### **2.10.1 Study of the Speech Act of Refusal**

As the DCT developed by Beebe et al. (1990) which consists of twelve questions about the speech act of refusal will be employed in this study along with the questionnaire, it is beneficial to present a brief literature on this speech act here.

As one of the basic tenets of pragmatics, speech act theory has been examined in many fields, including philosophy (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969, 1979) anthropology, sociolinguistics, and linguistics (Sadock, 1974; Bach & Harnish, 1979). Speech act theory was developed by philosopher Austin (1962) in an attempt to explain how particular utterances operate within natural language; nevertheless, it was further studied by Searle (1969). Austin (1962) was interested in how words seemed not only to provide information and facts, but also how these words seemed to carry action. According to Austin (1962), speech acts are speakers' utterances which convey meaning and make listeners do specific things. The primary function of speech acts is that various functions can be implemented by means of language. Austin (1962) indicates that people perform three different kinds of acts when speaking:

(a) Locutionary acts, which are the literal meanings of the utterances that we use. Therefore, it is the basic act of utterance or producing a meaningful linguistic expression.

(b) Illocutionary acts, which is the intention that we have as speakers or the effect that our utterances have on hearers. The illocutionary act is performed via the communicative force of

an utterance, like the act of making a bet, or a promise, or an offer, etc. by applying the force carried within the performatives, either directly or indirectly.

(c) Perlocutionary acts, which are the results that are created through our illocution acts.

Among the different speech acts, refusals are one of the most studied areas in pragmatics. Generally speaking, a refusal speech act is performed when a speaker responds negatively to an offer, request, invitation, etc. The refusal speech act is important because it is sensitive to social variables such as gender, age, level of education, power, and social distance (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Mills, 2003). Refusal is a complex speech act that requires not only negotiation and cooperative achievements, but also “face-saving manoeuvres to accommodate the noncompliant nature of the act” (Gass & Houck, 1999, p. 2). Therefore, refusal is a face-threatening act to the person who makes a request because it contradicts the person’s expectations that their request or invitation will be accepted. Consequently, it threatens an initiator’s positive face, the positive self-image that people want to be valued by others.

The relevant literature for refusals is very rich, particularly in intra-cultural communication. The major study on refusals was carried out by Beebe et al. (1990) who investigated the pragmatic transfer in the realisation of the speech act of refusal by Japanese learners of English. Data were collected using DCT which consists of three requests, three invitations, three offers, and three suggestions. Each situation type includes one refusal to a person of higher status, one to a person of equal status, and one to a person of lower status. Next, the data were analysed based on the frequency and order of the semantic formulas performed in each situation. The content of semantic formulas was also analysed. Findings from the study revealed that there was evidence of pragmatic transfer from L1 particularly in the case of the order, frequency and content of the semantic formulas obtained.

Nelson et al. (2002) investigated American and Egyptian perceptions of how they believe they would make refusals in particular situations in terms of strategy, level of directness and the effect on the two variables of social status and gender. Data were collected using a modified version of DCT developed by Beebe et al. (1990). An interviewer read each situation aloud to the subjects and asked them to respond verbally on audiotape instead of asking the subjects to read the situation and to respond in writing. Thirty American interviews resulted in 358 refusals and 25 Egyptian interviews resulted in 300 refusals. Generally, the results revealed that the most common strategies used by the Egyptian participants were similar to those used by the American participants. Reasons were the most common strategy used followed by negative willingness.

Saeki and O'keef (1994) studied American and Japanese refusals by using an experimental design. Participants responded to a scenario, like a candidate looking for a job, by writing what they would say to the person in the situation. Liao and Brenham (1996) employed a six-item written DCT to compare American English and Mandarin Chinese refusal strategies. Their analysis revealed that Americans used more strategies than Chinese in making refusals. Phuong (2006) worked on a cross-cultural pragmatic analysis of refusals to requests by Australian native speakers and Vietnamese learners of English. Results proved Australian refusals are different from those of Vietnamese, though they do share some similarities. Parallel to the differences in culture, Americans and Vietnamese also differed in the way they say 'No' to their conversational partners. Vietnamese were apt to express refusals with caution and/or care. Americans, on the other hand, were more direct in the way they refuse, especially when they employed more 'No' phrases.

Also, the study of refusal has triggered lots of interest among Iranian researchers and researchers including Allami & Naiemi (2011), Hassani et al. (2011), Ghazanfari et al.

(2012), Mohammadi & Tamimi (2014) are only few among several others who have investigated this speech act in recent years.

### **2.10.2 Conversational Implicature and the Cooperative Principle**

Grice (1975, 1981) was one of the first who titled the inferential process through which the meaning of any utterance is understood in terms of the context in which it takes place as conversational implicature. Moreover, Grice's (1975) assumption of the 'cooperative principle' inspired much of the research conducted in pragmatics. According to Grice (1975), generally conversations between two or more interlocutors are 'cooperative efforts' for a specific purpose. In order to convey the implicit meaning of an utterance, speakers rely on a deeper level of co-operation which goes beyond surface meaning. Conversational implicatures are then inferences which arise to preserve the assumption of co-operation.

To determine the appropriateness of a conversational contribution according to Grice's CP, one relies for analysis on the CP's four basic attendant components, his four maxims, including Quantity, Quality, Relation, and Manner that require description here. Each one will have a definition and example of non-compliance here. Grice also says of the maxims, admitting that his list may not be complete, that "one might need others" (Grice, 1989, p. 27).

Quantity details that one's conversational contribution should be just as informative as is required, not more or less. "The category of Quantity relates to the quantity of information to be provided, and under it falls the following maxims: 1. Make your contribution as informative as is required (for the current purposes of the exchange). 2. Do not make your contribution more informative than is required" (Grice, 1989, p.26). An example of non-compliance with the Quantity maxim could be the act of underinforming a hiring committee



about an applicant's skills in a letter of recommendation by stating simply that he/she attended tutorials regularly, when it is known that the committee wants to learn much more, in order to implicate a poor recommendation (Grice, 1989, p. 33).

According to the Maxim of Quality, a contribution should be true, not false or inadequately evidenced. Under the category of Quality falls a supermaxim "Try to make your contribution one that is true" and two more specific maxims: "(a) Do not say what you believe to be false. (b) Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence" (Grice, 1989, p. 27). All instances of verbal irony or sarcasm are examples of breaking with the Quality maxim (at the level of what is said, not what is implied) (Grice, 1989, p. 34).

The Maxim of Relation requires that a contribution be relevant to the conversation, under the single oath "Be relevant" (Grice, 1989, p. 27). When speaking of a friend in a new job working at a bank, someone reporting that he's getting along "quite well, I think; he likes his colleagues, and he hasn't been to prison yet" (Grice, 1989, p. 24) would be infringing the Maxim of Relation when meaning to communicate that he hasn't robbed the place.

Finally, the Maxim of Manner refers to the way in which something is said rather than the content of what is said, as opposed to the previous three maxims. It requires that a contribution show perspicuity, not obscurity, ambiguity, prolixity, or disorder (page 27). Saying that someone sang "Home Sweet Home" is perspicuous and thus superficially cooperative, while saying that someone "produced a series of sounds that corresponded closely with the score of "Home Sweet Home" shows a lack thereof (Grice, 1989, p. 37).

To explain how implicature works, Grice (1975) notes that all participants in a conversation expect themselves and the others to make their contributions appropriate to the progress of the conversation at any particular moment. In other words, each speaker is expected to make what he/she says truthful, appropriately informative, relevant, and clear.

However, real life communication will seldom meet these requirements. Grice enumerates four ways, though, that speakers can fail to fulfil one or more of the maxims and thus not be using literal, explicitly cooperative speech. These include violating, opting out, clashing, or flouting the maxims. Grice carefully defines the latter three, as terms of art, but he doesn't clearly define the first and suggests that violation may be a broad term usable for all maxim fulfilment failures.

Opting out is a direct refusal to participate in the talk exchange as required, thus evading the maxims and CP. Opting out, or the refusal to cooperate conversationally, can be exemplified by someone saying, "I cannot say more; my lips are sealed" (Grice, 1989, p. 30).

Clashes are instances of Ss making face-off decisions between the fulfilments of one maxim over another when context does not allow for both. Clashes would pin the compliance of two maxims against each other in a specific utterance, forcing one to be violated in favour of another being obeyed. For example, one might underinform, violating the Quantity Maxim, when answering a question to which they have only a partial answer in order to maintain fulfilment of the Quality Maxim by not providing information for which adequate evidence is lacking. A true clash would be a cooperative behaviour, creating an implicature. For instance, if friend A wants to visit friend B on a trip to France with friend C, but A can tell C during itinerary detail planning only that B lives "Somewhere in the South of France," it is likely that A does not know more information than that at that time (Grice, 1989, p. 32).

Lastly and most important to this study, is the idea of flouting or the blatant decision to violate a maxim that is not due to clashing or opting out. Such overt flouting can be done to uncooperatively mislead, but it can also be done cooperatively with the deliberate intention of creating a conversational implicature.

As argued by Levinson (1983, p. 97), “the notion of conversational implicature is one of most important ideas in pragmatics”. While Grice is associated with the introduction of the notion of implicature, he did not actually present a general definition of the term (Gauker, 2001, p. 165; Saul, 2002, p. 239). Nevertheless, his indication that it is related to the terms ‘imply’, ‘suggest’ and ‘mean’ (Grice, 1989, p. 24), laid the basis for the definitions presented by most Gricean and neo-Griceans. For example, Horn (2006, p. 3) also defined this concept as “a component of speaker meaning that constitutes an aspect of what is meant in a speaker’s utterance without being part of what is said”. However, there is a problem concerned with the definition presented above by Griceans and neo-Griceans that whatever included in pragmatics, falls in this category. If something is not said, then it constitutes pragmatic input into what is communicated. Therefore, implicature is ultimately equal to pragmatic input in Gricean and neo-Gricean implicature theory, but obviously, not all pragmatic domain can be considered implicatures.

Levinson (1983), lists five main features of implicature as:

Firstly, implicature stands as a paradigmatic example of the nature and power of pragmatic explanations of linguistic phenomena. Therefore, it offers significant explanations of linguistic facts. Secondly, it provides some explicit account of how it is possible to mean (in some general sense) more than what is actually said. Thirdly, this notion is likely to affect substantial simplifications in the structure and the content of semantic meaning. Fourthly, it is simply an essential feature of language which cannot be ignored where basic facts of language are accounted, and finally, the principles that create implicature have a very general explanatory power (Levinson, 1983, p. 97).

Conversational implicatures are central to Grice’s classical theory of pragmatics (1957, 1969); and his reductive analysis of meaning in terms of speaker’s intention, founded the basis for the introduction and development of this concept. Grice’s (1975) cooperative principle and its specific sub-maxims are the driving force behind conversational implicature.

He did not define conversational implicatures, but instead, introduced a framework to characterise them:

I am now in a position to characterize the notion of conversational implicature. A man who, by (in, when) saying (or making as if to say) that p has implicated that q, may be said to have conversationally implicated that q, provided that (1) he is to be presumed to be observing the conversational maxims, or at least the cooperative principle; (2) the supposition that he is aware that, or thinks that, q is required in order to make his saying or making as if to say p (or doing so in those terms) consistent with this presumption; and (3) the speaker thinks (and would expect the hearer to think that the speaker thinks) that it is within the competence of the hearer to work out, or grasp intuitively, that the supposition mentioned in (2) is required (Grice, 1975, pp. 49-50).

To illustrate the deeper layer of the cooperative principle, I use the following examples provided by Levinson (1983, p. 102):

(5) A: Where's Bill?

B: There's a yellow VW outside Sue's house.

If taken literally, (B)'s response fails to answer (A)'s question, flouting the Maxims of Quantity and Relevance. However, this apparent failure of co-operation indicates that (B) is relying on (A)'s co-operation to interpret the implicit meaning of the utterance: Bill has a yellow VW and therefore may be in Sue's house.

Grice (1975) proposes that, hearers should apply the following model so as to calculate conversational implicatures:

- (a) Process and arrive at the conventional meaning of the utterance;
- (b) Check the conventional meaning against the Co-operative Principle;
- (c) Check the context of the utterance;

(d) Check background information;

(e) Consider that numbers 1-4 are mutual knowledge shared by the speaker and hearer;

(f) Calculate any implicatures.

Grice distinguished between kinds of conversational implicature: generalised and particularised. In Grice's terms, generalised conversational implicatures (GCI) arise without any particular context or special scenario being necessary whereas, particularised conversational implicatures (PCI) require such specific contexts. Levinson (1983, p. 126) uses the following examples to illustrate this distinction:

(6) I walked into a house.

GCI: The house was not my house.

There seems to be a generalised implicature conveyed by the use of the indefinite article "a" (house), which implicates that the house is not closely related to the speaker.

(7) A: What has happened to the roast beef?

B: The dog is looking very happy.

PCI: Perhaps the dog has eaten the roast beef (based on the fact that the dog is looking very happy).

Thus, particularised implicatures are generated by saying something in virtue of some particular features of the context. Levinson (1983) adds that most of the floutings or exploitations of the conversational maxims are particularised, and that irony, for instance, requires particular background assumptions to rule out the literal interpretations. For Grice, any kind of non-literal use that relies in special circumstances like tautologies, metaphor and hyperbole can be explained in terms of particularised implicatures. In order to demonstrate

the distinction between the two levels of pragmatic inferences (generalised versus particularised conversational implicatures), Levinson (2000, p. 16) presents the following examples:

(8) A: What time is it?

B: Some of the guests are already leaving.

GCI= Not all the guests are already leaving.

PCI= It must be late.

(9) A: Where's John?

B: Some of the guests are already leaving.

GCI= Not all the guests are already leaving.

PCI= Perhaps John has already left.

Although the utterance-form 'Some of the guests are already leaving' carries different particularised conversational implicatures (PCI) which may be attributed to the Maxim of Relevance, there is a shared inference that 'not all of the guests are in the process of leaving' which applies to both contexts.

Grice's Co-operative Principle, maxims and conversational implicatures have raised a lot of controversy amongst linguists. Sperber and Wilson also comment on Grice's Implicature Theory:

Grice's ideas on implicatures can be seen as an attempt to build on a commonsense view of verbal communication by making it more explicit and exploring its implications. In his William James Lectures, Grice took one crucial step away from this commonsense view towards theoretical sophistication; but of course one step is not enough. Grice's account retains much of the vagueness of the commonsense view. Essential concepts, mentioned in the maxims are left entirely undefined. This is true of relevance,

for instance: hence appeals to the “maxim of relation” are no more than dressed-up appeals to intuition (Sperber & Wilson, 1995, pp. 35-36).

Nevertheless, Grice’s unquestionable contribution to the study of utterance- meaning via the notion of conversational implicatures remains unchallenged and fundamental to the underlying principles of contemporary pragmatic theories such as Brown and Levinson’s Politeness Theory (1987), Sperber and Wilson’s Theory of Relevance (1995), Levinson’s Theory of Generalised Conversational Implicatures (2000) and Costa’s Non-Trivial Connectivity Theory (2005).

### **2.10.3 Presuppositions**

The German philosopher Frege (1892) is recognised as one of the first scholars in modern times to introduce this notion. To clarify the concept of presupposition, he states:

If anything is asserted there is always an obvious presupposition that the simple or compound proper names used have a reference. If one therefore asserts, ‘Kepler died in misery’, there is a presupposition that the name ‘Kepler’ designates something (Frege, 1892, p. 69).

Since its introduction, presupposition has triggered lots of attention in both philosophy and linguistics. Levinson (1983, p. 167) argues that “there is more literature on presupposition than any other pragmatic aspect (except speech act), but much of it is very technical and complex, and a great deal is also obsolete and sterile”. Nevertheless, despite the existing literature, the notion of presupposition has not attracted lots of interest among researchers investigating the pragmatic competence of L2 learners.

Presupposition acts as a sort of precondition for the appropriate use of an utterance and can be defined as the pieces of information that the speaker assumes in order for his/her utterance

to be meaningful in the context. It is a kind of pragmatic inference which can be generated using some lexical items and linguistic constructions called presupposition triggers. Huang (2007, p. 65) states that “presupposition is an inference or proposition whose truth is taken for granted in the utterance of a sentence”.

Historically, presupposition shares the same philosophical origin with speech acts, and like conversational implicature, it has been central to the debates about the interaction between pragmatics and semantics. Keenan (1971) grouped presuppositions into semantic presupposition and pragmatic presupposition, although the question whether both semantic and pragmatic presuppositions exist was debated by many scholars in the following decades. It was Stalnaker (1970, 1973 & 1974) who developed the theory of pragmatic presuppositions and described it as:

To presuppose a proposition in the pragmatic sense is to take its truth for granted, and to presume that other involved in the context do the same. This does not imply that the person need have any particular mental attitude toward the proposition, or that he needs assume anything about the mental attitudes of other in the context. Presuppositions are probably best viewed as complex dispositions which are manifested in linguistic behaviour. One has presuppositions in virtue of the statements he makes, the questions he asks, the commands he issues. Presuppositions are propositions implicitly supposed before the relevant linguistic business is transacted (Stalnaker, 1972, pp. 387-8).

According to Levinson (1983, p. 177) pragmatic presupposition can be described as a relationship between a speaker and the appropriateness of a sentence in a context. They include the preconditions for linguistic interaction like the norms of turn-taking in conversation. Potts (2014, p. 3) argues that “the clearest instances of pragmatic presuppositions are those that cannot easily be traced to specific words or phrases, but rather seem to arise from more general properties of the context and the expectations of the discourse participants”.



On the other hand, semantic presuppositions including conventional and lexical, are associated with Frege (1892) and Strawson (1950). They are part of the encoded meanings of specific lexical items and constructions, called presupposition triggers. Although the label ‘semantic’ suggests that it is separate from pragmatics, even semantic presuppositions are pragmatic in the sense that they must be evaluated in the discourse participants’ common ground (Potts, 2014). Unlike pragmatic presupposition which applies to the utterances, semantic presupposition applies to sentences of a language.

Kempson (1975), Wilson (1975), Atlas (1976, 1977, 1979), Atlas and Levinson (1981), and Böer and Lycan (1976) sought to clarify the ambiguities surrounding semantic and pragmatic presuppositions. Developments in linguistic semantics in the 1980s (Heim, 1982, 1983; Kamp, 1981) adapted Stalnaker’s view by integrating the concept of context and the potential of expressions to change the context into the semantic system directly. Considering Heim’s perspective, presuppositions can be seen as definedness conditions on updating a given context with a sentence. While dynamic approaches represent a more semantic view on presuppositions, pragmatic accounts in a Stalnakerian spirit have recently seen a revival, with various proposals for assimilating the analysis of at least certain types of presupposition triggers to that of scalar implicatures (Abusch, 2002, 2010; Romoli, 2011).

So far, researchers have explored certain words in English which are associated with the notion of presupposition and my questionnaire will use a number of them to assess the knowledge of presupposition. The presuppositions that are employed in this study are based on Huang’s (2007, p. 65) categorisation presented below:

(a) Definite descriptions:

The king of Hungary is/isn’t bald (presupposes that there is a king in Hungary).

(b) Factive predicates:

- Cognitive factives

My friend *knew/didn't know* that Egypt is in Africa (presupposes that Egypt is in Africa).

- Emotive factives

Joe *regrets/doesn't regret* telling his wife the truth (presupposes that Joe has said the truth to his wife).

(c) Aspectual predicates

My father has *stopped/hasn't stopped* smoking (presupposes that my father was smoking before).

(d) Iteratives

- Iterative verbs

Jessica *returned/didn't return* to Paris (presupposes that he was in Paris before).

- Iterative adverbs

He had an accident *again* (presupposes that he had an accident before).

(e) Implicature predicates

He *managed/did not manage* to finish his homework (presupposes that he tried to finish his homework).

(f) Temporal clauses.

After booking his ticket, he *flew/did not fly* to New York (presuppose that he booked his tickets).

(g) Cleft sentences

I *was/wasn't* Marconi who invented radio (presuppose that someone invented radio).

(h) Counterfactual conditionals

If I were as fast as Usain Bolt, I *could/couldn't* win the London Olympics (presupposes that I am not as fast as Usain Bolt).

(i) Quantifiers

I have written to every governor at school (Presupposes that there are governors at school).

As argued by Potts (2014), while conversational and conventional implicatures share the same 'implicature' designation, the latter has more in common with presupposition than conversational implicature. Like lexical presuppositions, conventional implicatures are related to certain lexical items which convey additional meanings when used in utterances or sentences. Huang (2007, p. 55) lists a number of lexical items that are considered to engender conventional implicatures as “actually, also, anyway, barely, besides, even, however, manage to, moreover, on the other hand, only, still, so, though, too and yet”. He states that “a conventional implicature is a non-truth conditional inference which is not deductive in any general, natural way from the saying of what is said, but arises solely because of the conventional features attached to particular lexical items and/or linguistic constructions” (Huang, 2007, p 54).

According to Grice (1975), Levinson (1983) and Horn (1998), the properties of conventional implicatures are in contrast to those of conversational implicatures; nonetheless, there are some similarities between the two including that both conversational and conventional implicatures do not make any contribution to truth conditions, and both are associated with utterances rather than sentences. Levinson (1983, p. 128) lists several differences between the two. Firstly, unlike conversational implicatures, conventional implicatures are not associated with Grice's (1957) co-operative principle, but are attached to certain words or linguistic constructions by convention. Secondly, in contrast to conversational implicatures which are calculable through pragmatic principles and contextual knowledge, conventional implicatures cannot be calculated using any natural procedure. Thirdly, while conversational implicatures

can be cancelled, conventional implicatures are not cancellable. Fourthly, unlike the majority of conversational implicatures which are non-detachable, conventional implicatures are detachable; and finally, while conversational implicatures tend to be universal, by contrast, conventional implicatures are not universal.

As declared by Huang (2007), the notion of conventional implicature is not as coherent as conversational implicature. Grice (1986, p. 46) stated that “the nature of conventional implicature needs to be examined before any free use of it, for explanatory purposes, can be indulged in”. The existence of this notion has also been debated and as argued by Levinson (1983, p. 128), there have been many attempts to reduce this notion to matters of entailment, conversational implicature or presupposition.

In an attempt to clarify the notion of conventional implicatures, Grice (1975) argues that,

...in some cases the conventional meaning of the words used will determine what is implicated, besides helping to determine what is said. If I say (smugly), *He is an Englishman; he is, therefore, brave*, I have certainly committed myself, by virtue of the meaning of my words, to its being the case that his being brave is a consequence of (follows from) his being an Englishman (Grice, 1975, p. 44).

This implies a consequence link between these two sentences. Although, this does not contribute to the truth conditions of the sentence, since if a sentence *p* therefore *q* is true, it follows that *p* & *q* is the case, and that *p* is true and that *q* is true too. The contribution of *therefore* is thus non-truth-conditional. Using this terminology, the meaning contribution of *therefore* is not semantic, but pragmatic.

Also, Karttunen and Peters (1979, p. 7) used the following example to demonstrate how the choice of a certain word will explicitly reveal the difference between what is said and what is conventionally implicated:

(10) Even Bill likes Mary.

According to Karttunen and Peters (1979, p.9), this sentence implies the following two sentences:

(11) (a) Other people besides Bill like Mary.

(b) Of the people under consideration, Bill is the least likely to like Mary.

As discussed earlier, there is not a general agreement among researchers about the existence of conventional implicatures and whether they should be grouped separately or not. Therefore, due to the similarities that they share with presupposition, they have been grouped and studied under presupposition in this research.

#### **2.10.4 Studies of Implicature in the TL**

While the majority of studies in pragmatic research have been devoted to the study of speech acts, only few researchers have investigated the notion of implicature among non-native speakers (NNS). One of the early studies carried out by Keenan (1976) questioned the universality of conversational implicatures proposed by Grice's co-operative principle.

In the past several years, linguists interested in the interpretation of whole utterances have made use of a number of concepts developed by philosophers – concepts such as speech act, illocutionary force, and performative... In particular, there has been a great deal of discussion centering around ideas of Paul Grice... In developing such notions, philosophers likely reflect on conversational conduct as it operates in their own society. The qualification is not explicit however, and principles of conversational procedure are presented as universal in application (Keenan, 1976, p. 67).

Here Keenan picks up on the common thread of argument that treating philosophy as linguistic or social science should be done, at least, carefully, and states her criticism of

Grice's theory: its presented assumption of universality is falsified, or at least prematurely complicated, by its Anglocentricity. Keenan (1976) then offers a challenge to the wholeness and validity of Grice's theory by investigating its applicability to non- Anglophone people, focusing on the use of the Maxim of Quantity. Keenan (1976) claimed that, the Malagasy-speaking culture of Madagascar, where she carried out her study, is a speech community that does not follow the co-operative principle. Therefore, Keenan (1976) concluded that Grice's theory is culture-specific rather than universal.

Devine (1982) investigated the knowledge of CI among a group of 30 people including 15 American native speakers and 15 second language learners with different backgrounds. Devine's test was a questionnaire composed of brief descriptions of fifteen situations, each of which contained an example of conversational implicature. She concluded that both groups are "aware of the conversational rules which are being manipulated to create implicature" (Devine, 1982, p. 201). She also stated that, based on low NNS accuracy rates, that for NNSs, the Maxim of Quantity and perhaps the Maxim of Relation, which showed the second worst accuracy rate, do "not have the same status or applicability as the other conversational postulates proposed by Grice" (Devine, 1982, p. 201).

In a study carried out by Bouton (1994), the knowledge of conversational implicature of a group of NNS was investigated. The results showed that NNS performed significantly poorer in interpreting the implicatures than native students. The results also revealed that language background and cultural background could be factors underlying a person's ability to interpret implicature. However, another study of him done in 1990-1994 revealed that non-native students' proficiency in interpreting implicatures in English improved over the 17-month period of their stay in the target country. It is suggested that giving non-native students enough time to experience American culture increases their ability to interpret implicatures. To collect the required data, Bouton developed a questionnaire with multiple-choice

questions. So, in comparison to DCTs the linguistic knowledge of respondents was less involved, although, not completely eliminated. Boersma (1994) conducted a similar study to investigate whether second language learners of English can learn implicatures through explicit teaching. The subjects of his study were international graduate students with advanced English proficiency. Explicit lessons on six types of implicatures were introduced and instructional materials were also prepared for students. Through explicit teaching of implicatures, students were encouraged to analyse the implicatures and focus on the interpretation of the intended meaning within context where level of formality and relationship between interlocutors, cultural values, expectation, and intonation were taken into account. Boersma (1994) concluded that implicatures can be taught successfully.

Lee (2002) also investigated the ability of Korean non-native speakers of English with high English proficiency to interpret conversational implicatures and compared with that of native speakers of English. She found a slight difference in the performance of the two groups. She pointed out that high linguistic proficiency would allow the non-native learners to derive the same meaning as native speakers. Nevertheless, there were some differences in the strategies employed to interpret implicatures by both groups.

Taguchi (2005) examined second language learners' ability to comprehend conversational implicature of different types. A group of 46 Native English speakers and 160 Japanese students of English who were at different L2 proficiency level participated in the study and their comprehension was analysed in terms of accuracy and speed. They took a 38-item computerised listening task measuring their ability to comprehend conversational implicatures of different types. The study indicated that high proficiency of English influenced the accuracy of pragmatic comprehension, but not the speed and there was no significant relationship between the accuracy and processing speed. The findings from the

study suggested teachers not to expect the same rate of development in fluency and accuracy of pragmatic comprehension.

Roever (2006) developed a 36-item web-based test of ESL pragmalinguistics, evaluating L2 learners' knowledge of implicatures and routines, using a multiple-choice questionnaire and their knowledge of speech acts, using a DCT. 267 online ESL participants completed the tasks and the results suggested that the knowledge of both implicatures and speech acts increases with English proficiency. Nonetheless, the researcher found out that the knowledge of routines was strongly dependent on L2 exposure. According to Roever (2006), correlations between the sections and factor analysis confirmed that the routines, implicatures, and speech act sections are related but that each has some unique variance.



## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **Data Collection in Pragmatic Research**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter consists of two parts. The first part looks at current data collection methods in pragmatic research. Through a critical analysis of a current dominant data collection instrument in pragmatic research, which is a DCT developed by Beebe et al. (1990), it highlights its drawbacks at measuring what it is supposed to measure which is pragmatic competence and provides the discussions to challenge it theoretically. Also, one of the main studies in this area carried out by Bouton (1988, 1994) which is about the knowledge of conversational implicature will be discussed and analysed. These theoretical discussions will address some of research questions. The second part of this chapter looks into the quantitative approach that has been employed in this study.

#### **3.2 Research Methodology**

This study employs a mixed research method to collect the required data as both qualitative and quantitative approaches are required to meet the research objectives. On the effectiveness of using mixed method in collecting data, Straus and Cobin (1998) argue that,

Qualitative and quantitative forms of research both have roles to play in theorising. The issue is not whether to use one form or another but rather how these might work together to foster the development of theory. Although most researchers tend to use qualitative and quantitative methods in supplementary or complementary forms, what we are advocating is a true interplay between the two. The qualitative should direct the quantitative and the quantitative feedback into the qualitative in a circular, but at the same time evolving, process with each method contributing to the theory in ways that only each can (Straus and Cobin, 1998, p. 34).

While the first examples of combining qualitative and quantitative methods can be traced back to the 1800s (Hesse–Biber, 2010), the recent history of mixing methods has been influenced by the emergence of the concept of triangulation which was introduced by Campbell (1953) and Campbell & Fiske (1959). Denzin (1978, p. 291) defines triangulation as “the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon”. Therefore, it is a way of assuring the validity of data through the use of a variety of methods to collect data on the same topic. Bergman (2008, p. 1) defines mixed methods research as, “the combination of at least one qualitative and at least one quantitative component in a single research project or program”. Nevertheless, according to Bryman (2008), it would be simplistic to assume that merely utilising both qualitative and quantitative components in a single study would result in a mixed methods research. Hanson et al. (2005, p. 224) present a more technical definition of the term and define it as “the collection, analysis, and integration of quantitative and qualitative data in a single or multiphase study”. As argued by Dornyei (2007, p. 45), by using both qualitative and quantitative approaches, researchers can bring out the best of both paradigms.

Qualitative research uses a naturalistic approach that seeks to understand phenomena in context-specific settings, such as “real world setting [where] the researcher does not attempt to manipulate the phenomenon of interest” (Patton, 2001, p. 39). Qualitative research is defined as “any kind of research that produces findings not arrived at by means of statistical procedures or other means of quantification” (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, p. 17) and instead, the kind of research that produces findings arrived from real-world settings where the “phenomenon of interest unfold naturally” (Patton, 2001, p. 39). Unlike quantitative researchers who seek causal determination, prediction, and generalisation of findings, qualitative researchers seek instead illumination, understanding, and extrapolation to similar situations (Hoepfl, 1997).

Researchers who use logical positivism or quantitative research employ experimental methods and quantitative measures to test hypothetical generalisations (Hoepfl, 1997), and they also emphasize the measurement and analysis of causal relationships between variables (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998). To illustrate the meaning of quantitative research for its use of explaining social problems, Bogdan and Biklen (1998) note:

Charts and graphs illustrate the results of the research, and commentators employ words such as ‘variables’, ‘populations’ and ‘result’ as part of their daily vocabulary...even if we do not always know just what all of the terms mean...[but] we know that this is part of the process of doing research. Research, then as it comes to be known publicly, is a synonym for quantitative research (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, p. 4).

Quantitative research allows the researcher to familiarise him/herself with the problem or concept to be studied, and perhaps generate hypotheses to be tested. In this paradigm:

- (a) The emphasis is on facts and causes of behaviour (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998),
- (b) The information is in the form of numbers that can be quantified and summarised,
- (c) The mathematical process is the norm for analysing the numeric data and
- (d) The final result is expressed in statistical terminologies (Charles, 1995).

Since one the main implementations of qualitative research is to gain an understanding of underlying reasons, opinions and motivations, this method has been employed in this study which will contribute to meet these two objectives: firstly, to explore the drawbacks of main models of communicative competence and to discuss their failure to present a clear picture of the notion of pragmatic competence and its relationship with other elements of their model of communicative competence in details; secondly, to analyse Discourse Completion Task (DCT) which is the most popular data collection instrument in pragmatic research.

Discussions on the shortcomings of DCT as well those on the models of communicative competence will answer some main research questions.

On the other hand, the numerical data collected through the questionnaire will complement the findings from the first part of this study. To collect the numerical data two questionnaires are employed. This first questionnaire which is developed in this study to measure two aspects of pragmatics including implicature and presupposition is unique, as there is not any identical questionnaire in this field. On the other hand, DCT developed by Beebe et al. (1990) is also used to administer on research participants of this study which will contribute to explore the weaknesses of this DCT in measuring pragmatic competence of respondents independently. While the critical analysis of the structure of DCT will reveal its affiliation to linguistic knowledge of respondents to complete the task, administering it on the research participants of this study will contribute to demonstrate its weaknesses when measuring the pragmatic knowledge in the TL.

### **3.3 Research in Pragmatics**

In comparison to other subfields of linguistics, pragmatics is more difficult to study. This could be for the fact that among all subfields of linguistics, only pragmatics allows humans into analysis. On the importance of studying pragmatics, Leech (1983) claims that we can really begin to understand the nature of language only if we understand the language used in communication. Nevertheless, distinguishing pragmatics from morphosyntactic and lexical knowledge in a second language is not a simple task. Kasper and Roever (2005) argue that, while L2 learners' pragmatic abilities appear to develop in line with their overall language proficiency, the correlation is not always linear and does not appear in all domains of language use.

Pragmatic research is associated with the relationship between the use of language on the one hand and the social and interpersonal interactions on the other hand. Current studies in this area belong to one of the two main fields of pragmatic research: Cross-cultural pragmatics and interlanguage pragmatics (ILP); while the former studies the differences in pragmatics based on the first language background, the latter investigates the development of the ability of language use among second language learners.

So far, cross-cultural pragmatic research has triggered more interest among researchers and applied linguists, and the number of studies in cross-cultural pragmatics is considerably higher than those in interlanguage pragmatics. Studies carried out by Al- Kahtani (2005), Bardovi-Harlig & Dornyei (1998), Blum-Kulka (1982), Koike (1996), Rose (1998), Schmidt (1983), Tanck (2002), Beebe & Takahashi (1987), Takahashi (1996) and Trosborg (1987) are a few examples of a large number of studies in this field. Using DCTs, these studies explore the differences in pragmatics based on the first language of the research participants. Recently, in an attempt to analyse this method, Roever (2010, p. 242) argued that “a difference between two cultural groups in their speech act realisation or the cultural norms underlying their pragmatic performance does not necessarily mean that communication between them will be problematic, but it simply means that a difference exists which may or may not impact communication”.

On the other hand, since the 1990s, the notion of interlanguage pragmatics (ILP) has become an important field in the second language acquisition research. According to Taguchi (2010, p. 333), “ILP explores how second language learners develop the ability to understand and perform pragmatic functions in the target language”. Kasper & Dahl (1991, p. 216), defined ILP as “referring to non-native speakers’ comprehension and production of speech acts, and how that L2 related knowledge is acquired”. Therefore, in this type of pragmatic research, the focus is on the acquisition of pragmatic competence in a target language which is also the

main concern of this study. The interlanguage aspect of ILP denotes the systematic but transient nature of learners' pragmatic knowledge about the target language, and implies the influence of factors that have been identified in SLA research to affect interlanguage systems including transfer, overgeneralisation, simplification, transfer-of-training, amount and quality of input, attention and awareness, aptitude, motivation, and other individual differences (Selinker, 1972; Kasper, 1995; Kasper and Schmidt, 1996; Schmidt, 2001; Robinson, 2002).

### **3.4 Data Collection Instruments in Pragmatic Research**

Increasing interest in the study of pragmatics has created a concomitant need to develop appropriate and valid means for assessing pragmatic competence. Therefore, how to collect the required data is crucial in pragmatic research as the data collection instrument is one of the key reasons behind the reliability of the gathered data. As argued by Kasper and Rose (2001) and Roever (2005), the assessment of pragmatic competence has not triggered much research so far and not many tests to assess learners' pragmatic proficiency have been produced, though pragmatic knowledge is an indispensable part of language proficiency as defined by Bachman (1990). This lack of interest could be related to the difficulties that are associated with developing practical methods to assess pragmatic competence in the target language.

Oller (1979) was one of the first scholars who introduced a pragmatic proficiency test in which he stressed the importance of creating a natural occurrence of language in tests. However, this naturalness is in contrast with the artificiality of tests which is problematic. Thus, pragmatic tests were first defined as tasks requiring the meaningful processing of sequences of language items in the tested language at real-life pace (Oller, 1979).

Clark (1978) also tried to address the issue through the notion of direct versus indirect tests of language proficiency. Clark suggested that a 'direct' test should be based on approximating, to the greatest extent possible within the necessary constraints of testing time and facilities, the specific situations in which the proficiency is called upon in real life. Clark indicated that direct proficiency tests should model everyday language use situations, but he also acknowledged that testing contexts could only approximate the real world.

The assessment of pragmatic proficiency has quite recently begun to be explored (Brown 2001). Therefore, research on the field is quite limited. One of the studies about the assessment of pragmatic competence was done by Hudson et al. (1992). They introduced a framework to measure pragmatic competence and included several factors in their model. However, they have only addressed the assessment of speech acts and their model does not present any instructions on the evaluation of other pragmatic aspects. The following factors were considered by Hudson et al. (1992) when introducing their model of assessment: Firstly, the second language speaker's competence may vary depending on the particular speech act involved. Secondly, the second language speaker's perceptions of relative power, social distance and degree of position will potentially differ from the perceptions of native speakers. Finally, variation may be created by the particular task in which the speaker is involved. While they only focused on assessing speech acts, they also pointed out that it is important to identify the causes of pragmatic failure when considering pragmatics assessment. The identification of the causes of pragmatic failure in particular contexts will vary depending upon whether the focus is on linguistic or sociopragmatic judgments. As asserted by Thomas (1983), pragmatic failure occurs in any occasion when the speaker's utterance is perceived by a hearer different to what the speaker actually intended. Under this view, failure can be either due to "sociopragmatic failure," inappropriate utterances due to a misunderstanding of social standards, or "pragmalinguistic failure," utterances that convey unintended illocutionary

force. Sociopragmatic failure refers to misinterpretations that lead to violations of the social conditions placed on language use and its central focus in communicative competence is context. On the other hand, pragmalinguistic failure by a second language user occurs when the pragmatic force that the user assigns to any particular utterance differs systematically from the force generally associated with it by native speakers. Native speakers may perceive pragmalinguistic failure as rudeness, evasiveness, and so on. However, there is no absolute distinction between sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic failure because sociopragmatic concerns are realised pragmalinguistically (Hudson et al., 1992).

So far, researchers have employed at least seven methods for pragmatic competence assessment, i.e., the Written Discourse Completion Tasks (WDCT), Multiple-Choice Discourse Completion Tasks (MDCT), Oral Discourse Completion Tasks (ODCT), Discourse Role Play Talks (DRPT), Discourse Self-Assessment Talks (DSAT), Role-Play self-assessments (RPSA) and Multimedia Elicitation Tasks (MET). Apart from RPSA and MET, the other methods are different variations of DCT. Among them, MET is the most recent one which was developed by Schauer (2004, 2009) focusing on the speech act of request, in which participants are asked to sit down in front of a computer, watch a series of slides, listen to instructions and respond orally. However, as stated by Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford (1993) and Rose & Ono (1995), DCTs are the dominant method of data collection in pragmatic research and are used in different formats, including written, multiple-choice and oral. According to Félix-Brasdefer (2010), a common characteristic of these two elicitation instruments namely DCTs and RPSA concerns the fact that different variables, such as the situation, politeness factors, gender and age of the participants or their proficiency level, can be controlled. In DCTs the examinees will be asked to read a description of a situation and considering the settings, roles, power differences and social distances, and also the format of the test, whether it is the written form, oral one or the multiple choice one, to write, respond



or choose what they would think to come next in the situation respectively. Some of the key studies on DCTs were done by Blum-Kulka (1982, 1983), Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1986), Cohen et al (1986), House and Kasper (1987), House (1989), Beebe et al. (1990), Takahashi and Beebe (1993), Hudson et al. (1992, 1995), Brown (2000, 2001, 2004), Hudson (2001). To show the dominance of DCT in interlanguage pragmatic research, I refer to Kasper and Dahl's research in 1991 in which they reviewed 35 studies of speech act production, and found out that 19 out of 35 studies (54%) used DCT to collect their data. Nevertheless, only limited efforts have been made to evaluate the validity of this method. Rintell and Mitchell (1989) compared DCTs with role plays and found out that the collected data from the two methods are very similar. Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford (1993) compared native and non-native English rejections using two different kinds of DCTs, open questionnaires and dialogue type questionnaires and found out that the variation of DCT type affects non-native speakers' responses more than the native speakers' answers. Also, Hinkel (1997) made a similar comparison between DCTs and multiple-choice questionnaires.

### **3.4.1 What is a DCT?**

WDCT is the most popular data collection instrument in this field and is defined as "written questionnaires including a number of brief situational descriptions, followed by a short dialogue with an empty slot for the speech act under study" (Kasper & Dahl, 1991, p. 221), and are used by many researchers to assess the participants' pragmatic competence. According to Kasper and Dahl (1991), DCT along with role play serves as one of the main data collection instruments in pragmatic research. Levenston and Blum-Kulka (1978) were one of the first to use DCT to study lexical simplification; however, it was later modified by Blum-Kulka (1982) to measure speech act realisation.

Kwon (2004, p. 342) argues that “a DCT is an effective means of data collection when the purpose of the study is to inform about speakers’ pragmalinguistic knowledge of the strategies and linguistic forms by which communicative acts can be implemented, and about their socio-pragmatic knowledge of the context factors under which particular strategic and linguistic choices are appropriate”. Based on these arguments, Kwon (2004) believes that DCT is the most appropriate instrument in his study since the purpose of his study is to reveal participants’ use of refusal strategies under a given situation rather than to investigate pragmatic aspects that are dynamic of a conversation such as turn-taking or sequencing a speech. To complete a task, participants are asked to provide a response that they think is appropriate in the given context:

(1) (At the professor’s office)

A student has borrowed a book from her teacher, which she promised to return today. When meeting her teacher, however, she realises that she forgot to bring it along.

Teacher: Miriam, I hope you brought the book I lent you.

Miriam: -----

Teacher: OK, but please remember it next week.

(Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984, p. 198)

WDCTs have evolved gradually over the past twenty years into several different modified versions which vary mainly according to the presentation forms, that is, written or oral, and existence of rejoinder. WDCTs can include a rejoinder, as in the following example from Johnston, Kasper, and Ross (1998, p. 175):

(2) Your term paper is due, but you haven’t finished yet. You want to ask your professor for an extension.

You: -----

Professor: I'm sorry, but I never allow extension.

Or they may involve only the specification of the situation with no rejoinder, as this example from Eisenstein, Bodman, and Carpenter (1996, p.102) shows:

- (3) Two people who are friends are walking toward each other. They are both in a hurry to keep appointments.

They see each other and say: -----

MDCT or multiple-choice DCT is another kind of DCT which has been widely used in several studies. Brown (2001, p. 301) defines a MDCT as “a pragmatics instrument that requires students to read a written description of a situation and select what would be best to say in that situation from a set of choices”. MDCTs consist of test items where the test taker is required to choose the correct response (the key) from the several given options. Most commonly, multiple-choice items include an instruction to the test taker and a stem (typically either a phrase or sentence to be completed, or a question). The key and several distractors then follow in random order (Davies et al., 1999). Following is a sample MDCT item:

- (4) You are a Business student. You forgot to do the assignment for international businesses. When your teacher whom you have known for some years asks for your assignment, you apologise to your teacher.

A. I'm sorry, but I forgot the deadline for the assignment. Can I bring it to you at the end of the day?

B. I've completed my assignment but forgot to bring it with me. I'll hand it in tomorrow.

C. Pardon me, sir, I forgot about that. Shall I do the assignment at once? So sorry! It's my fault!

### **3.4.2 Advantages & Disadvantages of DCT**

Since 1982 when Blum-Kulka used DCT to study speech acts, discourse completion task has been significantly employed as a method of data collection in speech acts study (Beebe and Cummings 1996). One of the main reasons behind the popularity of DCT is that it can be used to collect a large amount of data in a short amount of time and can be administered easily. Nonetheless, as argued by Kasper and Roeber (2005), the fact that they can be administered faster than other data collection instruments does not mean that this is always the easiest instrument to be employed. Nelson et al. (2002) state that DCT is an appropriate instrument for interlanguage pragmatic research as it can be applied directly to participants coming from different cultural background whilst natural data cannot provide such facility since in natural data collection participants' variables such as status and ethnic background are difficult to control. Kwon (2004) states that DCT is a controlled elicitation data method as it allows participants to vary their response because the situations are developed with status embedded in the situations. One important advantage of DCT is that the collected data can contribute to distinguish which strategy has been used when respondents encounter a situation where another interlocutor has lower, equal, or higher status. Another advantage of DCT is that respondents will provide the prototype response occurring in one's actual speech. Therefore, DCT is more likely to trigger participants' mental prototype whereas natural data are more likely to bring on unpredictable and uncommon items in a speech such as repetition of certain words and back channel (Kwon 2004). Also, DCT helps researchers to comprehend the construction of a speech act in an authentic communication due to its nature as a prototype of actual speech acts. This view has also been supported by Houck and Gass (1999). According to them, when the focus of study is on data production, data elicitation measures such as DCT is the most appropriate means because natural data cannot produce adequate data due to the infrequent emergence of the speech act being studied. However, when the study emphasises

on conversational interaction and the sequencing of the communication, an interactive procedure such as spontaneous natural speech or role play should be employed (Kasper, 2000).

On the other hand, despite its popularity as the main source of data collection in pragmatic research, several studies have discovered that DCT has some drawbacks which influence its reliability in gathering appropriate data. Since its introduction, authenticity of DCT has been the centre of several studies and as Kasper & Dahl (1991) argue, DCTs are the most used and the most criticised elicitation format in cross-cultural and interlanguage pragmatics. Manes and Wolfson (1980), Kasper and Dahl (1991), and Cohen (1996) declared that DCT can only create an artificial linguistic action and is unable to produce an authentic discourse. This view is strongly argued by Beebe and Cummings (1996) who carried out an investigation through comparing the data collected through DCT and natural speech data collection in relation to the amount of talk and semantic formulas used by the respondents in refusal speech acts. They showed that DCT in many respects reflects the content expressed in natural data, while the significant difference is only found in the length of talk and the range of formula such as avoidance strategies. According to Beebe and Cummings (1996), the primary reason behind the difference is the psychological element. They note that “DCT is a written hypothetical situation so that DCT does not bring out psycho-social dynamics of an interaction between members of a group” (Beebe & Cummings, 1996, p. 77). In other words, there are no real consequences for either the speaker and hearer on DCT since the real interaction is absent. Beebe and Cummings (1996) declare that the absence of feeling and interaction, insufficient social and situational information such as detailed background of the event and comprehensive information on the relationship between the speaker and the hearer lead to some shortcomings. Similarly, Candlin (2005) questions the validity of using the DCT to measure L2 students’ pragmatic performance. According to Candlin (2005), there is an

inherent problem in the validity and authenticity of the discourse completion task, and consequently in any data it delivers.

In an investigation carried out by Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford (1993), it is stated that DCT elicits a narrower range of semantic formulas and fewer strategies than the natural data. In addition, due to the absence of interaction between interlocutors, DCT is unable to bring out the extended negotiation which commonly occurs in authentic discourses.

In an attempt to evaluate the validity of DCT in non-western contexts, Rose (1994) carried out a study in which he used a DCT and a multiple-choice questionnaire. While he employed the former to study the speech act of request in Japanese and American English, the latter was used as a means to explore the validity of open-ended questionnaires in non-western contexts. There were eight situations in both instruments, but the results were considerably different. In contrast to American respondents who had mainly employed indirect strategies to complete the DCT, Japanese used more direct responses and less hints. On the other hand, to answer the multiple-choice questionnaire, they chose hints frequently. Based on results of both studies, he concluded that DCTs may not be appropriate for collecting data on Japanese.

Also, in another study carried out by Kasper (2000), it is stated that DCT cannot provide data associated with the dynamics of a conversation such as turn-taking and sequencing of action. DCT is also incapable in producing pragmatic cues such as hesitation, and all paralinguistic and non-verbal features.

Several studies have reported the discrepancy between DCT and spoken data (e.g., Beebe & Cummings, 1985, 1996; Golato, 2003; Rintell & Mitchell, 1989; Sasaki, 1998; Turnbull, 2001). Other validation studies compared data produced in responses to DCTs and multiple-choice questionnaires and found significant differences between the two (e.g., Rose, 1994; Rose & Ono, 1995). In addition, research also documented that the prompt provided in the

DCTs affects the subjects' choice of strategies (e.g., Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 1993; Billmyer & Varghese, 2000; Blum-Kulka et al. 1989; Johnston, Kasper & Ross, 1998; Rose, 1992).

Considering all advantages and disadvantages of DCT, some researchers have called for redesigning DCT. Billmyer and Varghese (2000) believe that, by redesigning DCT its adequacy to approximate authentic discourse can be enhanced. In dealing with this issue, they carried out a validation study of DCT by enriching the contextual detail of DCT prompts in request act. They find that enhancement does not affect the strategy and the amount of syntactical and lexical devices. However, the result indicates that enhancing DCT prompts produce significantly longer and more elaborated requests.

Despite all the drawbacks listed above, one of the main shortcomings of DCT which has been neglected in previous studies is clearly mentioned in the definition presented by Kasper & Dahl (1991). DCT is designed to assess speech acts and as we know this is a very narrow area of pragmatics and certainly cannot represent the whole field of pragmatics. Unfortunately, the majority of the literature in this area is devoted to assess speech acts as the only measurement of non-native speakers' pragmatic competence. In contrast, only few attempts have been made so far to other devise data collection instruments which unlike DCTs can evaluate other features of pragmatics as well.

Nearly all prominent DCTs are based on different social distance and power and respondents are expected to respond considering those factors. However, power, social distance and imposition (the three sociological variables in Brown and Levinson's [1978] model) of the addressee in a situation described in a WDCT is likely to be different from that of the researcher and/or from that of another subject in the same study, thus obscuring research findings. For example, one of the situations (Situation 5) used in the WDCT developed by

Hudson, Detmer and Brown (1995) was “You work in a small department of a large office. You are in a department meeting now. You need to borrow a pen in order to take some notes. The head of your department is sitting next to you and might have an extra pen” (p.88). From the information provided by Hudson et al. (1995) about variable distribution, the addressee in Situation 5 (i.e., the department head) was meant to possess High P (power), High D (social distance) and low R (imposition) (p.6). However, the respondent who has had the real-life experience of being a close friend of his/her department head may interpret the value of D in Situation 5 as low based on the close relationship with his/her department head. In addition, although lending a pen to a subordinate is not likely to be seen as a big imposition by the department head, forgetting to bring a pen to a meeting may be regarded by an employee as indicating that s/he is careless and disorganised; thus, the act of borrowing a pen from his/her department head might be perceived as betraying his/her own weakness to the head. This kind of psychological make-up might make the request a difficult one for the respondent to make, which in turn might increase the R value of the request as perceived by the respondent, thus conflicting the small value of R assumed by Hudson et al. (1995).

In addition to the drawbacks of DCT mentioned above, in order to evaluate DCT in detail, I have looked into the two main models of DCT employed in many studies measuring the pragmatic competence of the participants. A critical analysis of these two models will provide the basis of my different approach to create my own set of specific questions and the format of questionnaire.

### **3.5.2 An Analysis of Two popular kinds of DCT**

Many studies in pragmatic research have used or modified one of the following two models of DCT developed by Blum-Kulka (1982) and Beebe et al. (1990), including Al-Eryani



(2007), Ahn and Brown (2011), Allami and Naeimi (2011), Al Shboul, Maros and Yasin (2012), Gue (2012), Tanck (2002), Yamagashira (2001).

Blum-Kulka's questionnaire consists of seventeen conversations designed to measure the respondents' knowledge of speech acts. The conversations take place in different contexts and the respondents are asked to take the role of one of the participants to complete the conversation.

The model developed by Beebe et al. (1990), consists of 12 situations which is also designed to assess the respondents' knowledge of speech acts. The respondents are given a scenario which they need to complete based on the knowledge of the context.

The first questions of these two DCTs are discussed below in details to highlight the weaknesses of them in assessing the speech act realisation as the pragmatic knowledge of the respondents.

The first question used by Blum-Kulka (1982, p. 56) is analysed below:

(5) (At the restaurant)

Dan: What would you like to eat?

Ruth: I don't know. Let's have a look at the menu.

Dan (to the waiter): Waiter .....?

In the first question developed by Blum-Kulka (1982), the context is a restaurant and there is a conversation between three characters including two customers and the waiter. The respondent needs to continue the conversation which should be a sentence addressing the waiter. According to Blum-Kulka (1982), this question aims at exploring the directive strategies used by non-native speakers and their responses will be evaluated based on their similarity or difference to those of native speakers. The directive types that have been listed

by the researcher are imperatives (do it.), willingness questions (are you ready to do it?), ability questions (can you do it?), existential questions (do you have ...?), question directives (will you do it?), why not question (why not do it?), obligation questions (you have to do it), permission questions (is it possible?) and hints. Considering the social distance between the customer and the waiter, the researcher decodes the responses and uses the native speakers' answers as the medium of comparison. Nonetheless, the difference in responding to this question can be also related to the respondents' level of linguistic knowledge as well, not just to their ability or inability to distinguish the social distance. I have used few possible answers to this task (there are numerous answers to this task, which I have only referred to a few of them here).

- (6) (a) Dan: Waiter, menu?  
(b) Dan: Waiter, bring the menu.  
(c) Dan: Waiter, can I have the menu?  
(d) Dan: Waiter, could you please bring the menu?

While we find a difference in the level of directness in these responses from very direct to indirect, we cannot deny the fact that these sentences are different linguistically as well since the level of linguistic complicity varies. Therefore, when we employ this DCT to measure pragmatic competence of our research participants, they can create a very simple imperative type or a complicated and indirect sentence in permission question form based on their grammatical knowledge of the target language. While the researcher attempts to relate the change in the level of directness in responses to respondents' pragmatic knowledge in the TL, we cannot simply ignore the level of linguistic differences among these responses. Therefore, what we actually see and measure here is the linguistic knowledge of respondents, who have responded to these questions based on their linguistic knowledge of the language, not just

their pragmatic knowledge. Secondly, even if we accept the change in the level of directness in these responses and try to relate it to pragmatic competence, the question is, how is it possible to separate these two blended components which are involved in these responses? This is a structural issue which is related to the way this DCT is designed. When respondents are asked to write their answers or to complete the task, the amount of linguistic involvement is very high. To complete the task, the first concern of a second language learner is to provide a grammatically correct sentence as we tend to be more accurate with our grammar when we write rather than when we speak. Therefore, the respondent may sacrifice a well-structured sentence which can possibly meet the requirements of the context with a simple answer to avoid any grammatical mistakes. Also, the respondent might have a good knowledge of the context, but due to his/her lack of lexical knowledge of the target language, may not be able to provide a pragmatically correct response. Therefore, DCT developed by Blum-Kulka (1982) is too dependent on the linguistic knowledge of the respondent and cannot measure the pragmatic knowledge independently.

The same issue is applicable to the very popular DCT developed by Beebe et al. (1990).

The first question by Beebe et al. (1990) is analysed below:

- (7) You are the owner of a bookstore. One of your best workers asks to speak to you in private.

Worker: As you know, I've been here just over a year now and I know you've been pleased with my work. I really enjoy working here, but to be quite honest, I really need an increase in pay.

You:

.....

Worker: Then I guess I'll have to look for another job.

Although this DCT is slightly different as it introduces a scenario to help respondents visualise the context in which the conversation is taking place, the respondents are still asked to write their answer in order to complete the task. Therefore, as argued above, the linguistic knowledge of respondents will be highly involved in their answers; so, this DCT cannot reveal the pragmatic knowledge of the target language independently.

In order to reduce the impact of linguistic knowledge of the participants on their responses, I have used Likert scale in my questionnaire.

### **3.5.3 The use of Likert Scale**

Answering a questionnaire is not a simple task, but rather a series of processes which involves judgments based on several cognitive decisions by the respondent. To simplify this process and to reduce the involvement of linguistic knowledge in this study, the Likert scale is employed. Likert scale is the method of summated ratings which was introduced by Likert (1932) as an alternative to Thurstone's (1928) method of attitude scaling. Briefly, in a Likert scale the respondent is presented with a set of attitude statements on a scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree, while there is a mid-point which is called the neutral point. Today, the summated rating method is a very popular measurement device (Andrulis, 1977; Lemon, 1973; Robinson & Shraver, 1973). It has also had an enduring impact on social science research (Likert, Roslow & Murphy, 1934, 1993). Johnson and Dixon (1984) reviewed several studies and concluded that five to seven scale steps appear to work best. Huck and Jacko (1974) compared three five-point scales which were different in verbal labels and formats and didn't find any consistency differences. Also, Dixon, Bobo and Stevick (1984) compared an end-points defined scale with one in which all points were defined and found no difference in means or subject scale preferences. According to Wyatt and Meyers

(1987) response scale endpoints can be thought of as more nearly absolute (e.g., completely false/completely true) or less nearly absolute (e.g., very little/very much). Scales with more nearly absolute end-points have greater 'psychological width', (Bendig, 1955), as they allow a wider range of responses than scales with less nearly absolute points. The format of a Likert-type scale can be classified as positive (traditional) or negative (reversed), according to the order in which alternative responses are presented (Belson, 1966; Chan, 1991). While in the positive form, the positive response labels such as 'strongly agree' come first, in the negative form, the negative labels like 'strongly disagree' precede the positive label. Several studies investigated whether response order can influence participant choices (Belson, 1966; Chan, 1991; Johnson, 1981; Mathews, 1927, 1929); however, the outcomes were different. On the one hand, Belson (1966), Chan (1991), and Mathews (1927, 1929) found that response order had a statistically significant effect on the responses. On the other hand, Johnson (1981) did not find any major difference among his highly educated respondents as a result of a change in response order. Busch (1993) investigated the ideal number of responses to include in likert scale. According to Busch (1993), an odd number of responses offer a neutral response, whereas an even number would require respondents to choose one direction. Butch (1993, p.735) has also stated "the effectiveness of the scale to rank subjects will depend in part on item format, category labelling, the number of possible responses offered, and whether a neutral response possibility is included". The midpoint or the neutral answer in a likert scale has also been investigated. Some researchers suggest the omission of midpoint as they argue that those respondents who do not have strong feelings about the material, tend to choose the neutral response. Therefore, by omitting the neutral answer, there would be more data to interpret; although, others like Vogt (2007) argue that, respondents choose the neutral response because they think that it is their best answer to the question, and the presence of a midpoint should never be avoided. Armstrong (1987) carried out a research in

which two midpoints of 'undecided' and 'neutral' were studied and it was observed that the tendency for the 'undecided' scores was slightly higher than the 'neutral' ones. Armstrong (1987, p.362) concluded that, "It is possible that a few respondents who were uncomfortable with 'undecided' as a midpoint tended to answer more positively than they would had 'neutral' been available".

Therefore, the choice of a wrong midpoint can influence the respondents' answer. In this study, the midpoint of 'neither agree nor disagree' is preferred to other alternatives. This has been for the following reasons:

The scaling in this study is designed on a five point scale basis, starting from 'strongly disagree' as the ultimate negative response, to 'strongly agree' as the ultimate positive response. The choice of 'neither agree nor disagree' is in harmony with the rest of responses and will not be seen and regarded as an isolated response. The word 'undecided' carries some sort of uncertainty and to avoid an uncertain response, some respondents may just simply go for a different choice.

### **3.6 Research Participants & Ethical Considerations**

According to Kasper & Dahl (1991, p. 226), including a 20-item Discourse Completion Test and administering it on a group of at least 30 people has become the standard measurement in pragmatics testing. However, they have not justified their argument and have not made it clear how they agreed on this number. Nevertheless, in order to improve the reliability of my data, I have included 50 subjects as my study group in this research. To recruit my study group, using the ethical approval form and a brief information sheet on my research, I approached several universities across the country that were popular among Iranian students.

To avoid any interference with my data, the purpose and the subject of my study was not revealed to the universities and respondents. This study also included a group of 15 native speakers of English who were undergraduate students of a reputable university in the UK. Unlike similar data collection instruments, the questionnaire is developed in a way that it does not need a control group to interpret the data. Therefore, the inclusion of native speakers of English has only been for comparison reasons.

Since this research involved human participants, it was subjected to ethical approval. Therefore, after completing the questionnaire and prior to the collection of data, the ethical approval was sought to meet the university's following ethical principles:

- (a). Respect the autonomy of human research subjects
  - (b). Do no harm to researchers or human research subjects
  - (c). Act justly towards those who contribute to your research
- (<http://www.salford.ac.uk/ethics>)

Prior to the collection of data, all research participants signed the consent form which was designed to carry out this study (a copy of the consent form has been included as an appendix). The collected data was saved on a personal laptop which was secured with a password and could not be accessed by anybody else, but the researcher. Moreover, the anonymity and confidentiality of participants were central to this research at all stages.

### **3.7 Research Instruments**

We are probably familiar with the term 'questionnaire'; however, when it comes to define it precisely it does not seem to be an easy task. This could be related to the structure of

questionnaire which may be different to a normal interrogative sentence with ends with a question mark.

‘Questionnaires are any written instruments that present respondents with a series of questions or statements to which they are to react either by writing out their answers or selecting from among existing answers’ (Brown, 2001, p. 6). Questionnaires can be used to collect a large amount of information in a short period of time. Also, they can be administered and scored easily and objectively.

While the questionnaire developed in this study targets the knowledge of conversational implicatures and presuppositions, using a slight modification, it can be used to measure the knowledge of speech acts as well. Arguably, this has been one of the first attempts to create an instrument capable of measuring different aspects of pragmatics. Using this questionnaire provides the opportunity to assess various aspects of pragmatic knowledge in one single study which will save time and energy for both researchers and respondents. Moreover, it addresses one of the main issues of DCT which is the interference of linguistic knowledge in responses. This questionnaire consists of twenty four questions which are designed to assess the respondents’ knowledge of implicature and presupposition. Each question starts with a description of the context or the relationship between the people in the conversation. This provides the knowledge that participants would require to respond to each question. The questionnaire includes a conversation between two people and using the likert scale, the respondents will be asked to decide on the truthfulness of the statement or the conversation. While, each question targets only one pragmatic aspect, careful considerations have been made to avoid using any difficult grammatical structures to make the task easier to understand and to respond. Also, questions have been designed in a way that the correct responses of ‘strongly disagree’ and ‘strongly agree’ would share equal numbers.



Twenty four questions in this questionnaire are divided into two groups; twelve questions evaluate the knowledge of conversational implicature and are based on Grice's four Maxims, and the other half are about the lexical items which covers the questions about conventional implicature and presupposition.

On the other hand, to explore the possible drawbacks of DCT during the collection or the interpretation of data, the discourse completion task developed by Beebe et al. (1990) is also employed which will be administered on my study group. The results of this research cannot be used to compare these two instruments as they focus on different aspects of pragmatics and employ different approaches, but will lead to some discussions on the shortcomings of this popular DCT developed by Beebe et al. (1990).

### **3.8 Data Collection Procedure**

Fifty Iranian students (study group) and fifteen native speakers of English (control group) responded to the questionnaire developed in this study consisting of 24 questions and they were given 30 minutes to complete the task. The study group also completed the DCT developed by Beebe et al. (1990) in a similar amount of time. The data collection procedure from both groups took place in classrooms supervised by the researcher. The collected data from the questionnaire was analysed using SPSS, while the taxonomy of refusals developed by Beebe et al. (1990) was employed to evaluate the data from DCT.

### **3.9 Variables**

In this study, the following three variables could influence the validity of the collected data. Therefore, in order to improve the reliability and validity of my data, I took into account the required considerations.

#### **3.9.1 Linguistic Knowledge**

As discussed earlier, the relationship between linguistic knowledge and pragmatic knowledge has been studied by several researchers. In a recent study carried out by Ashoorpour & Azari (2014), the relationship between grammatical knowledge and pragmatic knowledge among Iranian EFL learners was investigated and the researchers found a positive relationship between grammatical knowledge and pragmatic knowledge of Iranian EFL learners. However, the relationship between grammatical knowledge and pragmatic competence has generated different views, but to avoid any discrepancy, when measuring pragmatic knowledge in the TL, one of the important factors to consider by the researcher is the level of English language proficiency of the respondents. Current studies in the field of pragmatics include people with different proficiency levels in their studies which are normally classified as intermediate, upper-intermediate and advanced based on the length of studying the target language (eg. Allami & Naeimi, 2010), although the length of study does not seem to be the right criterion to be used to differentiate language proficiency level among the learners, as the quality of teaching, the context of study and several other factors may affect the English learners' linguistic competence. One of the entry requirements of UK universities for Iranian applicants is to take an IELTS Test to prove the required knowledge of English. The breakdown of Iranian students' IELTS scores in different skills will be used to evaluate their linguistic knowledge of English.

### **3.9.2 Length of Residence**

Another important variable that can influence the pragmatic knowledge of native speakers of Farsi in this study is the length of their residence in the UK. Many studies have used length of stay in a target speech community as an indicator of L2 pragmatic acquisition (Han, 2005). Researchers argue that language learners living in a target speech community have many opportunities to interact in the TL which leads to the learners' successful acquisition of pragmatic competence. Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1986) found a relationship between length of stay in the target speech community and the target-like perception of directness and politeness in the TL. Olshtain and Blum-Kulka's study (1986) also showed that the amount of external modification used by L2 learners approximated community pragmatic norms after five to seven years of stay in the target language environment, and that such convergence correlated positively with duration of stay. Takahashi and Beebe (1987) compared Japanese EFL and ESL learners' production of refusals and found that the ESL learners' refusals were more target-like. House (1996) found out that learners who had stayed in English-speaking countries consistently outperformed their peers who had not, both before and after instruction. In another study, Roever (1996) found that German EFL students who had spent six weeks in English-speaking countries performed better than learners who did not in the use of pragmatic routines. Bouton (1999) explored how length of residence can affect non-native speakers' understanding of implicature in American English. Similarly, Churchill (2001) found a decrease in direct want statements in the English request realisations of his JFL learners over a month in the target language context. Overall, these studies suggest that longer residence in the target language community yield greater L2 pragmatic attainments.

On the other hand, some researchers argue that length of residence in the target country has not been identified as a good predictor of the TL attainment and is not sufficient in the achievement of increased proficiency in the TL. Kondo (1997) investigated Japanese EFL

learners' apology performance before and after one year of home stay in the United States, and compared them with L1 speakers of Japanese and American English. In some respects, the students' apologies became more target-like, but in others they did not. In another study, Rodriguez (2001) explored the effect of a semester studying in a target-language community by examining students' request strategies. The findings of the study showed no advantage at all for the study-abroad students. Roever (2001) also found that neither learners' comprehension of implicatures nor performance of speech acts in English benefited from the learners' time abroad. It is possible that, much like how children acquire L1 through continuous interaction with adults and peers, L2 learners may need to be involved in intensive interaction with native speakers and fully embrace the L2 culture in order to achieve native-like pragmatic skills in the L2 (Ninio & Snow, 1996). To control the effect of the length of residence on responses, all Iranian learners participating in this study will share equal length of residence in the UK.

### **3.9.3 University Course**

The final variable that may affect the responses of native speakers of Farsi in this research is the course that they study at university. As we expect students who are studying language related courses like Linguistics, Literature, TESOL, etc., to have a higher English proficiency, and to avoid this interference, all Iranian students who are participating in this study will be chosen from non-language related courses.

### 3.10 An Analysis of the Questionnaire Developed by Bouton (1994)

Bouton (1988, 1994) is one of the few researchers who has explored the knowledge of conversational implicature in several studies. He carried out a longitudinal study to investigate the effect of explicit classroom instruction on NNS's ability to interpret implicature in American English as the native speakers do. To collect the data, Bouton (1988, 1994) developed a multiple-choice questionnaire which was later used by Roever (2005) with a slight modification; nevertheless, there are several drawbacks in his questionnaire which are discussed below:

One of the questions used by Bouton (1994) is similar to question number 19 of the questionnaire developed in this study, although he refers to it as 'sequence implicature'.

(8) Two friends are talking about what happened the previous evening.

Maria: Hey, I hear that Sandy went to Philadelphia last night and stole a car.

Tony: Not exactly. He stole a car and went to Philadelphia.

Maria: Are you sure? That's not the way I heard it.

What actually happened is that Sandy stole a car in Philadelphia last night. Which of the two has the right story then?

A. Maria.

B. Tony.

C. Both are right since they are both saying essentially the same thing.

D. Neither of them has the story quite right. (Bouton, 1994, p. 97).

Bouton (1994) states that the correct answer is 'a' as it is Maria who is telling the right story. However, looking at the questions more closely, it can be argued that this question cannot target the knowledge of sequence implicature as both following interpretations presented by Maria and Tony can be concluded from the whole conversation:

(9) (a) Sandy went to Philadelphia last night and stole a car.

(b) Sandy stole a car and went to Philadelphia.

Therefore, it is not clear whether car theft occurred before or after going to Philadelphia. To avoid such a mistake, I included 'going to pub' and 'drinking two pints' in my question as we are more likely to go to a pub first and then having two pints, rather than having two pints and then going to a pub.

The concept of Irony has been the reason behind the following question by Bouton (1994) which has been analysed in detail.

(10) At a recent party, there was a lot of singing and piano playing. At one point, Sue

played the piano and Mary sang. When Tom asked a friend what Mary had sung, the friend replied,

Friend: I'm not sure, but Sue was playing "My Wild Irish Rose."

Which of the following is the closest to what the friend meant by this remark?

A. He was only interested in Sue and did not listen to Mary.

B. Mary sang very badly.

C. Mary and Sue were not doing the same song.

D. The song that Mary sang was "My Wild Irish Rose." (Bouton, 1994, p. 97).

There are a number of issues related to this question. Firstly, Bouton (1994) argues that the correct answer is 'b', which Mary sang very badly; however, the fact that Tom's friend referred to Sue's playing piano rather than Mary's song could be for several reasons, like he was simply interested in Sue and did not listen to Mary, which is the answer 'a', or he was more interested in listening to piano rather than to Mary's song. Secondly, the answers are not chosen carefully. For example, answer 'b', *Mary sang very badly*, could have been

replaced with 'Tom's friend didn't like Sue's song which seems to be closer to the scenario introduced by the researcher.

Bouton (1994) has included a number of questions which he refers to them as the 'Pope Questions', taken from the question 'Is the Pope Catholic?' However, as reported by Bouton, such questions which all have similar positive answers of 'yes', were found easy by respondents to answer.

(11) A group of students are talking over their coming vacation. They would like to leave a day or two early but one of their professors has said that they will have a test on the day before vacation begins. No one will be excused, he said. Everyone had to take it. After class, some of the students get together to talk about the situation, and their conversation goes as follows:

Kate: I wish we didn't have that test next Friday. I wanted to leave for Florida before that.

Jake: Oh, I don't think we'll really have that test. Do you?

Mark: Professor Schmidt said he wasn't going anywhere this vacation.

What do you think, Kate? Will he really give us that test? Do you think we have to stay around here until Friday?

Kate: Does the sun come up in the east these days? (Bouton, 1994, p. 96).

What is the point of Kate's last question?

A. I don't know. Ask me a question I can answer.

B. Let's change the subject before we get really angry about it.

C. Yes, he'll give us the test. You can count on it.

D. Almost everyone else will be leaving early. It always happens. We might as well do it, too.

In this example, Kate's final question follows the prototype of such responses, i.e., 'Is the Pope Catholic?', while the response 'Does the sun come up in the east these days?' seems irrelevant, it refers to a clear fact which cannot be denied; therefore, as argued by Bouton (1994, p. 96), the correct response is 'c'.

There are a number of issues related to this question. Firstly, the scenario introduced at the beginning of question seems to be too long. Secondly, instead of including three characters in this conversation, the researcher could simply omit one and include only two people which this could make the question even shorter as well.

Also, one of the general issues related to this questionnaire is that some responses are easy to guess. This problem usually arises in multiple-choice questions where the researcher has to include the correct response among distracters and if the distracters are not chosen carefully, the correct answer stands out. The question below which targets the maxim of relation has a similar issue.

(12) Frank wanted to know what time it was, but he did not have a watch.

Frank: What time is it, Helen?

Helen: The postman has been here.

Frank: Okay. Thanks.

What message does Frank probably get from what Helen says?

A. She is telling him approximately what time it is by telling him that the postman has already been there.



B. By changing the subject, Helen is telling Frank that she does not know what time it is.

C. She thinks that Frank should stop what he is doing and read his mail.

D. Frank will not be able to derive any message from what Helen says, since she did not answer his. (Bouton, 1994, p. 90).

As stated by Bouton (1994, p. 90), "based on the regularity of the postman's deliveries and the fact that Helen's statement immediately follows Frank's question, her statement can be interpreted as some sort of answer to it".

Moreover, like Levinson (1983), Bouton uses violating as an umbrella term for all non-observance, and does not distinguish between a covert breach and overt-flouting. He uses relation and relevance interchangeably and neither infringing nor opting out of the cooperative principle was included in his data set. Therefore, considering the shortcomings of this questionnaire and the fact that it only involves certain aspects of conversational implicature, it cannot be used as an effective data collection method to measure pragmatic knowledge.

### **3.11 English Language Learning in Iranian Context**

In the light of rapid changes taking place in today's world, exposure to mass communication media, and access to scientific articles in English through the World Wide Web, it is undoubtedly necessary for Iranians, especially the new generation, to master an international global language after they have acquired their mother tongue. Due to this necessity, in the area of English language education in the country, teaching quality and the learners' ability to use English appropriately are of central concern in the present study. To put the research

work in perspective, a brief summary of the background of foreign language education in Iran is provided in the ensuing sections, including remarks on Iran's educational system and the status of English in the country. Before delving into the history of Foreign Language Learning (FLL) in Iran, it is appropriate to describe briefly, the present educational system of the country. This comprises three levels: primary (five years), guidance (three years) and secondary (four years). Upon completing the secondary level with a diploma, students can gain entry into the university to study in an area of their choice, provided they pass the university entrance examination. Presently, English is taught as a foreign language in Iran, and is introduced at the level of guidance school, when the children are about 12 years old. The teaching of the language is then continued into secondary school and university. At these two levels (guidance school and secondary school), English is a compulsory subject, and students have to attend English classes three hours per week. The schools are under the purview of the Ministry of Education, and the teachers are hired and paid by the government. The language educators who are involved in the teaching of English at public (national) schools are mainly non-native speakers of English. From the historical perspective, as stated by Sadigh (1965, cited in Farhady et al., 2010), foreign language instruction in Iran dates back to 1851, when the first well-known Iranian institution of formal instruction in higher education called 'Darol-Fonoon' was established. In those days, due to the political and social conditions of the country, the needs of the Iranian elite (e.g. scientists, politicians), and international ties with Europe, it was necessary for educated Iranians to learn both English and French. Hence, the two languages were taught alongside one another. Accordingly, due to the lack of local English and French teachers, non-native foreign language teachers were invited to the country from Anglophone and Francophone countries to teach English and French. Gradually, France and French as an international language lost power and Britain along with its language gained sovereignty and as a result French was completely replaced by

English. After the Islamic revolution (1979), the importance of foreign language teaching and the status of foreign language experts have continuously been under review. During this era, textbooks and the time allocated for teaching English were constantly a matter of change, with an undesirable outcome. In other words, the development of EFL learners particularly in terms of language pragmatic competence, has not prospered. Nevertheless, English has been and is taught in state schools, private institutes and all universities as a foreign language. However, the present aim of most EFL learners, except for those who are in private language institutes, is just to know the grammatical rules of the target language (English) rather than how to use the language for communicative purposes. This aim has been established through a failure in the national curriculum, because even though it professes to abide by principles of Communicative Language Teaching, the reality is that political agendas have undermined the intent and furthermore, teachers are not equipped enough to deliver a syllabus based on modern methods or techniques (Dahmardeh, 2009). This has resulted in a situation where most Iranian undergraduates, post-graduates, researchers and even university professors suffer from a lack of pragmatic competence in English proficiency. This lack of pragmatic competence may present some obstacles or hindrances for those who wish to pursue higher education or seek career advancement abroad. It will especially affect those who want to pursue research - or write articles in English. In a study in Iran, Khajavi and Gordani (2010) performed a needs analysis to discover a skills deficit in terms of writing articles and presenting their research findings at international conferences. This situation gives rise to the following questions: Why is the proficiency of English in Iran so generally poor? What are the factors that affect the students' competence in Iran? Do learning methods have any effect on these competences? What is the solution to this problem? Where can we begin to look for these solutions? Do teachers provide enough interaction opportunities in the classroom for students? There are several other questions that can be asked to address the lack of

communicative competence among Iranian English learners. Many of them are not the concern of this study, but could be investigated in the future.

### **3.11.1 Barriers for Iranian English Learners**

As stated earlier, the main objective of English language students in Iran is merely to pass the course; as such, the teaching of the language is confined to the form or the structure of the language rather than its use. Official tests are usually based on grammar, reading comprehension, and vocabulary. Consequently, the various parts or skills of language are taught and tested in isolation. There is little room for listening and speaking, and the language is taught mostly through Farsi. Thus, Eslami-Rasekh and Valizadeh (2004) believe that the orientation is therefore towards a combination of grammar-translation and audio-lingual methods in most schools. This shows that little attempt has been made for teaching language use. According to Widdowson (1990), language as a system consists of knowing and doing, meaning that just having the knowledge about language is inadequate. Similarly, it should be acknowledged that in the process of second or foreign language teaching, as Nassaji (2000) claims, just focusing on language use, as done in the weak version of communicative language teaching, is insufficient. This implies that the integrating of both form-focused instruction along with communicative interaction in the second or foreign language classroom is necessary. Consequently, the reason for the poor English proficiency amongst Iranian EFL learners could be due to the fact that for more than half a century, the English teachers consciously or unconsciously "used either the prescribed traditional grammar method of teaching or followed the structuralists' stand introduced by the American post-Bloomfield linguists" (Pejman-Fard, 1998, p. 1). Accordingly, from the 1950s onwards, particularly in terms of teaching English in Iran, the emphasis was placed on the form or the

structure and little attention was paid to the function or the sociocultural aspects of language in the hope and belief that the overt teaching of grammar, vocabulary or language forms to the students may help them eventually pick up language use on their own when needed (Fard, 1998). However, this type of teaching has led to a situation whereby even the best students who get the highest marks in English tests are not even capable of giving or asking for an address when the need arises. The reason is that they lack language use skills as they have not received instruction in the sociocultural aspects of language use. In order to overcome these problems which are related to English language proficiency, the Iranian Ministry of Education as well as the university professors involved in the design of the school curriculum, usually work in close collaboration with English teachers and try to produce new teaching materials in tandem with the new theories of teaching and learning. However, the outcomes of such collaborations have not been encouraging. As the teaching/learning issue has still not been properly addressed in schools, language institutes have been established in Iran as adjuncts to public schools with the aim of overcoming the weaknesses in the system of learning English. This has led to the private language institute administrators hiring language teachers who are preferably native speakers of English, probably because of the perceptions of these institutes that their customers (students) would prefer these teachers; the learners would probably believe that teachers who were native speakers of English could teach the English language more effectively than non-native speakers of the language (Mahboob, 2003; Celik, 2006).

According to a report by Education First (2012), Iran ranked 42 out of 60 countries who participated in a study about the level of English proficiency. Although, English is placed high up in the national curriculum, paradoxically, EFL approaches have been constrained by a set of political and social factors that tend to regard English speaking countries (especially America and Great Britain) as a threat to Iranian stability. EFL has been neglected with

curriculum development derived from an imposed societal view rather than what the students themselves deem as appropriate. Indeed, it is typical that a curriculum reflects national and political trends. Darhmardeh (2006) has pointed out that even after studying English for seven years through the school system, most Iranians typically cannot communicate effectively in the language. He has concluded that in Iran no real attempt has been made to make the English curriculum communicative. The emphasis is on achievement in exams, and yet these fail to test real communicative competence. Interestingly, he reports that although the stated aims of the ELT curriculum in Iran are often aligned with the principles of CLT, teachers and learners alike tend to agree that those aims are not realistic or attainable in the context of state or private education, due to limitations with time, materials and teaching approaches. Emphases tend to be on reading comprehension and grammar, and moreover, teachers are reluctant to assert that their students can perform tasks that are communicative in nature, stating that preparing the students for their final exams takes precedence. Furthermore, the teachers themselves lack confidence in their own English and the teaching methods they use. There is a specific profile to Iran, as well as other countries in the Middle East that disfavours motivation in English language learning. Even comparing Iran with countries like India and Pakistan, there is the disadvantage that in the former English is a foreign rather than a second language. Iran has created a barrier to International influence due to the policies and attitudes of the Islamic Republic and its clerics. For example, the country does not promote tourism, bans access to English-speaking programmes, and filters the internet so that news, videos and social networking sites are blocked, denying the populace to a wealth of real life English. Furthermore, the government makes it difficult for Iranians to leave the country and travel abroad, though of course this is not impossible. Nevertheless, this has had an impact on exposure to communicating in international settings. Many researchers (Ellis, 1994; Rost & Ross 1991; Kasper & Schmidt, 1996; Kasper, 1997) in the

past have pointed out reasons why EFL learners sometimes face communication problems, especially with native speakers of English. This has been attributed to the fact that such learners have failed to develop pragmatic competence because traditional learning materials and teaching methods offer no pragmatic input (Godleski, 1984). Learners simply possess little or no pragmatic competence: that is, they have not realised the need to understand contextual information in order to successfully derive the intended meaning of a speaker. Instead, they rely purely on linguistic information (e.g. grammar and lexis) to provide the clues. The result may be ambiguity or even confusion, and without awareness of the usefulness of pragmatic competence, EFL learners will fail to understand how to fully analyse the language they hear to determine their shortfalls.

The division of language competence into grammatical and pragmatic competence suggests a weak relationship between the two (Thomas, 1983). This assumption is based on the fact that the branching of any area of human knowledge into various classes by means of categorisation is a way of emphasising essential differences. On some level, the division of language competence into grammatical competence and pragmatic competence highlights a recognition that the two rely upon essentially different learning processes: one based on form (grammatical), the other based on experience (pragmatic). Many definitions of pragmatic competence state that it goes beyond what grammatical competence can provide, suggesting a different kind of knowledge or awareness (Crozet, 2003). However, having made this assumption, a survey of the literature does not explicitly state that research evidence proves the two competences are completely independent. It is therefore a worthy area of investigation to test this assumption and examine the relationship between the two. If grammatical competence only focuses on form and the meaning is supplied by form, does this knowledge in any way contribute to pragmatic competence? If the two are completely disassociated, is it reasonable to assume that EFL learners with differing levels of

grammatical competence will not display corresponding differences in their levels of pragmatic competence? That is, if we compare two learners, one showing a high level of grammatical competence gained through formal instruction, and the other showing a low level of grammatical competence, the assumption is that if their exposure to real life interactions in English is similarly limited, then we should expect no appreciable difference in their levels of pragmatic competence.

An interesting link to this discussion is the fact that Iranian EFL learners who have only learnt English in Iran are exposed to methods and materials that only focus on developing grammatical competence. A number of studies conducted in Iran attest to this fact. Karimnia and Zade (2007, p. 290) state that “the only way to learn English in Iran is through formal instruction, i.e. inside the classroom where the language teachers are native speakers of Farsi. There is little opportunity to learn English through natural interaction in the target language. This is only possible when students encounter native English speakers who come to the country as tourists, and this rarely happens”. In addition, they state “in order for language learners to use the language more successfully, they should be involved in real-life situations. But in Iran, English is used only as an academic subject” (p. 290). Finally, they add that EFL teaching methods in Iran focus almost entirely on the ‘grammar-translation method’. The implication is that many EFL learners from Iran have had little or no exposure to real-life situations in English where they might develop pragmatic competence. The classroom situation is teacher-centred rather than communicative-centred. Iranian learners are, therefore, a useful source of research subjects in order to test whether any relationship between grammatical and pragmatic competence exists.



### **3.11.2 A Review of Pragmatic Studies of Native Speakers of Farsi**

Cross-cultural and interlanguage pragmatic research of native speakers of Farsi did not start until the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Since then, there have been several studies mainly concentrating on the evaluation of Iranian English learners' use of speech acts. On the other hand, there has been no real attempt at evaluating other aspects of pragmatics and the study of speech acts covers the whole literature in this area. This section of my thesis will provide a list of major studies focusing on the evaluation of the pragmatic knowledge of Iranian English learners, while one of these studies will be discussed in further details.

In a study carried out by Jalilifar (2009), he investigated the request strategies used by 96 Iranian English learners studying at undergraduate and postgraduate level, while the responses of a group of 10 Australian native speakers were employed to review their findings. He used a DCT to collect his data and revealed that, as far as social power is concerned, EFL learners display closer performance to native speakers; but considering social distance, it seems that Iranian EFL learners have not acquired sufficient sociopragmatic knowledge to display proper social behaviour.

Birjandi & Rezaei (2010) developed a Multiple-choice Discourse Completion Test (MDCT) to assess the pragmatic knowledge of Iranian EFL learners in relation to the speech acts of request and apology in EFL classrooms. Ninety three Iranian EFL learners at two universities were asked to write, in either English or Farsi, the situations in which they would request or apologise. Based on the suggested situations by students, the researchers generated twenty scenarios and developed the multiple-choice task. To distinguish the key answer from distracters, the researchers administered the test on a group of American native speakers and based on their answers, the most frequently chosen choices were selected as the key answer for each question and the rest were regarded as distracters. The test was then applied on

another group of native speakers to ensure the correctness of answers and according to researchers, the second group of native speakers selected the same answers. Therefore, after two stages of tests, the key answers were identified.

Pishghadam & Sharafadini (2011) investigated the speech act of suggestion among Iranian EFL learners. 150 Iranian English learners were asked to complete a modified version of Beebe et al's (1990) DCT with 6 situations. The findings were compared with those of Jiang (2006) in order to find out the similarities and differences between Farsi and English suggestion strategies. The results of their study indicated discrepancy in three types of suggestion samples between natives and non-natives. Moreover, gender and language proficiency were found to play a significant role in the production of suggestion strategies.

Vaezi (2011) explored the similarities and differences in using the speech act of refusal among Iranian learners of English as a foreign language with a group of Farsi native speakers in Iran. 15 Iranian native speakers of Farsi and 15 Iranian English learners participated in his study. He also used the DCT developed by Beebe et al. (1990) to elicit their data, although a translated version of DCT was employed for Farsi native speakers. The research results revealed that Iranian native speakers tend to use more excuses and indirect reasons to avoid annoyance, while Iranian English learners are more frank and are more likely to refuse their friends' requests, suggestions, and invitations.

Khodareza & Lotfi (2012) carried out a study to investigate the Iranian EFL learners' interpretation and use of speech acts as part of their interlanguage pragmatic knowledge, and to explore the effect of pedagogical intervention on second language pragmatic learning in a 10 session pragmatics course. A group of 60 Iranian English learners were given a pre-test of speech acts including Multiple-Choice Questionnaire (MCQ) for interpretation and Discourse Completion Task (DCT) for use. The results of their study confirmed that formal instruction

of pragmatic knowledge does not play any role in the enhancement of Iranian intermediate EFL learners' use of speech acts. Khodareza & Lotfi (2012, p. 9241) state that “Iranian EFL learners face the production (use) of speech acts more commonly than the comprehension (interpretation) of them. In addition, such an inference can imply that Iranian experts in teaching English as a foreign language should focus on the problem of language production as seriously as possible”.

Azarmi & Behnam (2012) explored the ability of the Iranian upper-intermediate and the intermediate learners in keeping face in different complaint situations. A group of 40 Iranian English learners completed the DCT developed by Moon (2001) and Tanck (2002). The findings of their study revealed that the upper-intermediate learners and the intermediate learners used different types of speech acts in each situation. They also suggested that, at low levels some degree of pragmatic awareness should be presented.

Najafabadi & Paramasivam (2012) carried out a study to investigate the interlanguage pragmatic knowledge of Iranian English learners at three levels of English language proficiency. A modified version of DCT developed by Beebe et al. (1990) was used to elicit the responses of a group of 90 Iranian English learner and 30 American native speakers on their knowledge of the speech act of request. They found that “Iranian English learners overused external modifications and underused internal modifications compared to American native speakers. However, they showed pragmatic development toward native speaker norms with increase in language proficiency level” (Najafabadi & Paramasivam, 2012, p. 1387).

In an attempt to explore the effects of explicit instruction on Iranian L2 Learners' interlanguage pragmatic development, Esmaili & Mirzaei (2013) carried out a study on a group of 210 Iranian undergraduate students of English and 60 English native speakers over a 10 period course. They used a set of instructional L2 pragmatics materials explaining the

realisation and interpretation patterns, rules, strategies, and tokens of the three speech acts of request, apology, and complaint. Using a pre-test, post-test and a control group the data was collected. The results of the study supported the claim that “explicit metapragmatic instruction facilitates interlanguage pragmatic development. Most specifically, Iranian EFL students’ speech act comprehension as well as production abilities improved significantly due to the effect of the explicit metapragmatic instruction in speech act patterns, rules, and strategies” Esmaeili & Mirzaei (2013, p. 97). Therefore, they conclude that, raising awareness or consciousness can be influential in acquiring pragmatic competence.

In a similar study, Rezvani et al. (2014) looked into the effects of explicit and implicit instruction on Iranian EFL learners’ pragmatic development. 60 Iranian English learners were grouped equally into two classes, while one group were exposed to explicit instruction, the other group were exposed to implicit instruction and their progress was investigated over a 14 week period. They used a DCT as a pre-test and a post-test to assess the participants’ knowledge of requests and suggestions prior to and after the treatment phase of the study. The results of the study revealed that Iranian EFL learners’ production of requests and suggestions improved significantly after both explicit and implicit instruction. Implicit instruction aims “to attract learner attention and to avoid metalinguistic discussion, always minimising any interruption to the communication of meaning” (Doughty & Williams, 1998, p. 232). Explicit teaching aims “to direct learner attention and to exploit pedagogical grammar in this regard” (Doughty & Williams, 1998, p. 232). In other words, implicit instruction is to give learners’ unconscious attention to form and explicit teaching is to give learners conscious attention to form. In terms of the difference between the explicit and implicit instruction Rezavani et al. (2014) argue that

explicit and implicit instructions were not significantly different with regard to the influence they exert on the acquisition of the target forms.

In this regard, it can be argued that an implicit teaching condition can be effective in developing learners' pragmatic competence if properly implemented. In other words, metapragmatic explanations used with our explicit condition and the systematic combination of the implicit techniques of input enhancement and recasts employed with the implicit condition proved to be equally effective (Rezvani et al., 2014, p.11).

One of the main studies investigating the pragmatic competence of Iranian EFL learners is carried out by Allami & Naiemi (2010). This study which has also been cited by several researchers (Bardovi-Harlig, 2012; Pishghadam & Zabihi, 2012; Bella, 2014) attempts to measure Iranian EFL learners' knowledge of the speech act of refusal. The sample involved 30 Iranian English learners of lower-intermediate, intermediate and upper-intermediate levels, whose answers were reviewed against the responses of 37 native American speakers in a relevant study carried out by Kwon (2004). They used the DCT developed by Beebe et al. (1990) to collect their data and concluded that there are differences in the frequency, shift and content of semantic formulas used in refusals by Iranians and Americans. They also stated that there is a positive correlation between L2 proficiency and pragmatic transfer, which the latter being in contrast to that of Taylor (1975) who has demonstrated that beginners have the highest level of transfer, with transfer decreasing as proficiency increases.

This study by Allami & Naeimi (2010) is titled as 'an analysis of pragmatic competence development in Iranian EFL learners', while only the speech act of refusal has been studied and the outcome has been generalised to the whole pragmatic competence domain. Clearly, pragmatic competence involves an overall knowledge of all aspects of pragmatics, not only a single feature of speech act. Also, one of the main outcomes of the study is that Iranian EFL learners and native speakers employed different strategies in refusals. I believe that there is no surprise in this outcome and the result is just what was expected. Because, we cannot expect a group of Iranian English learners who are studying in Iran to have similar contextual

knowledge of American native speakers. Moreover, instead of including native speakers in their study, they simply chose to use the findings of another study carried out by a different researcher. As the native speakers' responses have been used against the non-native speakers' answers to evaluate their knowledge of speech act, the findings could have been more reliable with the inclusion of native speakers.

### **3.12 Reliability & Validity**

Validity and reliability are common terms used to evaluate the quality of the study and are essential to strengthen the quality of the work. The definitions of reliability and validity in quantitative research reveal two strands as the former refers to that fact if the result is replicable and the latter involves the means of measurement, whether they are accurate and can actually measure what they are intended to measure or not. This section presents the considerations that are made to ensure the reliability and validity of this research.

#### **3.12.1 Reliability in Qualitative & Quantitative Research**

Reliability is an important parameter of research and different methods can be employed to achieve it. Joppe (2000, p. 1) defines reliability as, "...The extent to which results are consistent over time and an accurate representation of the total population under study is referred to as reliability and if the results of a study can be reproduced under a similar methodology, then the research instrument is considered to be reliable". Sarantakos (2005, p. 89) argues that "in the majority of cases, researchers avoid the use of the concept of reliability, instead they use concepts such as credibility, applicability or auditability".

Also, Bogdan and Biklen (1998, p. 36) state that "qualitative researchers tend to view reliability as a fit between what they record as data and what actually occurs in the setting

under study, rather than as literal consistency across different observations”. This issue is inevitable when participants complete the DCT as it has been referred as one of the main drawbacks of it (for further details refer to the discussion of the drawbacks of DCT). When completing the DCT, participants may avoid giving the same answer that they would give in real situations.

In quantitative approaches, three types of reliability are usually mentioned. Stability reliability relates to a measure that produces reliable findings across time; representative reliability across groups of subjects; and equivalence reliability across indicators (Sarantakos, 2005, p. 88). Moreover, Charles (1995) adheres to the notions that consistency with which questionnaire items are answered or individual’s scores remain relatively the same, can be determined through the test-retest method at two different times. This attribute of the instrument is actually referred to as stability. If we are dealing with a stable measure, then the results should be similar. A high degree of stability indicates a high degree of reliability, which means the results are repeatable. However, Joppe, (2000) argues that using the test-retest method can make the instrument, to a certain degree, unreliable. She explains that test-retest method may sensitize the respondent to the subject matter, and hence influence the responses given.

### **3.12.2 Validity in Qualitative & Quantitative research**

To achieve validity, it is important to use methods of data collection and analysis that are appropriate to the subject under investigation (Volmerg, 1983, p. 124 cited in Sarantakos, 2005, p.86). Both instruments that are employed in this research are appropriate to the subjects under study. On the importance of validity in research, Joppe (2000) states that:

Validity determines whether the research truly measures that which it was intended to measure or how truthful the research results are. In other words, does the research instrument allow you to hit "the bull's eye" of your research object? Researchers generally determine validity by asking a series of questions, and will often look for the answers in the research of others (Joppe, 2000, p. 1).

One of the ways to improve the validity of data is the use of triangulation (Winter, 2000 cited in Cohen et al., 2007). Using mixed research methods, the researcher can complement the possible drawbacks in his/her qualitative or quantitative approach.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### Research Methodology in Second Language Acquisition

#### 4. 1 Introduction

It is generally agreed that the introduction of Universal Grammar in the 1960s marked the birth of a new field of study, second language acquisition (SLA) research as another young academic discipline (Davies, Cripes and Howatt, 1984; Larsen-Freeman and Long, 1991; Cook, 1993; Ellis, 1994; Gass and Selinker, 2008; Ortega, 2009). As Cook (1993, p. 19) states, “the interlanguage concept provided SLA research with an identifiable field of study that belonged to no one else”. SLA pioneers chose the language of the second language learner as their unique object of study, which is a distinguishing feature of an independent academic discipline. So far, research in SLA domain has benefited from both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Usually, the former refers to the recorded spoken data (for example, interview data) that is transcribed to textual form as well as written (field) notes and documents of various sorts, while the latter is the systematic empirical investigation of observable phenomena via statistical, mathematical or computational techniques. Nevertheless, as argued by Davies (1995), the distinction signifies more than merely using figures versus non-quantitative data (such as open-ended interviews or natural data). Dörnyei (2007) refers to the following decisive factors that differentiate these two methods including: “the general ideological orientation underlying the study, the method of data collection applied, the nature of the collected data, and the method of data analysis used to process the data and to obtain results” (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 24).

Early research in SLA followed the existing path from the first language acquisition which was dominated by the study of morpheme acquisition and grammatical descriptions (e.g. Braine, 1963; Fraser, Bellugi, & Brown, 1963; Brown & Bellugi, 1964). Since then, research

on SLA has expanded enormously and researchers have addressed a wider range of areas and employed multiple methodologies. Also, the introduction of new theories developed the research in SLA even further. While some SLA research findings have had direct application on learners' needs and their educational requirements, others have provided a resource to enrich the teaching practice. Moreover, the relationship between SLA and applied linguistics inspired many researchers to explore this area from their own practical point of view in an attempt to resolve the practical problems and concerns in language teaching by employing the linguistic theories. Considering the research questions and objectives, applied linguists have used a variety of research methodologies including classroom observation, interviews, questionnaires, etc. Today, research in SLA has developed even further and includes not only the new linguistic theories of language acquisition, but also investigates the second language learners' ability to use the TL in different contexts or their pragmatic knowledge.

#### **4.2 The Role of Quantitative Research Data in SLA**

Quantitative research has been central to many research studies in SLA and has been very popular among researchers so far. In a study by Hatch and Lazaraton (1991), they provided a very detailed summary of published quantitative studies. According to Lazaraton (2005), from 1970 to 1985, there was a significant increase in the number of quantitative studies in applied linguistics. Moreover, as reported by Lazaraton (2005), between 1991 and 2001, 524 empirical studies appeared in four major applied linguistic journals. The results of his report showed that 86 percent of the research papers were quantitative, while 13 percent were qualitative and only 1 percent were mixed methods. Therefore, Lazaraton concluded that quantitative studies are the favourite and dominant research method in the realm of applied linguistics.

Dörnyei (2007) provides the following definition for this method:

Quantitative research involves data collection procedures that result primarily in numerical data which is then analysed primarily by statistical methods.

Typical example is a survey research using a questionnaire, analysed by statistical software such as SPSS (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 24).

He also stresses the major strengths that the method has: it is “systematic, rigorous, focused, and tightly controlled, involving precise measurement and producing reliable and replicable data that is generalisable to other contexts” (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 34).

The collected data in SLA which can be attitudes, responses or task performances of participants will be analysed and the results of the quantitative analysis of the numerical data create the evidence to either accept or to reject the hypothesis.

#### **4.3 Questionnaire in SLA**

The main purpose of a survey study is to explore the certain features of a population by examining a sample of that group. While survey data can also be collected through structured interviews as well, questionnaires have become the dominant tool of data collection in survey studies in SLA. “Questionnaires are any written instruments that present respondents with a series of questions or statements to which they are to react either by writing out their answers or selecting from among existing answers” (Brown, 2001, p. 6). Dörnyei (2007) lists three different types of data that can be collected through questionnaire including factual data like the length of studying the TL by second language learners, behavioural data like personal history and attitudinal data like attitudes, beliefs and values. One of the main reasons behind the popularity of questionnaire is that it is easy to construct and to use. However, as argued by Dörnyei (2003), the fact that it is easy to construct a questionnaire could be detrimental as well and can become a weakness as a wrongly- constructed questionnaire may not address the

research questions or engage other variables that were not considered prior to the construction stage. On the other hand, processing the data collected through a well-constructed questionnaire could be fast and straightforward.

One of the main disadvantages of using questionnaire is that it involves respondents' literary knowledge, especially when they face open-ended questions or have to write their answers. As argued by Dörnyei (2003), questionnaire research makes the assumption that respondents can easily read the questions and write down their answers. However, if the focus of a study is not on respondents' literary knowledge, it is crucial to avoid constructing such questionnaires with open-ended questions or using written tasks to measure their pragmatic knowledge.

#### **4.4 Importance of Pragmatic Comprehension in SLA**

As stated by Bachman (1990), Canale (1983) and Canale and Swain (1980), pragmatic ability which is an important part of the language proficiency construct, is the ability to use language appropriately according to the communicative situation. The importance of the pragmatic dimension in the language ability construct is not disputed, yet its role in interlanguage development has been researched empirically, particularly within the aspect of comprehension (Bardovi-Harlig, 1999; Kasper & Rose, 1999). Pragmatic comprehension refers to the comprehension of oral language in terms of pragmatic meaning. Therefore, second language learners of English need to acquire the pragmatic knowledge of English language in order to achieve the following abilities:

- The ability to understand a speaker's intentions,
- The ability to interpret a speaker's feelings,



implicature have been carried out by Bouton (1988, 1992, 1994), Boersma (1994), Devine (1982), Lee (2002) and Taguchi (2005, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2011, 2013).

Correctly interpreting conversational implicatures requires the listener to form hypotheses about what the speaker thinks and feels based on the combination of propositional content of the utterance and the context in which it was uttered. According to Bardovi-Harlig (1999), as L2 learners may not have sufficient linguistic skills to fully interpret an utterance at the surface level, their ability to comprehend the pragmatic meaning could be affected as well. Unfamiliar communicative situations and over-reliance on linguistic cues may contribute to L2 learners' difficulty in matching the utterance to a familiar context, which can lead to pragmatic comprehension difficulties. In a study by Cook and Liddicoat (2002) in which 50 high-proficiency and 50 low-proficiency English learners participated, they concluded that higher-proficiency L2 learners could process both contextual knowledge and linguistic knowledge in the comprehension of speech acts because they have achieved higher levels of language processing automaticity. However, the lower-proficiency learners had not achieved such automated processing and therefore, relied only on bottom-up processing of linguistic information, resulting in miscomprehension of the speech acts.

As a response to the work of Grice and Keenan, Devine (1982) experimentally investigated the use of implicature in L1 and L2. Her goals were to (1) “assess the universality of the conversational principles delineated by Grice” (Devine, 1982, p. 195) and (2) “to evaluate the relative importance and applicability of the conversational principles for speakers from differing cultural groups” (Devine 1982, p. 195). For this first endeavour, Devine developed a 15-item tool, “adapted from or following Grice” (Devine, 1982, p. 205), composed of “brief descriptions of fifteen situations, each of which contained an example of conversational implicature” (Devine, 1982, p. 196). Informants were asked to read these and paraphrase each in writing, the research assumption being that, if Devine’s interpretation of Grice’s theory is



accuracy level overall, with 96% of NSs and 70% of NSs being recorded as accurate while no one was recorded as inaccurate. She concludes that following the Gricean logic, both groups are “aware of the conversational rules which are being manipulated to create implicature” (Devine 1982, p. 201). Based on low NNS accuracy rates to the questions about the Maxim of Quantity and the Maxim of Relation which showed the second worst accuracy rate, she concluded that “they do not have the same status or applicability as the other conversational postulates proposed by Grice” (Devine, 1982, p. 201).

Another researcher who has carried several studies to investigate the notion of CI is Bouton (1988, 1992, 1994) who has also designed a written elicitation instrument. Bouton employed his questionnaire to study the ability of non-native English-speaking university students in the interpretation of implicatures in American English. Bouton’s multiple-choice questionnaire included short written conversations about several types of implicatures consisted of indirect criticism, irony, Poop implicature, relevance implicature and sequence implicature. Following two examples are taken from his questionnaire:

(1) Relevance implicature:

Lars: Where's Rudy, Tom? Have you seen him lately?

Tom: There's a yellow VW parked over by Sarah's house.

What Tom is saying here is that...

A. he just noticed that Sarah has bought a new yellow VW and is telling Lars about it.

B. he has no idea where Rudy is.

\*C. he thinks Rudy may be at Sarah's house.

D. none of these. He is deliberately changing the subject to avoid having to admit that he doesn't know.



(2) Pope implicature:

Two roommates are talking about their plans for the summer.

Fran: My mother wants me to stay home for a while, so I can be there when our relatives come to visit us at the beach.

Joan: Do you have a lot of relatives?

Fran: Are there flies in the summertime?

How can we best interpret Fran's question?

A. Fran thinks her relatives are noisy.

B. Fran is new to the area and is trying to find out what the summers are like.

\*C. Fran has a lot of relatives.

D. Fran is trying to change the subject; she doesn't want to talk about her relatives

(Bouton, 1994, p. 9).

Bouton administered his multiple-choice questionnaire on a group consist of 436 international students who were admitted by the University of Illinois in 1986, at three different stages including, upon their arrival, after five months and after seventeen months. The results of his findings suggested that NNS had arrived at the same interpretation of the implicatures as the American NS, only about 79% of the time. Among different kinds of questions, those targeting the relevance implicature were found easier by respondents. Relevance implicatures operate on the maxim of relevance and listener works out the speaker's meaning using contextual information and his/her linguistic knowledge. On the other hand, Bouton identified four types of implicature including indirect criticism, irony, Pope implicature and sequence implicature that learners found difficult even after seventeen months of stay in the United States.

Following his study, Bouton (1988, p. 159) stated that “as Keenan had suggested in 1976, the use of implicature in cross-cultural interaction was a potential barrier to effective communication. Therefore, developing NNS' skill in the interpretation of English language implicatures should be one of the objectives of the ESL classroom”. Four years later, he repeated his study on a group of 30 international students from the original study who were still on campus. To avoid any possibility of differences as a result of using different questions, he used the same multiple choice-questionnaire that was originally used in 1986. While they showed considerable improvement in some areas, there were still some significant differences between the NS and NNS responses. For example, not all types of implicature manifested the same degree of improvement. Specifically, there were 8 items in Bouton’s post-test in which the frequency of the NNS responses matching expected ones was unexpectedly low. On the one hand, questions targeting maxim of order, Pope Question implicatures and understanding the criticism were improved over four and a half years period, but there were some types of questions that were still troublesome for international students. For instance, questions that had points related to the American culture did not show a major improvement. The following question which is based on the Maxim of Relevance was used by Bouton in both tests:

- (3) Bill and Peter have been good friends since they were children. They roomed together in college and travelled Europe together after graduation. Now friends have told Bill that they saw Peter dancing with Bill’s wife while Bill was away.

Bill: Peter knows how to be a really good friend.

Which of the following best says what Bill means?

\*A. Peter is not acting the way a good friend should.

B. Peter and Bill’s wife are becoming really good friends while Bill is away.

C. Peter is a good friend and so Bill can trust him.

D. Nothing should be allowed to interfere with their friendship.

(Bouton, 1994, p. 163).

Bouton (1994) states that, while 84% of American NS chose sentence (a) as their choice, only 33% of NNS in the original study chose this sentence and there was a slight improvement in the second study and this figure rose to 50%. Bouton (1994) argues that, there is still a major difference between the way NS and NNS interpreted Peter's remark. According to Bouton (1994), on both occasions, those NNS who did not choose (a) in responding to this question chose (C), which he relates this to NNS' different attitude towards marriage and friendship. To conclude, Bouton (1994) declares that the majority of the differences in the interpretation of implicatures was diminished after four and a half years as "(1) the number of items that were interpreted differently was greatly reduced, and (2) there was no longer any specific type of implicature that was, in itself, a serious problem for the NNS" (Bouton, 1994, p. 163).

Boersma (1994) carried out a similar study to explore the role of explicit teaching on the learning of conversational implicature. The subjects of his study were international graduate students with advanced English proficiency taking ESL classes at the University of Illinois. Explicit lessons on six types of implicatures were introduced and instructional materials were also prepared for the students. Through the explicit teaching of implicatures, the students were encouraged to analyse the implicatures and focus on the intended meaning interpretation within context where level of formality and relationship between interlocutors, cultural values, expectation, and intonation were taken into account. The results showed that implicatures could be taught with success, even though some types of implicatures were easier to teach than others.

Kubota (1995) carried out a study to examine whether conversational implicatures can be taught to Japanese students of EFL or not. 126 Japanese students from Junior and Senior high

schools who had studied English in instructional settings only between 6 and 7 years took part in this study. The research participants reported no experience of studying CI before. Kubota (1995) used two tests, test (A) which was a multiple-choice test developed by Bouton (1994) targeted four areas including Sequence, Poise Implicature, the Maxim of Relevance and understanding criticism and test (B) which was a sentence composing test about breaking or not breaking the Maxims of Quality, Quantity and Relevance. Kubota carried out a pre-test and post-test study on two different groups, a study and a control group, and the former received treatment and support while responding to questions. Kubota (1995) reported that the study group who had received treatment and support, generated significantly better responses than the control group. Therefore, he recommends teaching pragmatics explicitly to EFL learners to improve their pragmatic knowledge in TL.

In another study, Lee (2002) investigated the ability of Korean non-native speakers of English with high English proficiency to interpret conversational implicatures and compared with that of native speakers of English. She found a slight difference in the performance of the two groups. She pointed out that high linguistic proficiency would allow the non-native learners to derive the same meaning as native speakers. Nevertheless, there were some differences in the strategies employed to interpret implicatures by both groups. Some factors such as learners' knowledge of the culture that includes personal biases, stereotypes, and transfer of knowledge from the native culture can influence the performance in interpreting implicatures.

One of the researchers who has carried out several studies about the comprehension of implicatures is Taguchi (2003, 2005, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2011, 2013). She has considered many variables in this acquisitional process other than simply comprehension accuracy, including comprehension speed, comprehension load, lexical access speed, L2 proficiency level, and learning environment with a view to evaluate those underlying assumptions about

pragmatic theories in Speech Act Theory (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1976), Grice's Maxims (1975) and the Relevance Theory (Sperber & Wilson, 1995).

Taguchi (2003, 2005) investigated whether second language learners' comprehension of implicature differs from native speakers. 160 Japanese students of English at a college in Japan participated in her study and they took a 38-item computerised listening task which was designed to measure their comprehension of conversational implicature. Her control group were 46 native speakers of English who were studying at an American university. The participants' comprehension was analysed in terms of accuracy and comprehension speed. The results of her study showed a significant L2 proficiency influence on accuracy, but not on comprehension speed. Also, she did not report any significant relationship between accuracy and comprehension speed.

Taguchi (2008) carried out another study to investigate whether the acquisition of pragmatic knowledge and the achievement of employing this knowledge develop in a parallel manner or not. She included two study groups: the ESL group and the EFL group. The ESL group were 57 Japanese students enrolled at an intensive English Programme in a college in Hawaii. The EFL group were 60 Japanese students who had enrolled in an English-medium college in Japan. The average age between two groups was nearly the same. She used a computerised listening test consisting of 58 questions, including 24 questions about conventional implicatures, 24 questions about non-conventional implicatures and 10 literal comprehension items. A sample of both types of questions is presented below:

(4)

Conventional implicature	Non-conventional implicature
Susan: You look worried, Dave. What's the matter?	Dave: Hey Susan, I didn't know that you're working here on campus.
Dave: I need to turn in this paper by 6, but I'm	Susan: Yeah, I'm working in the Student Union

still typing it. I've got to go to work in half an hour or so.	cafeteria. I work Monday through Friday starting at six.
Susan: Do you want me to type the paper for you?	Dave: You sound busy. Do you like the job?
Dave: I think I'm almost done.	Susan: My mother wanted me to take it.
Question: Does Dave need Susan's help?	Question: Does Susan like the cafeteria job?

Taguchi (2013, p. 34)

She administered her listening test on both groups in two stages. The ESL group took the test once at the beginning of their course and after a seven-week period. The EFL group also took the test at the beginning of their course and after a five-week period. She selected different timings to control the number of instructional hours across groups. Therefore, both groups had received equal teaching hours prior to their second test. The results of her study indicated that, while the average score for the ESL group at pre-test was 32.46, it was improved at post-test to 33.83. Surprisingly, the EFL group showed higher accuracy score as their average pre-test score was 34.55 which it was improved at their pre-test to 37.40. However, the average response time among EFL group members was more than the ESL group.

Taguchi's (2013) latest study involved 160 Japanese English learners at an American university and their TOEFL score which ranged from 330 to 590 was used to evaluate their linguistic proficiency. She used a computerised listening test consisting of 40 multiple-choice items to measure the respondents' ability to comprehend implicature. She included 16 conventional implicature items 16 non-conventional implicature items and 8 literal-meaning items. The conventional implicature items included two indirect speech acts of request and refusal where she used fixed syntactic forms like "I was wondering if you could", "Do you mind if I", etc. Moreover, indirect refusals were based on giving an excuse for a refusal. On the other hand, for non-conventional implicature items, she used expressions to convey opinions indirectly without involving the conventional features. To give a better picture of her items, a sample of each group is presented below:

(5)

Sample conventional implicature items: indirect requests and refusals

Requests	Refusals
Tom: Oh hi Sally, how are you? Sally: So, I heard the boss just gave you a nice raise. Do you mind if I ask you how much you got this year? Question: What is Sally telling Tom? (a) She wants to know how much raise Tom got. (b) She is very pleased with her boss. (c) She wants to know if Tom's life is good. (d) She doesn't care that Tom got a raise.	Susan: I'm having a party this Saturday, and it should be fun. I hope you can come. Dave: Oh, Susan, I already have plans on Saturday. Question: Which of the following is correct? (a) Dave doesn't think Susan's party is exciting. (b) Dave is going to attend Susan's party. (c) Dave doesn't know his plans for Saturday. (d) Dave can't come to Susan's party.

Taguchi (2013, p. 26)

(6)

Sample non-conventional implicature items

Bridging	Flouting
Ben: Did you like the movie last night? Barbara: I was glad when it was over. Question: What did Barbara think about the movie? (a) She thought the movie was good. (b) She didn't enjoy the movie. (c) She thinks Ben should have watched the movie. (d) She liked the end of the movie.	John: How was the wedding? I bet it was Exciting. Mary: Well ... the cake was O.K. Question: What does Mary think about the wedding? (a) Mary doesn't remember the wedding. (b) Mary though that the cake wasn't so good. (c) Mary liked the wedding very much. (d) Mary didn't enjoy the wedding so much.

Taguchi (2013, p. 27)

According to the results of her study, Taguchi stated that “conventional implicatures (indirect refusals and requests) were found easier by Japanese English learners and they took less time to comprehend and answer than non-conventional implicatures” (Taguchi, 2013, p. 30). The

results of her study also indicated that, between two kinds of conventional implicatures, indirect refusals were easier to understand than indirect requests. She related that difference to L1 transfer and the similarity between Japanese and English as it is common in both languages to provide an excuse or a reason when refusing (Taguchi, 2013, p. 30). She argues that, using the shared convention, Japanese English learners comprehended indirect refusals faster and better, while lack of linguistic similarities in indirect requests in two languages made the comprehension of them harder for respondents as some of these requests like ‘Do you mind if’ are unique to English (Taguchi, 2013, p.30). Taguchi (2013) also refers to a significant difference across implicature types in terms of accuracy and comprehension speed; however, she also points out a variation within individual items in the same implicature category. For example, while she had reported quicker response time for conventional implicatures, some questions about conventional implicatures led to longer response time than non-conventional implicatures.

On the other hand, in order to derive meaning in non-conventional or conversational implicatures, listeners are required to analyse both linguistic and contextual cues. In conversational implicatures, meaning is not simply attached to a particular linguistic form. According to Taguchi (2013), non-conventional implicatures lack features that link the form with meaning; so, “it needs word-by-word bottom-up processing as well as analysis of contextual cues in order to derive the correct interpretations” (Taguchi, 2013, p. 30).

Following her studies, Taguchi (2013) concluded that, conventional implicatures are easier for learners to comprehend and they showed more improvement in a short period of time. In contrast, she referred to the lack of conventionality in non-conventional implicatures as the reason behind the difficulties that L2 learners face when trying to comprehend them.



#### **4.6 Study of Presupposition in SLA**

While major research about conversational implicature comprehension in the TL is limited to the studies discussed above, there are very few studies that have investigated the comprehension of presupposition among second language learners. The majority of the literature about presupposition is either generated by the philosophers or by the debate among linguists with regards to the semantic view and pragmatic view of presupposition. Some scholars believe that presupposition is purely semantic and others believe that it is purely pragmatic. The semantic field of linguistics deals with the meaning of language; it is primarily concerned with the linguistic code. Semantics deals with the literal definition of words and is not influenced by the speaker's intentions. Therefore, the meaning of words remains stable despite the context (the physical and social environment in which the utterance takes place). On the other hand, pragmatics is less concerned with the literal meanings of words and more concerned with the context, intentions behind utterances and the way they are interpreted. Unlike semantics, pragmatics has nothing to do with the linguistic code but deals with the extra-linguistic world and people's knowledge and assumptions of the real world. As mentioned earlier, presuppositions may be seen from a semantic and a pragmatic viewpoint. However, the semantic-pragmatic debate is little aired nowadays, since so many researchers have adopted hybrid theories on which the labels semantic and pragmatic are hard to pin.

The presuppositions of an utterance are the pieces of information that the speaker assumes (or acts as if she assumes) in order for her utterance to be meaningful in the current context (Potts, 2014, p. 3). Considering this definition, presupposition plays a vital role in our daily interactions as we all assume that lots of information is already known to our hearer and therefore, we avoid repeating it. When a speaker assumes that some information is already known by the hearer and takes that for granted, the hearer's success in comprehending the

conveyed message depends on his familiarity with the word that has triggered that presupposition. Therefore, second language learners need to extract the linguistic code related to the presupposition trigger as well the contextual factors that may affect the presupposed information. Thus, if a second language learner is not familiar with the conventional meaning that is associated with a particular word, then he/she may not comprehend part of the message that is generated by a native speaker through using that specific word in a conversation.

Just and Clark (1973) conducted an investigation of adult native speakers of English drawing inferences from the presuppositions and implications of sentences containing implicative and factive predicates. They included two implicative predicates (semantically positive *remember* and semantically negative *forget*) and two factive predicates (semantically positive *be thoughtful* and semantically negative *be thoughtless*). Just and Clark (1973) hypothesised that, if listeners had fully comprehended sentences containing these predicates, they should be able to answer questions about or verify the presuppositions and implications of these sentences. For example, if they read or heard a sentence like *John remembered to let the dog out*, they should be able to answer questions like, *Where is the dog?* (implication) or *Where is the dog supposed to be?* (presupposition). In two separate experiments, with the four predicates occurring in both syntactically affirmative and negative sentences, and with subjects pushing “in” and “out” or “true” and “false” buttons, Just and Clark (1973) measured subjects’ response latencies. They generally found implications faster to respond than presuppositions.

Inspired by Just and Clark (1973), Carrell (2006) carried out a study in which she investigated second language learners’ ability to draw inferences from English sentences containing factive and implicative predicates (Kiparsky and Kiparsky, 1970; Karttunen, 1971). Her study actually took place in 1982-1983 (according to the footnote on page 1) but it did not publish until 2006. She included 30 advanced ESL learners with an average TOEFL

score of 585 and 13 high intermediate ESL students as her study group, while 17 native speakers of English who were undergraduate students at the University of Hawaii acted as her control group. She selected eight predicates for her study: (a) remember, (b) forget, (c) bother, (d) neglect, (e) be thoughtful, (f) be thoughtless, (g) be considerate, and (h) be inconsiderate. Each predicate was placed in a syntactically affirmative frame sentence containing the infinitive complement *to let the dog out*, and she included 32 questions in her questionnaire. Subjects were asked to make true/false judgments about each premise-conclusion pair. The test items were presented orally by the experimenter with a controlled intonation and stress pattern typical of such if-then declaratives. Subjects were given eight seconds, from the end of the reading of one sentence until the announcement of the next item number, in which to respond by circling either “true” or “false” on a numbered answer sheet. To clarify the way she generated her questionnaire, two samples of her questions are presented below:

- (7) If John neglected to let the dog out,  
then the dog is supposed to be out.
- (8) If John remembered to let the dog out,  
then the dog is out.

The results of Carrell’s (2006) study suggested that, both high-intermediate and advanced ESL learners showed their proficiency to interpret both the implications and the presuppositions of implicative and factive predicates correctly. They were also generally able to draw the correct inferences about the indirectly conveyed meanings of sentences containing these predicates. As expected, native speakers had the best performance, followed by advanced ESL learners and high intermediate ESL learners respectively.

While the last few decades has seen enormous studies to measure second language learners' performance to use speech acts in the TL, second language learners' knowledge of presuppositions has not attracted many researchers and there is a major gap in the literature of this area. Considering the lack of study about the comprehension of CI and presupposition in the second language and the significant role of these two important aspects of pragmatics in L2 proficiency, this study has focused on these two pragmatic topics.

#### **4.7 Research Participants**

To improve the validity of the collected data, three different groups participated in this study: a pilot group, a control group and a study group. All three groups were selected carefully according to research objectives.

##### **4.7.1 Pilot Group**

According to Dörnyei (2007, p.75), piloting in Applied Linguistics refers to “a dress rehearsal” of the full data collection procedures. Mackey (2000) explained, pilot testing “can help avoid costly and time-consuming problems during the data collection procedure ... [as well as] the loss of valuable, potentially useful, and often irreplaceable data” (p.57). Piloting the questionnaire involves administering the instrument to a group of respondents who are similar to the target group of people for whom it has been designed. According to Dörnyei (2007), piloting is more important in quantitative studies than in qualitative ones, because

quantitative studies rely on the psychometric properties of the research instruments; in a questionnaire survey for example, if we have not covered a variable by sufficient questionnaire items then this variable simply cannot emerge in the results, no matter how important it may be in the particular context (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 75).

Prior to administering the questionnaire developed in this research on the study group, this study was piloted to achieve the following objectives:

- (a) To assess the practicality of data collection procedures,
- (b) To identify the possible problems before doing the actual study,
- (c) To enhance the validity and reliability of the research instruments.

The pilot group were fifteen postgraduate students of a Business School from a reputable UK university who were attending a 10 week pre-sessional English course and their overall IELTS score varied from 6.5 to 7. The pilot group consisted of eight females and seven males and they were from different countries, including China, Iraq, Japan and Saudi Arabia. Also, to demonstrate the possible differences between the results collected through the questionnaire developed in this study and the DCT developed by Beebe et al. (1990), the original DCT consisting of 12 questions was also administered on the pilot group. The pilot study took place in a classroom and it was monitored by myself.

#### **4.7.2 Control Group**

Fifteen native speakers of English who were undergraduate students of a reputable university in the UK and were studying History, took part in this study as the control group. There were 9 females and 6 males and the study took place in a classroom it was monitored by myself.

#### **4.7.3 Study Group**

Fifty native speakers of Farsi who were admitted by three reputable UK universities in September 2015 to study non-English courses at undergraduate level, and their length of stay

in the UK varied from one to three months participated in this study. Also, their overall IELTS score ranged from 6.5 to 7. The group consisted of thirty five males and fifteen females and I personally monitored the data collection procedure.

#### 4.8 Data Analysis

Table (4) provides a general comparison of the data collected from three different groups participated in this study. All three groups were given 30 minutes to respond to the questionnaire developed by the researcher.

(9)

Groups	The mean score	Average correct response to Conversational Implicature	Average correct response to Presupposition
Pilot Group	70%	80%	60%
Control Group	100%	100%	100%
Study Group	73.25%	84.50%	62.83%

General comparison of the results from different groups

A short glance at the table above shows that, the results acquired from the pilot group and the study group were quite similar and as expected, the control group answered correctly to all questions. The similarity between the collected data from the pilot and study group can confirm the reliability of the research instrument as well as the validity of the data.

##### 4.8.1 Interpretation of Questions about Conversational Implicature

In this part, answers to 12 questions about Conversational Implicature (CI) will be presented and analysed.

(10)

Question	Type of Question	Agree (A)	Strongly Agree (SA)	Neutral	Disagree (D)	Strongly Disagree (SD)	Correct Answer	Total Correct Answers	Percentage of correct Answer
1	CI	4	0	2	31	13	D/SD	44	88%
3	CI	6	40	3	1	0	A/SA	46	92%
5	CI	8	2	0	28	12	D/SD	40	80%
7	CI	8	34	2	5	1	A/SA	42	84%
10	CI	22	18	2	4	4	A/SA	40	80%
12	CI	12	18	1	11	8	D/SD	19	38%
15	CI	38	11	0	1	0	A/SA	49	98%
17	CI	2	0	1	8	39	D/SD	47	94%
18	CI	4	1	2	32	11	D/SD	43	86%
19	CI	15	24	1	4	6	A/SA	39	78%
21	CI	2	0	0	9	39	D/SD	48	96%
22	CI	9	41	0	0	0	A/SA	50	100%

Presentation of responses to questions about Conversational Implicature

While the average score for questions about CI was 84.5%, the range of correct response varied from 38% to 100%.

*Question (1)*

*Holly and Nick are having lunch at the university café.*

*Nick: 'One Direction' is coming to Manchester this weekend.*

*Holly: I have two term papers due this Monday.*

*On the basis of Holly's response, Nick is likely to conclude that Holly will attend the concert.*

The first question about CI is targeting the Maxim of Relevance introduced by Grice (1961, 1975, 1978 and 1989). Grice's Maxim of Relevance is responsible for creating a large number of standard implicatures. According to Levinson (1983, p.107), "if the implicatures were not constructed on the basis of the assumption of relevance, many adjacent utterances in conversations would appear quite unconnected". Therefore, in the question raised above, it is only through considering the relevance of Holly's answer to the statements uttered by Nick that we can realise that she is providing a partial response to his statement. Nick makes a statement which is an indirect way of asking Holly whether she would be going to the concert or not, and she should be answering the question. Assuming that in saying what she has

uttered, Holly is co-operatively answering Nick's indirect question, we can infer that she is giving an indirect negative response to Nick as she may not be in a position to give a straightforward negative answer. To do so, she opts to refer to her two term papers which are due to submit, as this might contribute to Nick to realise the intended 'no' answer.

The mean score of this question (88%) is higher than the average correct responses to all questions targeting CI (84.5%) and out of 50 respondents, 44 of them answered correctly to this question, while 2 of them remained neutral.

### *Question (3)*

*Susan is talking to her friend, Amy, about her graduation ceremony.*

*Amy: Have you invited Isabella and Julie to your graduation ceremony?*

*Susan: I've invited Julie.*

*On the basis of Susan's utterance, Amy is likely to conclude that Isabella is not invited to Susan's graduation ceremony.*

In this question, the focus is on Grice's Maxim of Quantity. According to Grice's theory of conversational implicatures, we should not say less or more than what is required. While, Amy refers to two names of 'Isabella' and 'Julie' in her question, Susan only refers to one of them in her response and violates the maxim of quantity deliberately. Violation, according to Grice (1975), takes place when speakers intentionally refrain to apply certain maxims in their conversation to cause misunderstanding on their participants' part or to achieve some other purposes. However, considering Grice's co-operative principle, Susan should be still trying to answer Amy's question. To do so, instead of referring to her name or giving a direct response like 'I didn't invite Isabella', Susan simply chose to omit her name and left it to Amy to understand the conveyed message.

The mean score of this question was 92%; meaning only 4 respondents could not answer correctly to this question.



*Question (5)*

*Joe and Kate are colleagues.*

*Joe: Would you like a cup of coffee?*

*Kate: We have run out of sugar and I like mine sweet.*

*According to Kate's response, Joe is likely to conclude that she will have a cup of coffee.*

The focus in this question is on the Grice's Maxim of Manner. Joe offers his colleague, Kate, a cup of coffee and she declines his offer. To do so, she does not use a direct 'no' response; instead, she refers to the fact that there is no sugar and she likes to have her coffee sweet. According to one of the submaxims of Manner, Kate is supposed to avoid ambiguity; nevertheless, she violates this maxim and does not give a clear 'no' response to his offer. According to Grice (1975), conversational implicatures can arise from either strictly observing or openly disregarding the maxim which the latter applies to this question.

The Average score of this question was 80% which is less than the average correct response to all questions about CI. There was no neutral answer and all other 10 respondents answered wrongly to this question.

*Question (7)*

*Katie and George are jogging together.*

*George: Can we slow down a bit as I am out of breath?*

*Katie: I am glad that I don't smoke.*

*If you hear this conversation, you are likely to believe that George smokes.*

This question focuses on the Maxim of Relevance. To reply to George's request to slow than, Katie's utterance seems irrelevant; however, considering Grice's Maxim of Relevance it can be concluded that there is a relationship between Katie's utterance and George being out of breath. Thus, it can be concluded that, the reason behind George being out of breath is that he is a smoker.

The average correct response to this question was 84% which is close to the average correct answer to all questions about CI (84.5%). While 42 respondents answered this question correctly, 2 of them were neutral and the rest (6 respondents) responded incorrectly.

*Question (10)*

*John and Thomas are trying the new buffet restaurant in town. John is eating something but Thomas can't decide what to have next.*

*Thomas: "How do you like what you're having?"*

*John: The cutlery set is new.*

*Based on John's utterance, Thomas is likely to conclude that John does not like his food.*

Like the previous question, this question also focuses on the Maxim of Relevance. To respond to Thomas's question whether he likes his food or not, instead of commenting on the food, John refers to the cutlery set. Considering that he is still contributing to this conversation co-operatively, his response can be interpreted as an indirect 'no' to Thomas's question.

Here, the average correct response is again 80%, meaning it was slightly less than the overall average correct response of all questions targeting CI. The majority of correct responses (22 out of 40) were 'Agree', which means that only 18 of them chose 'Strongly Agree'. This can be interpreted as a sign of uncertainty among respondents. 8 respondents answered incorrectly to this question, while there were 2 neutral answers.

*Question (12)*

*Joseph and Arthur are professors at a university. They are talking about the essay of a student called Jessie.*

*Joseph: How did you find Jessie's term essay on thermodynamics?*

*Arthur: It was well-typed.*

*According to Arthur, Jessie's term paper was good.*

In order to answer Joseph's question, Arthur is trying to be relevant and contribute to this conversation; although, his utterance conveys a meaning beyond what he has actually being uttered. Joseph's question is about a student's paper on thermodynamics and to respond to his colleague's question, Arthur only refers to the presentation quality of the paper rather than the contents. This can be interpreted as the only positive point worth referring to by Arthur. Nevertheless, this question led to the fewest correct answers among all 12 questions about CI as only 19 respondents (38%) replied correctly to this question. There was 1 neutral answer, while the rest of the responses (30) were incorrect. This question had generated similar results in the pilot study and only 33% answered correctly to this answer. To avoid any misunderstanding of this question and in order to stress the importance of the contents rather than the presentation, the word 'thermodynamics' was chosen; however, the majority of respondents found a positive correlation between the essay being well-typed and being a good essay shows that they could not use the inferential bridges to understand Arthur's utterance.

#### *Question (15)*

*Nigel has a meeting with his mortgage advisor to apply for a mortgage on a house he has seen.*

*Mortgage Advisor: To be eligible for the loan, you must have 10% deposit which is £15,000. Do you have this amount, sir?*

*Nigel: Yes, I do.*

*According to the Nigel's response, he has £15,000 deposit, maybe more.*

This question refers to Grice's Maxim of Quantity. According to Grice (1975), while exchanging information in conversations, we should make our contribution as informative as is required. Here, when Nigel agrees to the mortgage advisor's utterance, he means that, he has at least £15,000 deposit. Therefore, from his utterance it can be concluded that, he either has exactly £15,000 deposit or he may have more.

This question was answered correctly by majority of respondents (49) and there was only 1 wrong response.

*Question (17)*

*Adam and Sarah bought an apartment in New York.*

*The sentence above is likely to lead you that Adam and Sarah bought separate apartments in New York.*

Considering Levinson's (2000) Maxim of Manner, this question is generated. According to Levinson's (2000) informative principle, a speaker should say as little as it is required. Therefore, in the above conversation we expect the minimum linguistic information that is needed to achieve communicational ends. Considering this maxim, this sentence would lead us to conclude that Adam and Sarah bought one apartment together in New York.

47 respondents answered correctly to this question; thus, the mean score of this question was 94%.

*Question (18)*

*Julie and Janet are friends. Janet goes to bed early when she is tired.*

*Julie: Shall we go to the cinema tonight?*

*Janet: I've had a long day.*

*Based on Janet's response, Julie is likely to conclude that Janet is interested to go to cinema tonight.*

Considering the Maxim of Relevance, this question is generated. To respond to Julie's offer to go to the cinema, Janet provides a statement which violates the Maxim of Relevance as Janet's response seems to be irrelevant to Julie's question; although, considering the information given about Janet in the introduction that she goes to bed early when she is tired and the fact that she has had a long day, it can be concluded that she is not looking to accompany Julie to go to the cinema.

While 43 respondents (86%) answered this question correctly, only one fourth of them (11 respondents) selected ‘Strongly Disagree’ as their choice.

*Question (19)*

*I went to our local pub last night. I had two pints.*

*If you hear this utterance, you are likely to conclude that the speaker went to the pub first and then had two pints there.*

According to Grice’s (1975) Maxim of Manner, those participating in a conversation should be orderly. Therefore, in the above example, it can be concluded that this person has gone to the pub first and then has two pints.

The average correct response to this question (78%) was less than the overall average correct response to CI question (84.5%), meaning 11 respondents did not reply correctly to this question. This means that they might have concluded that this person could have two pints somewhere else before going to the pub. Although, as argued above, considering the Maxim of Manner the only true scenario would be that this person has had his pints after going to the pub.

*Question 21)*

*Sally and Liam who are roommates, are in the university café. Sally starts talking about their other roommate Lisa.*

*Sally: Lisa can be such a cow sometimes.*

*Liam: Have you heard about the university’s new developments?*

*If you hear this conversation, you are likely to believe that Liam is interested to continue this conversation about Lisa.*

Here, the focus is on the Maxim of Relevance. To continue the conversation with Sally, Liam produces an utterance which is totally irrelevant to her statement. Thus, he intentionally violates the Maxim of Relevance as he is not interested to continue the conversation on the topic raised by Sally.

Only two respondents provided wrong answers to this question, while the rest (96%) replied correctly. From forty eight correct responses, thirty nine of them (81.25%) chose ‘Strongly Disagree’ and the rest selected ‘Disagree’ as their choice which shows the certainty among respondents.

*Question (22)*

*After Janet has withdrawn money from a cash machine, her friend Mike approaches her.*

*Mike: Janet, I need some cash.*

*Janet: Your debit card also works on this machine.*

*Based on Janet’s utterance, you are likely to believe that Janet has no intention of lending money to Mike.*

Based on Grice’s Maxim of Manner, people involved in a conversation should avoid ambiguity; however, a speaker might intentionally violate a maxim by avoiding being clear in a conversation to convey more than what he or she had actually uttered. In this question, Janet uses an ambiguous response to Mike’s statement as she is pretending not to understand Mike’s real intention of requesting money of her.

This was the only question about CI that was answered correctly by all respondents. 41 respondents chose ‘Strongly Agree’ and the rest selected ‘Agree’ as their choice.

#### **4.8.2 Bridging Implicature & Flouting Implicature**

A number of non-conventional implicatures that are used in this study operate at two levels: bridging and flouting (Grice, 1975; Levinson, 1983). Bridging implicature observes the maxim; however, it requires the listener to employ some inferential bridges in order to provide a relevant utterance. On the other hand, flouting implicature is a deviation from the maxim which occurs when the utterance is generated; therefore, it needs more extensive

inferencing. The table below presents an example of each type of these non-conventional implicatures.

(11)

Flouting implicature	Bridging implicature
<p>Question 21) Sally and Liam, who are roommates, are in the university café. Sally start talking about their other roommate Lisa.</p> <p>Sally: Lisa can be such a cow sometimes. Liam: Have you heard about the university's new developments?</p> <p>If you hear this conversation, you are likely to believe that Liam is interested to continue this conversation about Lisa.</p>	<p>Question 22) After Janet has withdrawn money from a cash machine, her friend Mike approaches her.</p> <p>Mike: Jill, I need some cash. Janet: Your debit card also works on this machine.</p> <p>Based on Janet's utterance, you are likely to believe that Janet has no intention of lending money to Mike.</p>

Sample CI items: bridging and flouting

The following two tables provide a comparison of the answers to questions targeting bridging and flouting. As shown below, there is a difference between the answers to these two kinds of questions. While the average correct response to bridging implicature is 90.66%, the average correct response to flouting implicature is 78.16%. Moreover, while the question which led to the least correct response among all questions about CI (question 12 with 38% of correct responses) was about flouting implicatures, the only question which generated 100% of correct responses belongs to bridging implicature. Therefore, respondents found bridging implicatures easier to comprehend and answer than flouting implicatures. To comprehend the underlying meaning in flouting implicatures, listener has to go through an extensive inferencing process as they present drastic deviations from the maxim at the surface level. So, it requires further attempt by the listeners to derive the meaning.

(12)

Questions about Bridging	Total number of Correct Responses	Percentage of Correct Response
Question 3	46	92%
Question 5	40	80%
Question 22	50	100%

Questions about bridging implicature

(13)

Questions about Flouting	Total number of Correct Responses	Percentage of Correct Response
Question 1	44	88%
Question 7	42	84%
Question 10	40	80%
Question 12	19	38%
Question 18	43	86%
Question 21	48	96%

Questions about flouting implicature

#### 4.9 Analysis of Questions about Presupposition

The Table below illustrates how respondents replied to questions about presupposition.

(14)

Questions	Type of Question	Agree (A)	Strongly Agree (SA)	Neutral	Disagree (D)	Strongly Disagree (SD)	Correct Answer	Total Correct Answers	Percentage of correct Answer
2	P	8	37	2	3	0	A/SA	45	90%
4	P	27	9	6	7	1	D/SD	8	16%
6	P	9	1	4	29	7	A/SA	10	20%
8	P	11	33	4	2	0	A/SA	44	88%
9	P	10	2	6	24	8	D/SD	32	64%
11	P	22	14	2	9	3	A/SA	36	72%
13	P	16	11	3	15	5	A/SA	27	54%
14	P	8	9	4	18	11	D/SD	29	58%
16	P	6	1	1	14	28	D/SD	42	84%
20	P	16	9	4	15	6	D/SD	21	42%
23	P	2	45	0	3	0	A/SA	47	94%
24	P	9	4	1	8	28	D/SD	36	72%



*Question (2)*

*Being asked 'Who left the door open?' would lead you to believe that someone left the door open.*

When we use any interrogative words like 'who' in English, there is always something which is presupposed prior to asking that question. This structural presupposition is associated with 'wh' questions. Wh-questions in English are conventionally interpreted with the presupposition that the information after the wh-form (e.g. when and who) is already known to be the case. Therefore, the question above will lead us to believe that the door must have been left open by somebody rather than something.

45 respondents answered this question correctly, while there were 2 neutral responses.

Therefore, the average correct response to this question was much higher than the total average correct response to questions about presupposition.

*Question (4)*

*Jack who participated in a marathon race for a charity is talking to her mum, Margaret.*

*Margaret: Did you finish the race, Jack?*

*Jack: I had almost finished the race that I felt a sharp pain in my left knee, and hardly managed to do it.*

*According to this conversation, Jack didn't finish the race because of a pain in his left knee.*

The key point in this question is the verb 'managed to' which is an 'implicative verb'. Karttunen (1971b) has listed 31 kinds of presupposition triggers which implicative verbs like 'managed to' are one of them. Although, Huang (2007) listed this term along with other words like *actually, also, anyway*, etc. as the lexical items that engender conventional implicatures.

The lexical trigger of ‘managed to’ conveys this message that, despite difficulties in doing something, it was finally done. Therefore, in this example, Jack finally finished the race, though with pain and difficulty.

This question led to the fewest correct responses among the study group and only eight respondents replied correctly to this question. Out of the eight correct answers, only one student chose ‘Strongly Disagree’ while the rest who were less sure selected ‘Disagree’.

*Question (6)*

*John is talking to his brother, Josh, about their neighbour who is a wealthy man.*

*Josh: I saw our neighbour in his new Rolls Royce yesterday.*

*John: He is rich, but he is not a happy man.*

*On the basis of John’s utterance, you are likely to conclude that rich people are usually happy as well.*

The conventional implicatures of an utterance are certain aspects of the conventional meaning of the sentence uttered that go beyond its truth conditions or ‘what is said’. Nevertheless, as there is not a general agreement among linguists on considering a separate classification for conventional implicatures, they will be analysed under presupposition. Grice (1967, p. 46) uses the following example to demonstrate the conventional aspects that are associated with ‘but’.

(15) (a) She is poor but honest.

(b) She is poor and honest.

Grice argues that (a) and (b) have the same truth conditions, but that a speaker who utters (b) conventionally implies that there is some salient contrast between the poverty and honesty of the woman in question. ‘And’ and ‘but’ therefore, on Grice’s account, share their truth conditional content; however, ‘but’ has an implied content that ‘and’ lacks.

This question focuses on this conventional aspect of the word ‘but’ and the following sentence can be inferred (>> is the symbol of presupposes).

(16) John: He is rich, but he is not a happy man.

>> Rich people are happy as well.

Only ten respondents answered correctly to this question; therefore, the number of correct responses to this question was less than one third of the average correct responses to all twelve questions about presupposition.

*Question (8)*

*Leanne is talking to her friend, Julia.*

*Leanne: I saw Sally’s husband in a new car yesterday.*

*If you hear this utterance, you are likely to believe that Sally is married.*

This question is created to explore the conventional meaning that is associated with the word ‘husband’. The fact that Leanne chose to refer to him as ‘Sally’s husband’ not ‘Sally’s ex-husband’ or ‘Sally’s boyfriend’, it means that she is trying to convey the message that Sally is married. Therefore, Leanne’s sentence implies the following sentence:

(17) >> Sally is married.

The percentage of correct answer to this question was 88%, meaning it was much higher than the average correct response to all 12 questions about presupposition (62.83%). Out of 44 corrects responses, 33 of them were ‘Strongly Agree’ and the rest (11) were ‘Agree’, which confirms the level of certainty among students.

*Question (9)*

*If you hear the sentence 'No horses in the farm have been vaccinated', you are likely to believe that there are not any horses in the farm.*

This question focuses on the notion of quantifiers' domain. Both strong quantifiers (e.g. *every, the, most*) and weak quantifiers (e.g. *no, few, several*) create a presupposition called the domain presupposition. According to several scholars like Roberts, 1995; Gawron, 1995; Abusch & Rooth, 2000; Cooper, 1983), the existence of a quantifier triggers a presupposition about the noun phrase used in the sentence. Therefore, considering the existence of the quantifier (no), the following sentence is presupposed:

(18) >> There are horses in the farm.

64% of answers to this question were correct which was close to the average correct response to all 12 questions about presupposition. Out of 32 correct responses, only one third were confident to choose 'Strongly Disagree' as their answer. Also, there were 12 wrong answers, while 6 respondents chose to remain neutral.

#### *Question (11)*

*Amy and Lucy are housemates. Amy expects a parcel from her family via post.*

*Amy: Has my parcel arrived?*

*Lucy: Your parcel still has not arrived.*

*If you overhear this utterance, you are likely to conclude that Amy's parcel was expected to have arrived by now.*

This question investigates the learners' knowledge of the conventional meaning that is associated with the word 'still'. Karttunen & Zaenan (2005) cited the following example from Frege (1918):

(19) Alfred has still not come.

Entailment: Alfred has not come.

Conventional implicature: Alfred was expected to have come by now.

'Still' is one of several lexical items in English that are associated with a conventional meaning and as shown in the above example by Frege (1918), this word implies that

something was expected to happen by the time the utterance was produced, but it has not happened yet. Thus, in this question the following sentence can be implied:

(20) Entailment: Amy's parcel has not arrived.

>> Amy's parcel was expected to have arrived by now.

The mean score of this question was 72% which was higher than the average of all questions about presupposition. 12 respondents answered incorrectly, while 2 of them remained neutral.

### *Question (13)*

*Joe and Allen are Friends.*

*Joe: How is your neighbour now?*

*Allen: He stopped ignoring my morning greetings.*

*According to Allen, his neighbour has been ignoring his morning greetings.*

The presupposition trigger of 'stop' is central to this question. Verbs like *stop, start, continue, finish, take, leave, enter, come, go, arrive, ...* which are referred to as 'change of state' verbs carry a background assumption. Therefore, this question presupposes the following sentence:

(21) >> Allen's neighbour has been ignoring his morning greetings.

This question led to less correct answers than the average of all 12 questions about presupposition as the correct answer percentage was only 54% which was less than 62.85%.

### *Question (14)*

*The sentence, 'Sally regrets telling Bob the truth' would lead you to believe that the truth hasn't been told to Bob yet.*

As originally noted by Kiparsky and Kiparsky ('K&K', 1970), factive predicates ('factives,' e.g. regret, hate, realise & remember) are distinguished from non-factives (e.g. think, say, reckon) in that the former presuppose the truth of their complement clause while the latter do not. This question is chosen to investigate the learners' knowledge of this factive verb. The presupposition trigger of 'regret' conveys a feeling of sadness or disappointment over an

occurrence. Thus, its presence indicates that Sally has already told the truth to Bob. Although, only 29 of respondents found the right answer, while 4 of them remained neutral and the rest (17) answered wrongly to this question. Here, the percentage of correct response (58%) was again lower than the average correct response to all questions targeting presupposition knowledge.

*Question (16)*

*Ryan and Leighton are talking about their friend, Alex.*

*Ryan: Do you know where Alex has planned to go this summer?*

*Leighton: He will either return to France or will go to Spain for his holidays.*

*Based on Leighton's utterance, you are likely to conclude that Alex has been not in France before.*

According to Levinson (1980, p.182), iterative verbs like, *come back, restore, repeat, return,* etc., denote a repeated action. Therefore, it can be concluded that Alex has been in France before. Forty two students answered correctly to this question and the ratio of 'Strongly disagree' to 'Disagree' was 2:1. This means that the level of certainty among respondents was high. On the other hand, there was only one neutral answer and the rest of students (seven) replied incorrectly to this question.

*Question (20)*

*The utterance, 'Susan didn't realise that Pam had left early' would lead you to believe that Pam had not left early.*

Here, the question is targeting the respondents' knowledge of the factive verb of 'realise'. According to Karttunen (1971, p. 341), verbs like *know* and *realise* as the factive verbs carry along the speakers' presupposition that the complement sentence represents a true presupposition". He also refers to verbs like *believe, think* and *assume* as non-factive as they are not accompanied by a similar presupposition. Levinson (1980, p.181) uses the following sentence to indicate the role of the factive verb of 'realise' in his example.

(22) John realised/didn't realise that he was in debt.

>> John was in debt.

Therefore, it can be concluded that this question presupposes the following sentence.

(23) >> Pam had left the door open.

This question aims at exploring the respondents knowledge of the meaning associated with the factive verb of 'realise'. Among fifty responses, there were only twenty one correct answers, while majority of respondents (fifteen) preferred to choose the answer with less certainty level (Disagree) and the rest (six) chose 'Strongly disagree'. Here, half of the answers (twenty five) were incorrect. Therefore, the percentage of incorrect answers (50%) was more than the correct answers (42%). There were also four neutral answers to this question.

*Question (23)*

*Overhearing the sentence 'Peter is in the room too' would lead you to believe that someone else is in the room.*

According to Lakoff (1971) and Levinson (1980) particles like *too*, *back* and *in return* or comparative constructions which lead to comparisons or contrasts, function as presupposition triggers. Levinson (1980) uses the following example to explain how the word 'too' triggers a presupposition:

(24) Adolph called Marianne a Valkyrie, and she complimented him back/in return/too.

>> to call someone (or at least Marianne) a Valkyrie is to compliment them

(Levinson, 1980, p.183).

Therefore, considering the particle 'too' in this question, the following sentence is presupposed:

(25) >> Someone else is in the room.

This question generated the highest number of correct responses among all 12 questions about presupposition and 47 students replied correctly to this question. On the other hand, there was no neutral answer, meaning 3 answers were incorrect. Among students who answered correctly, 45 of them (90%) chose ‘Strongly Agree’ which confirms the high level of certainty among respondents.

*Question (24)*

*Julia and Samantha are talking about Leah’s Wedding Ceremony.*

*Julia: Are you invited to Leah’s Wedding Ceremony?*

*Samantha: Of course, I am. Even Lucy’s mum is invited.*

*If you listen to this conversation, you are likely to conclude that Lucy’s mum was among the first people to be invited.*

The final question targets the conventional meaning that is associated with the word ‘even’. According to Huang (2011, p.55), “the term ‘even’ being epistemic in nature, conventionally implicates some sort of unexpectedness, surprise or unlikeness”. Therefore, considering the word ‘even’, following sentences can be implicated:

(26) >> Other people were also invited to Leah’s wedding ceremony.

>> Of all the people under consideration, Lucy’s mum was the least likely to be invited to Leah’s wedding ceremony.

The mean score to this question was 72% which was almost 10% higher than the average correct response to all questions about presupposition. Also, respondents answered this questions more confidently as out of 36 correct response, 28 of them were ‘Strongly Disagree’ and only 8 people chose ‘Disagree’ as their choice.

The table below which presents the data collected from the study group in detail will be used to extract the required information for further analysis and to shape this chapter.

(27)



Question	Type of Question	Agree (A)	Strongly Agree (SA)	Neutral	Disagree (D)	Strongly Disagree (SD)	Correct Answer	Total Correct Answers	Percentage of correct Answer
1	CI	4	0	2	31	13	D/SD	44	88%
2	P	8	37	2	3	0	A/SA	45	90%
3	CI	6	40	3	1	0	A/SA	46	92%
4	P	27	9	6	7	1	D/SD	8	16%
5	CI	8	2	0	28	12	D/SD	40	80%
6	P	9	1	4	29	7	A/SA	10	20%
7	CI	8	34	2	5	1	A/SA	42	84%
8	P	11	33	4	2	0	A/SA	44	88%
9	P	10	2	6	24	8	D/SD	32	64%
10	CI	22	18	2	4	4	A/SA	40	80%
11	P	22	14	2	9	3	A/SA	36	72%
12	CI	12	18	1	11	8	D/SD	19	38%
13	P	16	11	3	15	5	A/SA	27	54%
14	P	8	9	4	18	11	D/SD	29	58%
15	CI	38	11	0	1	0	A/SA	49	98%
16	P	6	1	1	14	28	D/SD	42	84%
17	CI	2	0	1	8	39	D/SD	47	94%
18	CI	4	1	2	32	11	D/SD	43	86%
19	CI	15	24	1	4	6	A/SA	39	78%
20	P	16	9	4	15	6	D/SD	21	42%
21	CI	2	0	0	9	39	D/SD	48	96%
22	CI	9	41	0	0	0	A/SA	50	100%
23	P	2	45	0	3	0	A/SA	47	94%
24	P	9	4	1	8	28	D/SD	36	72%

Presentation of the data collected using the questionnaire

While the average correct response to questions about CI was 84.50%, only 62.83% of responses to questions about presupposition were correct. Therefore, there is almost 22% difference between two aspects of pragmatics which indicates that, although both aspects are categorised as pragmatics, there must be a significant difference between them that language learners with similar linguistic knowledge responded differently to them. To explore the understanding of CI, it is worth referring to the existing theories about CI comprehension.

Conversational implicature refers to the universal ability to recognise the speaker's underlying intention over and above the compositional semantic meaning of the utterance. Grice claims that human beings communicate with each other in a logical and rational way, and cooperation is embedded into people's conversations. Furthermore he argues, this habit will never be lost, because it has been acquired during their childhood. Some researchers

claim that Grice's Cooperative Principle and its maxims are universal. For example, Green (1996) argues that rationality and cooperativeness are characteristics common to all the speakers in the world; therefore, non-cooperative conversations should be regarded as cooperative considering more global themes including listener and speaker (p. 98). Cappella (1995) also mentions that rejecting the cooperative principle as a norm may lead to inefficient and unfinished interactions.

On the other hand, there are several scholars who do not agree with Gricean Maxims. Thomas (1998a) criticises Grice's theory for three misinterpretations which are as follows: viewing human nature optimistically, proposing a series of rules for effective conversation and believing that his suggested maxims would always be taken into consideration. Thomas (1998a, 1998b) claims that although Grice's theory is not satisfactory and suffers from a lot of holes, nothing better has been found to replace it. Also, Taillard (2004) attacks Grice's claim that people normally cooperate and follow the maxims, and mentions that "Human communication rests on a tension between the goals of communicators and audiences" Taillard (2004, p. 247). In fact he believes that, we as communicators, interact to fulfil our benefit and interest, but it does not mean that we always tell the truth. Another scholar who disputed Grice's Cooperative Principle initially is Keenan (1976) who argues that cooperative conversation, as with most social behaviour, is culturally determined, and therefore the Gricean Maxims and the Cooperative Principle cannot be universally applied due to intercultural differences.

In conversational implicatures, the speaker expresses attitudes and feelings using indirect utterances that must be inferred by the hearer (Grice, 1975; Sperber & Wilson, 1995). Comprehension of conversational implicatures involves the integration of information from a wide range of linguistic sources (i.e., phonetic, syntactic, and semantic) to comprehend a contextually appropriate utterance that reveals a speaker's intentions and attitude.

While this study does not aim at confirming or rejecting the universality of conversational implicature, research respondents' better performance in answering the questions about CI can suggest that, second language learners' existing knowledge assisted them more in dealing with questions about CI rather than presupposition.

#### **4.10 Interpretation of Neutral Responses**

One concern among researchers about having midpoints on a Likert scale is the effects of the midpoints on the reliability and validity of measurements. Generally, the supporters of using a midpoint claim that the midpoints can increase the reliability of measurement. For example, Courtenay and Weidemann (1985) assess the effects of midpoint answers ("don't know") to the Palmore's Facts on Aging quizzes (FAQ) and conclude that the midpoint answers tend to enhance the reliability of FAQ. Another study conducted by Adelson and McCoach (2010) present similar findings. In that study, Adelson and McCoach compared the response pattern of elementary students who responded a mathematics attitudes instrument with a 4-point Likert scale with another group of elementary students who responded the same instrument but the scaling had an additional neutral point. The study shows that the scale including a neutral midpoint might be more appropriate for elementary students than the 4-point scale, because the reliability of the 5-point scale was statistically and significantly higher than the reliability of the 4-point scale.

On the other hand, some researchers argue that the high reliability may be resulted from the response set (Cronbach, 1950), especially the tendency to choose the midpoint options. Weems and Onwuegbuzie (2001) conduct three studies to show that there was a high rate of midpoint choices among their samples. This to some extent implies response set to the midpoints exist. Different from the findings found by the supporters of midpoints, the

response set in Weems and Onwuegbuzie's studies seems to attenuate the reliability rather than enhance it (Weems & Onwuegbuzie, 2001). In this sense, midpoints are not necessary to benefit the internal consistence of measurements. Nevertheless, some researchers argue that the use of reliability as a criterion to judge the merit of midpoints is inappropriate (Chang, 1994). As Cronbach (1950, p.22) already notes, "there is no merit in enhancing test reliability unless validity is enhanced at least proportionately." In other words, validity should be a better criterion than reliability (Chang, 1994). Some studies evaluate the impacts of midpoints on measurement validity. However, the findings are also contradictory. For instance, some studies find that the construct validity may not be influenced by the midpoints (Adelson & McCoach, 2010; Kulas, Stachowski, & Haynes, 2008), but some researchers suggest the omission of the midpoints may impair the validity (Johns, 2005).

One possible reason explaining such contradictory findings is that the reliability and validity may be independent of the number of scale points, including the use or not use of midpoints, on Likert scale (Dawes, 2001a; Matell & Jacoby, 1971). Another possible explanation is that there are other factors mediating the relation of the use of midpoints to the measurement of reliability and validity, such as respondents' response style (Clarke, 2001; Lee, Jones, Mineyama, & Zhang, 2002; Wong, Tam & Fung, 1993) and reverse coding (Weems & Onwuegbuzie, 2001).

Respondents might choose a neutral response because they do not want to exert the cognitive effort to form an opinion. This tendency should be more frequent for respondents who are less motivated or questions that are less salient and thus require more effort. For example, Shoemaker, Eichholz and Skewes (2002) showed that the proportion of 'don't know' responses was correlated with the degree of cognitive effort required by opinion survey items. Baumgartner and Steenkamp (2001)

proposed respondents might choose a middle category such as neutral "due to evasiveness . . . indecision . . . or indifference" (p. 145).

Among the 24 questions used in this survey, 5 questions did not attract any neutral answers, while the majority of them (4 out of 5) were about conversational implicature and only one was about presupposition. The table below demonstrates questions that did not attract any neutral response in this study.

(28)

Question number	Category	Subcategory	Correct Response (%)
Question 5	CI	Maxim of Manner	80%
Question 15	CI	Maxim of Quantity	98%
Question 21	CI	Maxim of Relevance	96%
Question 22	CI	Maxim of Relevance	100%
Question 23	Presupposition	Particle (too)	94%

Questions with no neutral answers

Regardless of the category of these five questions, what is common among all of them is that, these 5 questions that did not generate any neutral responses, had a high percentage of correct responses too. Among the 24 questions in this study, question 22 was the only item that generated 100% correct answers. Also, question 23 led to the highest correct response among all questions about presupposition. Thus, it can be said that those questions that were not found difficult by respondents did not generate neutral answer as well. Moreover, out of 5 questions with no neutral response, 4 of them were about CI. If we interpret the choice of neutral response as a sign of uncertainty, therefore, it can be concluded that respondents were more certain when answering the questions about CI rather than presupposition.

The table below demonstrates the questions that generated the highest number of neutral responses.

(29)

Question Number	Category	Subcategory	Number of Neutral Response	Correct Response (%)
Question 4	Presupposition	Implicative verb (managed to)	6	16%
Question 6	Presupposition	Conventional Implicature (but)	4	20%
Question 8	Presupposition	Conventional Implicature	4	88%
Question 9	Presupposition	Quantifier (no)	6	64%
Question 14	Presupposition	Factive Verb (regret)	4	58%
Question 20	Presupposition	Factive Verb (realise)	4	42%

Questions with the highest number of neutral response

As it can be seen, all six questions with the highest number of neutral answer were about presupposition. This comes as no surprise when we can observe that the number of correct responses to these questions is low as well (apart from question 8 which generated 88% of correct responses). The higher number of neutral responses to questions about presupposition indicates that when answering these questions, respondents found them harder to choose a definite answer and simply decided to remain neutral.

One of the questions that led to the highest number of neutral response (6) and the lowest correct response (16%) is question number 4 which targets the knowledge of the implicative verb of 'managed to'. The verb 'managed to' as a lexical trigger presupposes that, despite a difficulty associated with an activity, the attempts were made and the activity was fulfilled. Nevertheless, this study indicates that only few number of respondents (8 out of 50) responded correctly to this question. Other lexical triggers like *realise*, *regret* and *but* generated similar results and created higher number of neutral responses.

#### 4.11 Interpretation of Responses in Likert Scale: Agree vs. Strongly Agree

While the inclusion or omission of a midpoint has been debated by many researchers using Likert scale and some have supported and others have rejected the use of a neutral answer (refer to part 4.10, page 187), there has not been enough discussion on the interpretation of the difference between choosing a correct answer with a low level of certainty (agree/disagree) or the correct answer with a high level of certainty (strongly agree/strongly disagree). Therefore, both answers have been treated equally when interpreting the data acquired through the use of Likert scale and there has not been any major attempt to differentiate the correct answers with different levels of certainty.

The table below illustrates the questions in which the number of strongly agree/strongly disagree were higher than agree/disagree.

(30)

Question no.	Category	Correct Answer	Total number of correct answers	Distribution of correct answers (A/SA) or (D/SD)	Correct Response (%)
2	P	A/SA	45	8/37	90%
3	CI	A/SA	46	6/40	92%
7	CI	A/SA	42	8/34	84%
8	P	A/SA	44	11/33	88%
16	P	D/SD	42	14/28	84%
17	CI	D/SD	47	8/39	94%
19	CI	A/SA	39	15/24	78%
21	CI	D/SD	48	9/39	96%
22	CI	A/SA	50	9/41	100%
23	P	A/SA	47	2/45	94%
24	P	D/SD	36	8/28	72%

Questions with higher number of strongly agree/strongly disagree response

‘P’ stands for presupposition

‘CI’ stands for conversational implicature

‘A’ stands for Agree

‘D’ stands for Disagree

‘SA’ stands for Strongly Agree

‘SD’ stands for Strongly Disagree

From 24 questions used in this study, in 11 questions the number of correct responses with high certainty (strongly agree/strongly disagree) was bigger than the answers with low certainty (agree/disagree). The majority of these questions (6) are about CI, while the rest (5) are about presupposition. As it is demonstrated above, the common point in all these questions is the high number of correct responses. The lowest percentage of correct answer which is 72% and is targeting the knowledge of presupposition is still 10% higher than the average of correct response to all twelve questions about presupposition. Here the average of correct response to six questions about CI is 90.66% which is higher than the total average of correct response to all twelve questions about CI which is 84.50%. Also, the average of correct response to these five questions about presupposition which is 85.60% is much higher than the total average of correct answers to all twelve questions about presupposition which is 62.83%. Considering this significant difference which is common in both groups of questions, it can be concluded that questions that were found easier by respondents received more correct response with a higher level of certainty. In other words, respondents were more confident answering these questions that they chose the answer with a higher level of certainty. Thus, it can be said that there is a positive correlation between total correct responses and the number of answers with a higher level of certainty. On the contrary, questions that received less correct answers from respondents had lower number of answers with a higher level of certainty as well. For example, in question number four which is about



the presupposition and received the least number of correct responses among all questions (only 16% answered correctly to this question), only one out of eight correct responses was an answer with a high level of certainty (strongly disagree).

#### **4.12 Presentation of Collected Data from DCT**

In line with the data gathered from the questionnaire developed in this study about the respondents' knowledge of CI and presupposition, the DCT developed by Beebe et al. (1990) which is about the speech act of refusal has been used as well. The use of DCT in study was only to demonstrate the drawbacks of this instrument to measure pragmatic competence when collecting and interpreting the data.

To collect the data, only the study group took this test and the responses from 37 American native speakers from another study carried out by Allami & Naeimi (2010) are used to review the study group's responses. The collected data were coded based on the taxonomy of refusals developed by Beebe et al. (1990). This DCT provides twelve various situations in which two people with either different or similar status are involved. As shown below, the findings of this study demonstrates the difference in performing the speech act of refusal in two cultures, Iranian and American. Nonetheless, this DCT has been widely used in last two decades by researchers to measure the notion of pragmatic competence in the TL, and the different strategies employed by non-native speakers to those by native speakers has been related to their formers' lack of pragmatic competence.

(31)

Formulas	50 Iranian NNS's			37 American NS's		
	Higher status	Equal status	Lower status	Higher status	Equal status	Lower status
Direct Refusal	34	94	16	89	100	24
Regret	24	30	4	4	0	0
Criticise	0	16	20	0	0	0
Hesitation	0	0	0	0	0	0
St. Empathy	0	0	0	0	0	0
Pause fillers	6	8	10	2	8	2
St. Solidarity	24	4	0	0	0	0
Excuse, Reason	74	48	22	60	35	84
Wish	8	0	0	0	0	0
Set condition	0	12	14	0	0	0
Request	0	16	4	0	0	0
Gratitude	0	60	6	36	76	6
Elaboration	0	0	6	0	0	0
St. Pos. opinion	14	8	2	0	0	0
Hedging	0	0	16	0	0	0
Joke	0	0	0	0	0	0
St. Frankness	0	0	0	0	0	0
Topic switch	0	0	0	0	0	0
Saying I tried	0	0	0	0	0	0
Let off the hook	0	0	86	0	0	94
St. Alternative	24	2	0	3	3	5

Data collected through DCT (% of each group that used the given formula)

The table above demonstrates the frequency and shift of semantic formulas used by NSs and NNSs while refusing an offer. The collected data suggests different strategies used by Iranian English learners to those by American native speakers.

However, for the purpose of using DCT to measure pragmatic competence, I do not recommend it for the following reasons:

Firstly, DCTs are only designed to demonstrate the different strategies that are employed by native (NS) and non-native speakers (NNS) while using speech acts like refuse or request, not to measure the knowledge of speech acts. However, they still fail to achieve their goal as not

every difference between a strategy used by a NNS and NS could be interpreted as a deviation from the norm by NNS. For example, an analysis of the above table shows that Iranian native speakers used 'regret' as a strategy when declining an offer which is in contrast to those by the Americans. While only 4% of Americans used 'regret' when refusing an offer from a person with a higher status, this figure rose to 24% among Iranians. Also, unlike Americans who did not use this strategy when refusing an offer from somebody with an equal or lower status, these figures among Iranians were 30% and 4% respectively. This significant difference between NSs and NNSs of English when refusing an offer refers to the way the concept is viewed in two different cultures. Among Iranians, declining an offer can be sometimes interpreted as being impolite, and using 'regret' as a softening strategy can help to minimise this impact. Therefore, such differences are sometimes cultural and it cannot be seen and interpreted as the lack of pragmatic competence among NNSs of English.

Secondly, another issue with the DCTs is that they ignore the significance of contextual factors which play a vital role in the strategies that we use when we need to refuse or accept an invitation. In our interactions in L1, we may respond differently to the same question uttered by the same person in two different occasions, simply because we didn't like his/her facial expression when asking us the question. Therefore, one day we may use an apology to turn down an invitation, while the other day we may employ a direct refusal since we were not impressed with the way that the invitation was made. Unfortunately, such an important issue which is associated with DCTs affects the validity of the collected data and this should be considered by researchers who are interested to carry out studies in cross-cultural or interlanguage pragmatics.

Thirdly, the time that was allocated to respondents to answer to the questionnaire developed in this study with 24 questions and the DCT by Beebe et al. (1990) with 12 questions was equal, and respondents were given 30 minutes to respond to each test. However, around two

third of respondents finished the questionnaire in less than 25 minutes which was in contrast to several respondents who took longer than 30 minutes to finish the DCT. To answer the questions on DCT, respondents are asked to complete the task by writing down their response. This makes the process of responding longer as respondents become more occupied about writing a sentence without any grammatical mistake rather than what they think might be the best response in that context.

Fourthly, the feedback that I received from my respondents who took both tests was that they found the DCT harder to respond. They stated that they would prefer to take a test with multiple-choice answers or based on Likert scale rather than open-ended questions.

Finally, the majority of respondents had at least one or two sentences that were grammatically incorrect. The question is, how we can interpret those grammatically incorrect responses when trying to address their pragmatic knowledge? Can we simply ignore them or they should be considered as well. Unfortunately, this is another issue when using DCT for the purpose of measuring pragmatic competence which has not been addressed so far.

The DCT developed by Beebe et al. (1990) might have been primarily designed to indicate the semantic formulas that are used by native and non-native speakers when refusing an offer, but a number of researchers have used the original or the modified version of it to measure the knowledge of speech acts of refusal among second language learners, and in many cases the collected data has been generalised to decide on the knowledge of pragmatics competence of the respondents. As shown in this study, DCT is not designed for this purpose and researchers may need to reconsider applying it to measure the knowledge of speech acts. Moreover, DCT involves the learners' linguistic knowledge to a large extent and cannot explore the respondent's pragmatic knowledge independent of his/her linguistic knowledge.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Teaching Pragmatics in EFL

#### 5.1 Introduction

The lack of pragmatic competence in the TL has inspired many researchers to study the impact of teaching pragmatics in EFL classrooms. These studies have led to the introduction of a number of teaching methodologies and techniques to improve the pragmatic competence among EFL learners. However, these methodologies and pedagogies are mainly based on the assumption that the whole area of pragmatics is simply teachable as syntax and semantics are, and without realising that there are certain aspects of the concept of pragmatics that cannot be taught in any language classroom. Considering this misunderstanding about the essence of pragmatics, it seems beneficial to modify these theories and methodologies as they can only address parts of this notion not the whole territory of pragmatic competence in the TL. The clarification of the issues that are associated with teaching pragmatic competence can help both teachers and learners. For example, instead of focusing on the whole area of pragmatics, teachers only target those teachable aspects of this concept in the language classrooms. Also, learners will be not be expected to achieve a native-like pragmatic competence in the target language through attending language lessons.

The first part of this chapter will provide a short history on teaching pragmatics in the literature. Then, two main theories in teaching pragmatics domain including Schmidt's noticing hypothesis and Bialystok's two-dimensional model of L2 proficiency development which have been used as the basis of many pedagogies in this area will be reviewed and analysed. This will contribute to demonstrate their weaknesses in addressing the notion of pragmatic competence. This section will be followed by discussing the teachable and non-teachable aspects of pragmatics in order to distinguish their differences. Then, general issues

that are associated with teaching pragmatics and play a vital role in the success or failure of teaching methodologies will be discussed. Finally, some techniques that can be used to teach those teachable aspects of pragmatics in EFL classrooms will be introduced.

## **5.2 Teaching Pragmatics**

After the introduction of communicative competence models (Canale & Swain, 1980; Bachman, 1990; Bachman & Palmer, 1996), there was a major shift in the view of second language learning, as the mastery of linguistic knowledge of the second language was no longer considered to be enough and the acquisition of functional abilities and social use of language became a crucial notion in second language theories and pedagogies. Since then, pragmatic competence has become an integral part of proficiency in TL and there have been many studies which stressed the significance role of pragmatic competence in TL interaction. Consequently, this has resulted in a large body of literature on teaching the pragmatics of the TL.

According to advocates, teaching pragmatics aims to facilitate the learners' sense of being able to find socially appropriate language for the situations that they encounter. Today, 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 a large number of publications on this topic since 2000 that describe instructional methods and learning opportunities in the classroom (Alcon-Soler & Martinez-Flor, 2008; Martinez-Flor & Alcon-Soler, 2005; Martinez-Flor, Uso-Juan, & Fernandez-Guerra, 2003; Rose & Kasper, 2001; Taguchi, 2009; Yoshimi & Wang, 2007). Moreover, there are several teachers' guides and resource books with ready-made lesson plans and teaching tips for teaching

pragmatics as well (Bardovi- Harlig & Mahan-Taylor, 2003; Houck & Tatsuki, 2011; Ishihara & Cohen, 2010; Ishihara & Maeda, 2010; Tatsuki & Houck, 2010).

An early call by Kasper (1997) titled “Can Pragmatic Competence Be Taught?” inspired many researchers to explore the ways that formal instruction could be translated to the area of socio-cultural and socio-linguistic abilities. Pioneering studies that were generated in the 1990s showed that most aspects of pragmatics are amenable to instruction, meaning that instruction is better than non-instruction for pragmatic development (see Kasper & Rose, 1999; Rose, 2005). Once the benefits of instruction were introduced, this field evolved around the question of ‘What is the best instructional method for teaching pragmatic competence?’ Inspired by this question, a number of instructional intervention studies were carried out to explore the effects of certain teaching methods over others by measuring the degree of learning from pre- to post-instruction (Kasper, 2001; Kasper & Roever, 2005; Martinez-Flor & Alcon-Soler, 2005; Roever, 2009).

Studies on the effect of instruction in pragmatics support the idea that explicit teaching is more effective in helping learners develop their TL pragmatic competence in comparison with implicit teaching or lack of instruction (Kasper, 2001; Takahashi, 2001; Tateyama, 2001; Yoshimi, 2001). Rose and Kwai-fun (2001) compared the effect of deductive and inductive teaching in the development of pragmatic competence and they concluded that both types of instruction had a positive impact on developing pragmalinguistic proficiency; however, only the deductive instruction was effective in the acquisition of sociopragmatic features.

In recent years, the supporters of teaching pragmatics in EFL classrooms have carried out several studies and there has been an increasing body of empirical studies on the effectiveness of instruction in the development of pragmatic knowledge dealing with

discourse markers (House & Kasper, 1981), pragmatic routines (Tateyama, 2001), conversational structure and management (Myers-Scotton & Bernstein, 1988), conversational closings (Bardovi-Harlig et al, 1991), pragmatic fluency (House, 1996), requests (Hasaal, 1997), apologies (Olshtain & Cohen, 1990), compliments (Manes & Wolfson, 1981; Holmes & Brown, 1987; Rose & Kwai-fun, 2001), complaints and refusals (Morrow, 1996). According to these researchers, the results acquired from most of these studies are promising with regard to the positive effect of pedagogical intervention, supporting the view that instruction of pragmatics can facilitate the development of EFL learners' pragmatic competence (Kasper & Rose, 2002; Bacelar da Silva, 2003; Martínez-Flor & Fukuya, 2005). Research in the field of teaching pragmatics is mainly dominated by comparing two types of teaching, explicit or implicit. Schmidt (1993) refers to implicit teaching as non-conscious generalisation from examples. As argued by Schmidt (1993), the general phenomenon of implicit learning has been well-established in the psychological literature and is viewed as a natural product of attending to structured input (Hartman, Knopman, & Nissen, 1989; Reber, 1989). Schmidt (1993, p. 26) further continues that "there is a gathering consensus within psychology that the mechanisms of implicit learning probably involve the strengthening and weakening of connections between nodes in complex networks as the result of experience, rather than through the unconscious induction of rules abstracted from data". Also, Brown (2007, p 291) refers to implicit learning as "learning without conscious attention or awareness". This process involves exposing learners to various input and they deduce underlying content, rules, and in the case of speech acts, their appropriate production and use during communication events. The underlying assumption therefore is that, learners' interaction in these different communication events will encourage critical analyses of the process of verbal interactions and the use of speech acts in particular, and the results will be applied by the learners in their own language behaviour. One method of implicitly instructing



in the classroom for speech act development, which is also highly recommended by researchers like, Liu & Ding (2009), Atieh et al. (2014) is role play. According to these researchers, this activity facilitates L2 students' movement from being learners to active users of the language.

In contrast, explicit learning, that is, “conscious problem solving” (Schmidt, 1993, p.27), relies on different mechanisms, including attempts to form mental representations, searching memory for related knowledge and forming and testing hypotheses (Mathews, Buss, Stanley, Blanchard-Field, Cho & Druhan, 1989; Johnson-Laird, 1983). Explicit instruction involves formalised content where main tenets of a subject are portioned into discrete units and learners are taken through these units. In pragmatics, explicit instruction would involve instruction in the many diverse aspects inclusive in pragmatic competence –theoretical and applied language studies. Both implicit learning and explicit learning have particular strengths. Implicit learning appears to be superior for the learning of fuzzy patterns based on perceptual similarities and the detection of non-salient covariance between variables, while explicit learning is superior when a domain contains rules that are based on logical relationships rather than perceptual similarities (Mathews et al., 1989).

While explicit or implicit teaching of pragmatics has been the core of many studies, the reality is that the majority of them only refer to speech acts like requests (Hasaal, 1997), apologies (Olshtain & Cohen, 1990), compliments (Manes & Wolfson, 1981; Holmes & Brown, 1987; Rose & Kwai-fun, 2001), complaints and refusals (Morrow, 1996), rather than other areas like conversational implicatures; nevertheless, they claim to provide a teaching methodology for pragmatics. Moreover, the majority of the existing teaching models only address the area of speech acts. For example, Olshtain and Cohen (1991, p. 161-62) introduced five steps (diagnostic assessment, model dialogue, evaluation of the situation, role-play activities, and feedback and discussion) to teach the speech acts of declining an

invitation and reprimanding. On the other hand, the literature on teaching implicature in TL does not offer much and it is limited to studies carried out by Bouton (1988, 1994a), Lee (2002) and Taguchi (2002, 2009). These studies have documented that conversational implicature in the second language is mastered slowly unless it is explicitly taught and that formal instruction can facilitate the learning of most types of conversational implicature (Bouton, 1988, 1994a; Lee, 2002; Taguchi, 2002, 2009). While implicatures are an important aspect of pragmatics that play a significant role in our daily conversations, it seems that there is a major gap in research about the teachability of implicatures in EFL domain. Among the existing studies, Taguchi's works have focused on the comprehension of implicature, while Bouton carried out a study to determine whether focused instruction in the EFL classroom could speed the progress of the NNS attempting to interpret implicature or not. He reported a positive correlation between focused instruction of implicature and the speed of interpretation especially when the instruction is focused on the more formulaic implicatures. Bouton (1994a) provides us with a procedure as how to address conversational implicature in an advanced EFL classroom:

- (a) Introduction of each type of implicature with the label, definition and several examples for each;
- (b) Discussion of new examples of implicature:
  - Identification of the implicature;
  - Explanation of how literal meaning did not hold and how the implicature was detected;
  - Identification of what is actually implied in the messages;
  - Illustration of learners' experiences with implicature;
  - Identification of similar implicatures in learners' L1s;
- (c) Group work creating dialogues containing implicature; and
- (d) Analysis of new examples of implicature provided by the teacher or by the learners (p.102).

Bouton (1994a) goes on to elaborate that the suggested interventional procedure above would take approximately six hours of instruction, which can be spread over several weeks. He recommends that after the instruction (steps 1–3) is implemented, step 4 could be drawn upon as an occasional warm-up of a regular class time. Learners take advantage of a discussion as to whom the appropriate recipients of a message with a given implicature would be, such as whether a message with a certain type of implicature tends to be more or less appropriate for higher-status or equal-status conversational partners. Bouton (1999) makes a demarcation between idiosyncratic implicature and formulaic implicature. Idiosyncratic implicatures are those based on violations of Grice's relevance maxim. Formulaic implicatures, on the contrary, have typical structural or semantic features, such as POPE Q (Is the Pope Catholic?). Bouton (1990) defines four subtypes of idiosyncratic implicature:

- (a) Relevance general, that refers to responses that violate the Maxim of Relation.
- (b) Relevance evaluation, which is related to the responses which are given to evaluation.
- (c) Relevance disclosure, that deals with the responses to disclose oneself.
- (d) Relevance change, which is related to the responses that totally change the topic.

While Bouton (1990) made the first attempt to introduce a procedure to teach implicatures in EFL classrooms, this concept has not generated enough interest among other researchers in last two decades and there has not been any further progress from Bouton's initial teaching model, nor any analysis on the practicality of this method. One of the reasons behind the lack of research in this area could be the difficulties that are associated with teaching pragmatics in the TL as the mechanism of mastering pragmatics, even in L1, is not as clear as other more tangible aspects of language like syntax and semantics.

Bouton's classification of implicatures is open to criticism, since it does not cover the whole area of implicatures and out of Grice's four Maxims, only the Maxim of Relevance is chosen

while other Maxims have not been included in this classification. Bouton has focused on some aspects of conversational implicature rather than referring to the whole area of conversational implicature. Also, the teaching model that he presents only emphasises on certain kinds of conversational implicature like what he calls the ‘formulaic implicature’ and the ‘idiosyncratic implicatures’. While for the former he refers to the Pope Questions, irony and metaphor, for the latter he only states the violation of the Maxim of Relevance and does not include Grice’s other Maxims.

### **5.3 Theories of Teaching Pragmatics**

Current teaching methodologies in EFL that focus on the inclusion of pragmatic competence of the TL, not only the grammatical aspects have been mainly influenced by the following two theories introduced by Schmidt and Bialystok respectively. Presenting a discussion on each of these two theories can contribute to a better understanding of them and their strengths and weaknesses.

#### **5.3.1 Schmidt’s Noticing Hypothesis**

One of the most influential SLA theories that has provided 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. Schmidt (2001) argues that “noticing intercultural communication requires of the learner a conscious apprehension and awareness of input”, and “while there is subliminal perception, there is no subliminal learning” (p. 26). Schmidt (1995) also distinguishes ‘noticing’ from ‘understanding’, as he believes that the former refers to the “conscious

registration of the occurrence of some event”, which is “surface level phenomena and item learning”, whereas the latter “implies the recognition of some general principle, rule, or pattern”, which is a “deeper level of abstraction related to (semantic, syntactic, or communicative) meaning, system learning” (1995, p. 29). He points out, “in order to acquire pragmatics, one must attend to both the linguistic forms of utterances and the relevant social and contextual features with which they are associated” (p.30). That is to say, learners acquire pragmatic competence by consciously paying attention to linguistic form, pragmalinguistic function and socio-pragmatic constraints. To clarify his point, he argues:

In pragmatics, awareness that on a particular occasion someone says to their interlocutor something like, ‘I’m terribly sorry to bother you, but if you have time could you look at this problem?’ is a matter of noticing. Relating the various forms used to their strategic deployment in the service of politeness and recognising their concurrence with elements of context such as social distance, power, level of imposition and so on, are all matters of understanding (Schmidt, 1995, p. 30).

According to Schmidt (1993, 2001) the concept of attention is necessary in order to understand virtually every aspect of second language acquisition, including the development of interlanguages over time. He differentiates ‘attention’ from ‘awareness’ as he believes that former is a mechanism that controls the access to the latter.

My intention is to separate ‘noticing’ from ‘metalinguistic awareness’ as clearly as possible, by assuming that the objects of attention and noticing are elements of the surface structure of utterances in the input, instances of language, rather than any abstract rules or principles of which such instances may be exemplars. Although statements about learners “noticing [i.e., becoming aware of] the structural regularities of a language” are perfectly fine in ordinary language, these imply comparisons across instances and metalinguistic reflection (thinking about what has been attended and noticed, forming hypotheses, and so forth), much more

than is implied by the restricted sense of noticing used here (Schmidt, 2001, p. 4).

The role of attention is mostly emphasised in cognitive accounts of second language development, especially those that are strongly psycholinguistic in approach (Bialystok, 1994; Carr & Curran, 1994; N. Ellis, 1994b, 1994c, 1996a; R. Ellis, 1996; Gass, 1988, 1997a; Hatch, 1983; Pienemann, 1989; Pienemann & Johnston, 1987; Robinson, 1995; Kehan, 1998; Swain, 1993, 1995). Most studies targeting the role of attention in second language development concentrate exclusively on morphology and syntax; however, a few have dealt with lexical learning (N. Ellis, 1994b) and pragmatic development (Bialystok, 1993; Schmidt, 1993b).

### **5.3.2 Bialystok's Two-dimensional Model of L2 Proficiency Development**

Different from the Noticing Hypothesis which accounts for initial input selection, Bialystok's two-dimensional model of the TL proficiency development, as was suggested by Kasper and Rose (1999), "explains the development of already available knowledge along the dimensions of analysed representation and control of processing" (p. 14). Bialystok claimed that TL learners have two separate tasks to complete. One is that representations of pragmatic knowledge must be formed, and the other is that control must be gained over processing, i.e., declarative knowledge must be developed into procedural knowledge. Studies of interlanguage pragmatic use and development consistently demonstrate that adult learners rely on universal or L1-based pragmatic knowledge (Kasper & Schmidt, 1996; Kasper & Rose, 2002; Bardovi-Harlig, 2001). That is to say, adult TL learners have largely completed the task of developing analytic representations of pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic knowledge. What requires more effort of the adult learners is to gain control over the selection of knowledge. However, there is no guarantee that learners will spontaneously use

these resources. Bialystok argued that slow and inefficient retrieval of pragmatic knowledge is the primary reason for learners' use of pragmatically inappropriate L2 utterances. Hence, teachers can step in to help adult learners gain control over their already existing pragmatic foundations. According to Bialystok (1993), instructions also help adult learners to develop new representations of pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic knowledge not existing in their L1, by means of instruction, including input exposure to pragmatic realisations, discussions of the meta-pragmatic knowledge underlying communicative action, and engagement in communicative activities where learners can practice using the linguistic knowledge they have acquired.

As it has been argued by both Schmidt and Bialystok in their theories, pragmatics is an area which can be developed through either explicit or implicit instruction in language classrooms. Therefore, regardless of their various approaches to teaching pragmatics, both agree on the fact that pragmatic competence is a teachable notion which can be developed among EFL learners like linguistic competence, and we can expect them to acquire a native-like competence in the pragmatics of the TL through either explicit or implicit teaching. However, to understand some aspects of pragmatics, learners require to be equipped with some characteristics like reasoning ability which cannot be developed or taught in any language classroom. Therefore, considering the fact that pragmatics is not a complete teachable area of language, it is simplistic to expect EFL learners to achieve a native-like pragmatic competence in the TL in language classrooms.

#### **5.4 What is teachable and what is not teachable?**

One of the main research objectives has been the clarification of the concept of teaching pragmatics in the TL. Unfortunately, the majority of the existing teaching methodologies do

not differentiate between various aspects of pragmatics as they simply find the whole area teachable. Therefore, it is essential to distinguish the teachable aspects of pragmatics from those non-teachable ones. Making such a distinction is very important as it can contribute to the further development of teaching pragmatics in the TL in several ways. For instance, instead of referring to all aspects of pragmatics in EFL classrooms or including whatever is known as pragmatics in teaching materials, teachers only need to focus on what is really teachable. This will increase the efficiency in language classrooms as teachers only spend their time and energy on what can be taught. Since conversational implicatures have been the core of this study, it makes sense to start this discussion by referring to them.

Knowledge of common forms of implicature is acquired along with one's native language at an early age. Implicature denotes either the act of meaning or implying one thing by saying something else, or the object of that act. They can be part of sentence meaning or dependent on conversational context, and can be conventional (in different senses) or unconventional. Implicature serves a variety of goals beyond communication including maintaining good social relations, being indirect for different purposes, misleading without lying, style, and verbal efficiency. Therefore, they are an important part of our daily interactions and can guarantee our success or cause our failure in communications. As discussed earlier, teaching pragmatics has been the core of many studies and researchers have introduced different teaching methodologies for teaching pragmatics in classrooms; although, it can be argued that, when they talk about teaching pragmatics, they are only referring to parts of this realm not the whole territory of pragmatics. In order to clarify the point that the whole area of pragmatics is not teachable, I refer to generalised and particularised conversational implicatures.

According to Grice, there are some conversational implicatures which arise without requiring any particular contextual conditions and those which need those conditions. Grice called the



first kind generalised conversational implicatures (GCIs) and the second kind particularised conversational implicatures (PCIs), meaning that the former has a very general currency and the interpretation can go through without needing any particular context, while the latter in contrast depends crucially on its linguistic context. We consider the following examples to show the difference of these two kinds of conversational implicature.

(1) Generalised conversational implicature (GCIs):

Most of Bill's friends attended his birthday party.

>> Not all of Bill's friends attended his birthday party.

(2) Particularised conversational implicature (PCIs):

Jack: I have not seen Joe for a while?

Mary: I could hear the music from his room earlier on today.

>> Joe is in his room.

In example (1), we have a very general currency. Any utterance of the form 'Most x are Y' will have the default meaning that 'Not all x are Y'. This interpretation does not need any particular context (see Ariel, 2004 for detailed explanations about the word, *most*). So, this implicature is linguistic-dependent and can be considered in any context as the presence of 'most' is enough to identify this conversational implicature. On the other hand, the implicature in example (2) depends crucially on the context it is happening in and without that context, we will not have such an implicature to consider. Looking more closely at example (2), it can be seen that this implicature depends on the listener's reasoning ability rather than his/her linguistic knowledge. In this example, by referring to hearing music from Joe's room, Mary is trying to convey this message that, Joe must be in his room. To

understand this conveyed message, Jack needs his reasoning ability rather than his linguistic knowledge. Here, if we do not consider Jack's initial remark (I have not seen Joe for a while?), Mary's response could be interpreted differently. To demonstrate that PCIs are heavily context-dependent, I have listed some possible interpretations in the absence of Jack's remark.

(3) Mary: I could hear the music from his room earlier on today.

>> He plays the music really loud.

>> He likes to listen to music.

>> I was passing by his room earlier on today.

Considering this feature of PCIs, it can be argued that they are hard to be taught as they are not linguistic and may vary in different contexts. While, awareness of the cultural norms of the TL may contribute to the hearer to make the correct reasoning to understand the conveyed message, the ability to reason is the main criterion needed to realise these implicatures. Therefore, any attempt at teaching PCIs to EFL learners in language classrooms seems to be a waste of time and energy for both teachers and students.

The story for presuppositions is different as there is a degree of conventionality which is usually associated with them. Here, awareness raising activities can contribute to language learners to identify the presuppositions (this has been discussed further in the following sections). Another point which makes the teaching of presupposition easier is the limited number of presupposition triggers in English. Consequently, teachers have less difficulty to cover the lexical triggers in language lessons.

## **5.5 Decisive Factors affecting Pragmatic Competence in the TL**

Even if we accept that the whole area of pragmatics is simply teachable like other areas of linguistics, there are still some factors in the territory of pragmatics which have a major impact on the learners' success or failure in acquiring pragmatic competence in the TL. Factors like the distinction between pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics, culture, the learning environment, linguistic proficiency, pragmatic input and pragmatic transfer, which are introduced and explained below, cannot be ignored when making any attempt at improving the pragmatic competence whether via instructions or any other teaching techniques. Each of them can play a vital role in acquiring pragmatic competence in the TL, and may either act as a facilitator or a barrier for EFL learners to achieve the required level of pragmatic competence.

### **5.5.1 The Distinction between Pragmalinguistics and Sociopragmatics**

As argued by Trosborg (2010), the distinction between pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic aspects of communication is an important one for both learners and teachers since both aspects must be considered in learning or teaching a language. Leech (1983) and Thomas (1983) were among the first researchers who differentiated between two aspects of pragmatics, pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics. According to Kasper and Rose (2001), pragmalinguistics is the linguistic resources available for conveying communicative acts and performing pragmatic functions. The resources "include pragmatic strategies such as directness and indirectness, routines, and a large range of linguistic forms which can intensify or soften communicative acts" (p. 2). In other words, as Kasper and Roever (2005) state, pragmalinguistics focuses on the intersection of pragmatics and linguistic forms and comprises the knowledge and ability for the use of conventions of meanings and conventions of forms. Sociopragmatics is the interface of sociology and pragmatics and refers to "the

social perceptions underlying participants' interpretation and performance of communicative action" (Kasper & Rose, 2001, p. 2). As Kasper and Roever (2005) assert, sociopragmatics encompasses the knowledge of the relationships between communicative action and power, social distance, imposition, and the social conditions and consequences of what you do, when, and to whom.

On the importance of each aspect, Liu (2004) states that pragmalinguistic failure relates to a linguistic deficiency "caused by differences in the linguistic encoding of pragmatic force", while socio-pragmatic failure results from a lack of sociocultural knowledge and "cross-culturally different perceptions of what constitutes appropriate linguistic behaviour" (p. 16). Moreover, according to Roever (2009, p. 560), "pragmalinguistic knowledge incorporates the linguistic tools necessary for implementing speech intentions, and relies crucially on general target language knowledge, while sociopragmatic knowledge encompasses knowledge of the social rules of language use, including knowledge of appropriateness, the meaning of situational and interlocutor factors, and social conventions and taboos".

Therefore, according to several researchers (Leech, 1983; Thomas, 1983; Liu, 2004; Roever, 2009) it is essential that both aspects of pragmatics are developed and employed in order to avoid pragmatic failure in social interactions with native speakers. According to Thomas (1983), while pragmalinguistics is, in a sense, akin to grammar in that it consists of linguistic forms and their respective functions, sociopragmatics is about appropriate social behaviour. For example, if a foreign language user has the sociopragmatic knowledge to understand that a polite request is needed in a context but does not have the pragmalinguistic knowledge of modals, interrogatives, and conventionalised formulae to utter it, pragmatic failure is likely to occur. On the other hand, a foreign language learner with good pragmalinguistic knowledge of the TL, but without knowing much about those rules of usage may generate well-structured utterances, but so non-conventional that creates similar results to those of the

former scenario. As stated by Rose & Kasper (2001), speech communities differ in their assessment of speakers' and hearers' social distance and social power, their rights and obligations, and the degree of imposition involved in particular communicative acts. In many cases, adult bilinguals with at least an intermediate proficiency in their TL appear to have fewer problems with pragmalinguistics than with sociopragmatics. For instance, Barron (2003) examined the development of Irish learners of German in producing the three speech acts of request, refusal and offer. It was found that the learners achieved great improvement in their pragmalinguistic competence, but little sociopragmatic development. There may be two reasons for this. First, classroom instruction usually focuses more on pragmalinguistics (see, for instance, Jeon & Kaya, 2006) than on sociopragmatics. Second, pragmalinguistics is about linguistic means expressing social functions.

Chang (2011) has asserted that the relationship between sociopragmatic competence and pragmalinguistic competence is a complex and interwoven one. Consequently, it is difficult to draw a clear boundary between them. Thus, any exploration of pragmatic variability should address the pragmalinguistic forms and strategies in relation to the sociopragmatic values and norms of language speakers. Recent studies (Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 1993; Barron, 2003; Rose, 2009) have mostly favoured the precedence of pragmalinguistics over sociopragmatics instead of dealing with the reciprocity of the two pragmatic levels. The preference of pragmalinguistics over sociopragmatics in teaching pragmatics can be related to the fact that the former is easier to focus in a language classroom as we simply deal with linguistic aspects of pragmatics which are more tangible than the latter in which we are concerned more with the non-linguistics aspects of it.

Nevertheless, when we talk about teaching pragmatics, we should include both aspects rather than just one of them. If we focus on pragmalinguistic aspects but fail to include sociopragmatics, then we cannot claim that we are teaching pragmatics as we are only

emphasising on some areas of pragmatics rather than the whole territory of it. On the difficulties of teaching these two aspects, Yates (2010) points out that these two aspects cannot be taught unless teachers almost consciously know how these facets of communicative acts are realised in various contexts of language use.

### **5.5.2 Language and Culture**

One of the main factors that can determine an EFL learner's success or failure while interacting with a NS is his/her degree of familiarity with the TL's cultural norms. Since its inception until the 1970s, the study of language was in the realm of linguistics and language teaching was about teaching linguistic structures. Nonetheless, the emergence of communicative language teaching opened the door for specialists from other areas like anthropology and sociology to enter into this area which led to the introduction of new notions to the domain of language learning. Moreover, the study of language as a discourse which was stressed by communicative competence theories, laid the foundation for the concept of culture to become an inseparable part of language. Language was no longer seen as a set of linguistic forms defined by linguists, but as a social phenomenon that could be affecting people and the context they belonged to, as well as to be affected by both factors. As stated by Kramsch (1998, p. 360), "The social turn in applied linguistics brought to the fore a vigorous interest in the cultural component of language study, based on a variety of research domains that have to do with the culture of language use in everyday life: discourse and conversation analysis, cross-cultural pragmatics, intercultural communication and intercultural learning".

The introduction of discourse analysis in the 1970s provided a new definition for culture and according to this new definition, culture could be found in the meaning that speakers and

listeners, writers and readers gave them through the discourse of verbal exchanges, newspaper articles or political speeches. To understand this kind of culture, one had to understand both the universal and the culture-specific constraints on language use in discourse.

Another related field that studies culture in action and is the main concern of this research is pragmatics, especially cross-cultural pragmatics (e.g. Blum-Kulka et al., 1989; Kasper, 2001). According to Blum-Kulka et al (1989), cross-cultural pragmatics studies the realisation of speech acts like requests and apologies in different cultural contexts, while Matsumoto (1989) refers to it as the cultural variations of the Gricean cooperative principle in conversation and Lakoff (1990) finds politeness strategies as cross-cultural pragmatics. But the truth is that, cross-cultural pragmatics as the word pragmatics suggests should address all aspects that are recognised as pragmatics, not only parts of pragmatics. Current research studies in this field of research focus on the exchanges between interlocutors from various cultural backgrounds, mostly in professional or institutional contexts, very often with unequal speaking rights.

Since the 1980s, intercultural communication (IC) has become a broad field of research, and in applied linguistics, it is mostly related to language education and professional language use. However, the field of intercultural communication is not a coherent area as it manifests itself differently in Europe and in the USA. In the USA, intercultural competence has often been associated with communication studies, and cross-cultural psychology, which do not give much attention to language per se. On the other hand, intercultural learning as a research area developed in Europe through the work of educational researchers like Hu (1999), Schmenk (2004) and Roche (2001) in Germany, and Byram (1997) in the UK who have tried to create a pedagogy based on intercultural communication to be used across Europe.

These three factors linked culture and language in many aspects and as Hymes (1996) states, today the learning of culture is an integral part of any and all language learning and education, because it crucially influences an individual's view of his or her place in the society, the success of everyday interactions, the norms of speaking and behaving, and the socio-cultural expectations of an individual's roles. He further notes that those who do not follow the norms of appropriateness accepted in a community are often placed in a position that exacerbates social disparities and inequality. Brown (1996) refers to the relationship between these two concepts as “a language is a part of a culture and a culture is part of a language; the two are intricately interwoven so that one cannot separate the two without losing the significance of either language or culture. The acquisition of a second language, except for specialised, instrumental acquisition, is also the acquisition of a second culture” (p. 165). Therefore, culture became an inseparable part of language and according to Byram (1989, p. 41), “The pedagogic separation of language from culture is thus justified in the sense that language can and does stand alone. (...) On the other hand, the tendency to treat language quite independently of the culture to which it constantly refers cannot be justified; it disregards the nature of language”. Today, one of the fundamental principles of cross-cultural communication is that, it is through culture that people communicate.

The significance of familiarity with and the awareness of the cultural features of the target language for a language learner further arises when he or she realises that “understanding the cultural context of language exchanges means knowing what is appropriate to say to whom, and in what situations, and it means understanding the beliefs and values represented by the various forms and usages of the language” (Peterson & Coltrane, 2003, p. 2). Therefore, the reason for most communication failure is that the underlying norms and assumptions of the cultures the two speakers come from may differ remarkably, and as House (2006) points out, miscommunications are attributed to the lack of culture-specific pragmatic knowledge



required in a circumstance. So, language learners whose cultural beliefs, norms, and perspectives have the most similarities with the cultural beliefs, norms, and perspectives of the target language speakers are supposed to better comprehend the culture-specific pragmatic knowledge of the target language expressions and texts and also to experience fewer communication failures in interactions with target language speakers than those language learners whose cultural beliefs, norms, and perspectives have the least similarities with the cultural beliefs, norms, and perspectives of the target language speakers.

As argued by Leech (1983), the universality of the Co-operative Principle has not been sustained because the Gricean maxims do not operate in the same manner in all communities. The fact that they may be utilised differently across cultures could make people from one society misinterpret implicatures used by those from another one. That is to say, cultures differ in the way they implement these principles in context and also in what they consider to be cooperative (Rose & Kasper, 2002) and therefore the usefulness of implicature as a conversational strategy in cross-cultural communication can be diminished (Bouton, 1999). For instance, in his cross-sectional study, Bouton (1988) concluded that the international second language learners differed in their interpretation of implicatures with respect to the native speakers and among themselves. More precisely, out of the six culture groups under study he found out that the Latin Americans occupied the second nearest position with respect to the Americans, who were the target group (Bouton, 1988).

While the fact that culture and language cannot be isolated from each other is not at question, the issue that arises from merging these two phenomena is that, when we talk about culture it is really difficult to indicate what we are actually referring to. Culture is an amorphous concept even in the most rigorous of theoretical discussions of intercultural communication and it is one of the hardest concepts to define. The National Centre for Cultural Competence has defined 'culture' as “integrated pattern of human behaviour that includes thoughts,

communications, languages, practices, beliefs, values, customs, courtesies, rituals, manners of interacting and roles, relationships and expected behaviours of a racial, ethnic, religious or social group; and the ability to transmit the above to succeeding generations” (Goode et al., 2000, p. 1). Therefore, it is can be claimed that culture includes many aspects that surround people’s personal and social lives including they way they live, how they eat, feel, socialise, think, talk, and many other activities that they do on a daily basis as a part of their routine life. Even within the explorations and the teaching of the language, this term has diverse and disparate definitions that can deal with forms of speech acts, rhetorical structure of text and knowledge constructs. Culture is sometimes defined with notions of personal space, appropriate gestures, keeping eye-contact with interlocutors and time as well. Although all these items are only manifestations of cultural norms, the impact of culture is broader and deeper defining the way a person sees his place in a society.

The strong correlation between culture and language has inspired many researchers to incorporate intercultural aspects of language with language learning pedagogies. In the current understanding of the relationship between culture and language, Kramersch (1991, 1997, 1998, 2001, 2003, 2004, 2009, 2010, 2011) has played a prominent role. According to Kramersch (1991, p. 217), culture and language “are a single universe or domain of experience”. In her book, *Context and Culture in Language Teaching*, Kramersch (1993a) states that cultural awareness and the learning of a second language culture can only aid the attaining of second language proficiency. She declares that the teaching of the second language culture either explicitly or implicitly develops the teaching of social interaction, and the spoken and the written language. According to her, second and foreign language learners become learners of the second language culture since it is impossible to learn a language completely without understanding the cultural aspects of the context in which it is used. She also indicates that even those second language learners who have many years of experience

with second language culture may have to find their “own place” (Kramersch, 1993a, p. 257) at the intersection of the their natal and target cultures. She also points out that in many language classrooms culture is often restricted to “foods, fairs, folklores and statistical fact” (Kramersch, 1991, p. 218). But she believes that the impact of culture on language learning and use is far more than “the four F’s” and that research and language teaching need to link the teaching of language to the teaching of culture” (p. 236).

Another researcher who has contributed to a better understanding of the place of culture in the second and foreign language pedagogy is Byram (1989, 1997, 1998). Byram (1989) states that, culture represents a hidden curriculum in second and foreign language teaching. According to Byram (1989), language teaching can rarely occur without teaching the cultures of its native speakers implicitly since language refers to their knowledge and recognition of the world, the concepts of culture and cultural learning. According to him, communicative competence involves “appropriate language use which, in part at least, is culture-specific” (Byram, 1989, p. 61).

The original goals of teaching culture in second or foreign language were proposed by Ned Seelye (1988). Since that time, these basic objectives have been examined and modified by other researchers; however, the fundamental goals proposed by Seelye are still the basis of designing culture-based curricula and pedagogies in second language and foreign language. The key goals of teaching culture proposed by Seelye (1988) are listed below:

- (a) An understanding that, in all societies, people exhibit culturally-conditioned behaviours,
- (b) A realisation that, in all languages, social variables such as age, sex, social role, and social status determine the ways in which people speak and interact,

- (c) An awareness that, in all societies, people display conventionalised language uses and behaviour in common (or typical) situations,
- (d) An awareness of the cultural connotations assigned to words and phrases in L2/FL,
- (e) An ability to evaluate and refine generalisations (and stereotypes) about the L2/FL culture, based on real-life evidence and experience,
- (f) Skills for researching another culture, i.e. how to locate, organise, and evaluate new information about another culture
- (g) Intellectual curiosity about L2/FL culture, as well as insight, respect, and other positive attitudes toward members of other cultures.

Seelye's model was the subject of further studies and many researchers criticised him for not providing any details on how to integrate these skills into teaching curricula. However, despite the practical issues with Seelye's model, the fact that it laid the foundation for later studies in this area cannot be argued.

Despite all the discussions about the significant role of the culture of target language in the acquisition of pragmatic competence, incorporating cultural themes of the TL in teaching lessons is not an easy task, since as argued by Barro, Byram, Grimm, Morgan, & Roberts (1993, p. 56), an advanced TL speaker cannot be expected "simply to abandon his/her own cultural world". Adamson (1988) pointed out that NNSs are often reluctant to accept and share the values, beliefs and presuppositions of an L2 community even if they have been living there for a long period of time and can speak the language quite well. The influence of culture on communication patterns is so strong that even if the conceptual socialisation process in TL is very advanced and the individual has high proficiency and excellent skills in the TL, her/his interaction with NSs is severely blocked by the limits imposed by cultural

factors. According to Lu (2001) the influence of the traditional Chinese culture is so far-reaching and persistent that even second or third generation Americans of Chinese descendants are unable to fully ignore it, although their English proficiency is on a par with that of native English speakers. Many of these people do not speak Chinese and totally depend on English as the tool of thinking and communication. “Nevertheless, their speech acts are still in the shadow of culturally governed modes of thinking, talking and behaving” (Lu, 2001, p. 216).

Another issue arises from the resistance of some countries and societies to include the cultural themes of the TL in their textbooks and teaching curricula as they find their cultural norms and those of the TL at two opposite directions. This problem is quite visible when some countries find some cultural norms in western countries in contrast to their own ones. For example, Iranian authorities have publicly warned against the impact of western cultural invasion over Iran’s traditional culture which has influenced the country’s educational system to a large extent. Consequently, all teaching materials related to English language in Iranian schools and to some extent at universities are subject to strict filters to avoid the transfer of any cultural themes of the TL that are in contrast to those of the Iranian culture. This issue will act as a major obstacle when trying to include those cultural aspects of the TL that can lead to pragmatic competence development of Iranian learners.

Considering the above discussions, incorporating those cultural aspects into teaching pedagogies is not possible in all contexts. Therefore, in a foreign language context like Iran, in which the teachers are non-native speakers and the textbooks do not present any cultural aspects of the TL, we cannot expect the Iranian English learners to possess a native-like pragmatic competence in TL. The issue in Iran can be expanded to many other countries with similar restricting policies on their educational system.

Previous studies (e.g. Leech, 1983; Thomas, 1938) have demonstrated that pragmatics involves two different domains including pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics. Moreover, the relationship between pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic competence in the development of pragmatic competence in the TL has been addressed in several studies (e.g. Bardovi Harlig & Hartford, 1993; Barron, 2003; Rose, 2009). As argued in these studies, pragmatic competence in the TL will not be achieved if both aspects are not developed and mastered. While pragmalinguistics has been referred to as the linguistic end of pragmatics which is easier to focus on, whether as a teacher or a learner, sociopragmatic competence is the appropriate usage and selection of language in accordance with context and the ability to understand the social conventions that govern communication. Thus, the existence of such socio-cultural variables within sociopragmatics makes this second half of the pragmatics territory of the TL even harder to master, if not impossible.

### **5.5.3 Conscious vs. Unconscious**

One of the other issues which has always been associated with the concept of pragmatic competence is whether this ability can be learned consciously or it is totally an unconscious process, or maybe it is a combination of both. One of the early researchers who explored this area is Wolfson (1989). According to Wolfson, native speaker's knowledge of what she calls rules of speaking (which include both pragmatic and discoursal rules) is mostly unconscious:

Rules of speaking and, more generally, norms of interaction are ... largely unconscious. What this means is that native speakers, although perfectly competent in the uses and interpretation of the patterns of speech behaviour which prevail in their own communities are, with the exception of a few explicitly taught formulas, not even aware of the patterned nature of their speech behaviour. [Native speakers] . . . are not able . . . to describe their own rules of

speaking (Wolfson, 1989, p. 37).

Wolfson (1989) provided several evidence to support her claim that speakers do not have reliable information concerning the ways in which they use language: people who are bilingual or bi-dialectal may switch from one language or variety to another without being aware of it and cannot accurately report their use of these languages or varieties (Blom & Gumperz, 1972). Native speakers often report that they typically use or do not use specific forms, but their descriptions do not match reality (Wolfson, D'Amico-Reisner, & Huber, 1983). Even highly trained linguists who rely on intuition to describe such phenomena as the differences between men's and women's speech (e.g., Lakoff, 1973) may find their intuitions proven incorrect. Also, textbook writers who almost always rely on intuition rather than empirical data, provide information regarding language use that is frequently wrong (Cathcart, 1989; Holmes, 1988; Williams, 1988). Schmidt (1993) refers to two reasons why we should expect native speakers' intuitions about these matters to be fallible:

First, there is the obvious problem of the intrusion of prescriptive norms, stereotypes, and folk-linguistic beliefs; when asked what they do, informants are likely to report what they think they should do. Second, this kind of introspection violates basic principles distinguishing between potentially accurate and inaccurate verbal reports (Ericsson & Simon, 1984; Nisbett & Wilson, 1977), because such intuitions are general rather than specific, retrospective rather than concurrent, and sometimes call for information that could not be reported even if the other conditions were met (Schmidt, 1993, p. 22).

Some researchers have previously claimed that learning a language is a primarily unconscious process (Gregg, 1984; Krashen, 1982; Seliger, 1983).

The importance given to subconscious processes in language learning led in part to the rejection of prior foreign language teaching methods that emphasised the patterns and rules of a target language in favour of a pedagogy that focused on meaning with little or no

explanation of grammar, error correction, or focused practice (e.g., the Natural Approach developed by Stephen Krashen and Tracy Terrell in the late 1970s and early 1980s). In contrast, there are other researchers who believe that the process of acquiring pragmatic competence is conscious (Odlin, 1986; Blum-Kulka, 1989; Blum-Kulka and Olshtain, 1986). Blum-Kulka (1989) reported that Hebrew-English bilinguals in Israel exhibit heightened meta-pragmatic awareness and are aware of their code-switching behaviour. Another researcher who supports the idea of consciousness is Odlin (1986) who suggests that linguistic forms that are important for communicative competence are, in general, highly salient and accessible to awareness, which may be why the meta-language observed in anthropological linguistics tends to describe linguistic functions more accurately than linguistic form. The fact that communicative behaviour is sometimes accurately reportable is also compatible with the principle that accurate self-report depends on information that is attended to during performance. Pragmatic and discoursal knowledge is not always used automatically and unreflectively. According to Ochs (1979), conversations vary a great deal in terms of spontaneity and planning. Some people pre-plan their telephone conversations, and writing involves a great deal of conscious deliberation and choices in discourse organisation. There are many occasions in which particular care is given to producing appropriately polite language. Students may worry about how to address professors and many aspects of the use of personal address are not unreflecting responses to a determining context, but represent strategic and sometimes manipulative choices (Kendall, 1981).

Therefore, as stated by Schmidt (1993), pragmatic knowledge seems to be only partly conscious and therefore, the whole area of pragmatics is not accessible to consciousness. Consequently, teaching those unconscious aspects of pragmatics seems impossible or at least seems unreasonable. Grice (1979) also did not believe that making inferences in case of implicatures is always conscious and explicit, but it could involve reasoning. Reasoning



which is central to Grice's theory of meaning or what he refers to as personal or justificatory-explanatory reasons is not something that we can teach in any English classroom; as it is neither related to English language, nor a teachable ability or skill.

#### **5.5.4 Pragmatic Transfer**

Another decisive factor that should be considered while focusing on teaching any aspects of pragmatics is the concept of pragmatic transfer. As argued by Bardovi-Harlig (2001), the keen interest in the influence of the first language and culture on target language learning can reflect the close connection between interlanguage and cross-cultural pragmatics studies. This notion has been defined by Kasper and Blum-Kulka (1993) as the use of L1 pragmatic knowledge to understand or carry out linguistic action in the TL. As argued by them, in a language learning situation a positive or negative transfer may occur. Positive transfer takes place when the forms and functions in the L1 map onto the TL (Rose & Kasper, 2001). This leads to successful interactions, whereas when a correspondence between the two languages is wrongly assumed by learners, namely negative transfer, the outcome could be the use of non-target expressions or their avoidance (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001). Olshtain and Cohen (1989) refer to pragmatic transfer as L2 learners' strategy of incorporating native-language-based elements in L2 production. It is also an important source of cross-cultural communication breakdown (e.g. Beebe, Takahashi, & Uliss-Weltz, 1990).

In particular, adult learners can resort to their universal or L1-based pragmatic knowledge when acquiring FL pragmatics. Unluckily, learners do not always transfer their existing knowledge and strategies to TL contexts, and this is also the case for some pragmatic aspects (Rose & Kasper, 2001). A good example of pragmalinguistic transfer is provided by Takahashi and DuFon's (1989) study which examined nine Japanese English ESL learners'

use of indirectness in two request situations. They found that the L2 learners at beginning proficiency level were either too direct or too indirect in their choice of indirectness in one of the situations. As reported by Takahashi and DuFon (1989), in cases with a strong desire for something, the Japanese used more direct strategies than the Americans do, while in cases when a desire was implicit, they used fewer indirect request strategies than the Americans.

In another case, Byon (2004) identified and described sociopragmatic features of Americans learning Korean as a foreign language in the Korean communicative act of requests. The semantic formulae usage patterns of the learners of Korean as a foreign language were consistent with those of the American ENSs, indicative of L1 transfer effect. Regarding pragmatic transferability, Takahashi (1993, 1996) maintains that if an L1 strategy is perceived to be frequently used and assumed to be appropriate enough, this strategy are more likely be transferred to the L2 context. Her second transferability criterion refers to the simlarty of strategies between L1 and L2, meaning similar strategies are more likely to be ransferred. Based on the two above criteria, she proposed a pragmatic transferability scale, which posits that strategies rated high for contextual appropriateness and viewed as contextual equivalents are more transferable, whereas those that are rated low for appropriateness and considered contextually different are less transferable. However, occurrences of pragmatic transfer may be influenced by various factors including L2 learners' perception of language distance between their L1 and L2 (e.g. Takahashi, 1996), learning context (e.g. Takahashi & Beebe, 1987), instructional effect (e.g. Bardovi-Harlig, 2001; Kasper, 1982), TL proficiency (e.g. Olshtain & Cohen, 1989; Takahashi & Beebe, 1987), and length of time in the TL community (e.g., Félix-Bradsefer, 2004).

Pragmatic competence in the first language is the result of language socialisation. As said above, language and social development in the first language go hand in hand, and are inseparable. However, this is not exactly the case in TL and subsequent languages. Pragmatic

skills in TL appear like modifications, adjustments and additions to the existing L1- based pragmatic competence. Sociopragmatic norms and conventions concerning appropriateness developed through L1 are very influential and difficult to change. Exposure to and immersing into the new language and culture are not enough to change them. Sometimes TL norms and patterns need conscious acts by the language learner to accept and/or acquire them. Bilinguals may see things in TL through their L1 socio-cultural mind set. Thomas (1983) indicated that, if we should try to force non-native speakers (NNSs) to conform to a native speaker (NS) norm, it would be nearly the same as NS' ideological control over NNSs or cultural imposition on NNSs by NS' socially hegemonic strata. Some recent studies have pointed out that NNSs may have some kind of resistance towards the use of NS norms and speech conventions to maintain their own identity, and so they may commit pragmatic negative transfer 'on purpose' (e.g. Al-Issa, 2003; Siegal, 1996). Siegal (1996) discussed the case of a female western learner of Japanese who felt affective resistance to a Japanese norm, because Japanese female language appeared too humble to her. According to Siegal (1996) these findings mean real difficulty for researchers because frequently it is impossible to establish whether some inappropriate or misleading language use results from the NNS affective resistance to the NS practice or it is just a lack of native-like pragmatic competence.

Pragmatic transfer could be more beneficial when the two cultures of L1 and L2 share more similarities than differences. For example, if we consider two second language learners, one Japanese and one Portuguese with similar linguistic knowledge of English who are attending a British university, we expect the student who is coming from Portugal to benefit more from any possible pragmatic transfer than the Japanese student due to the cultural similarities between English and Portuguese. In contrast, due to the fewer similarities that the Japanese and British culture share, any pragmatic transfer from L1 may lead to more communication breakdowns with native English speakers. On the difference of Iranian and American culture,

Eslami-Rasekh (2005) uses an example about the amount of ritual politeness that is involved in these two cultures. As stated by Eslami-Rasekh (2005), a very strong social convention in Iranian society is that, out of modesty, any offer must be refused at least once and often more than once as a matter of course, resulting in the initiator's stronger insistence. Such insistence is seen as a sign of consideration for the guests and of concern for the guests' needs. As argued by Eslami-Rasekh (2005), the situation has potential for cross-cultural miscommunication because the same amount of persistence may be interpreted as forcefulness in American culture. Therefore, the concept of pragmatic transfer does not seem to contribute much to Iranians in their communications with native English speakers.

### **5.5.5 The Learning Environment**

Another important factor which can affect the pragmatic competence in the TL is the learning environment. As confirmed in previous studies (Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford 1993, 1996), learners immersed in the TL culture are at an advantage with respect to those in an FL context. However, there are some researchers who have different views and believe that learners in an FL environment still have the chance to develop their pragmatic competence (Niezgoda & Röever, 2001). Bardovi-Harlig and Dornyei (1998) carried out a study to demonstrate the effect of residency on the acquisition of pragmatic competence. They concluded that “neither contact with NSs of English in the foreign environment nor contact with NSs via short stays in English-speaking countries had the same effect as residency” (p. 253). Also, Bardovi-Harlig (1996) asserts that the longer the learner interacts with native speakers or is immersed in a community of speakers of the TL, the more pragmatically aware the learner becomes.

The learning environment for Iranians English learners who are living in Iran not only does not contribute to their acquisition of pragmatic competence, but also functions as a major barrier to achieve it. According to Dahmardeh (2006, 2009) Iran has a specific political and cultural perspective in the world, one that is suspicious of America and the UK. This has placed constraints on foreigners entering the country and Iranians leaving the country. It has also led to other limitations, ones that have a direct impact on improving Iranian learners' English knowledge. For example, news programs in English, news on the Internet, as well as video and social networking sites, such as YouTube and Facebook are banned, which restricts access to a wealth of authentic material. In an educational context, the restrictions on movements have meant most English language teachers are Iranian and have not learnt their English in an English-speaking country. In explaining the way the national curriculum for English language instruction has developed in Iran, Dahmardeh (2009) investigated the success or failure of the apparent intention to base the Iranian national curriculum on Communicative Language Teaching. This investigation led to the conclusion that both the willingness and the mechanisms needed to implement that intention were sadly lacking, with the result that teachers were mainly untrained in communicative teaching methods and did not have access to materials or the time to create the materials that reflected a communicative approach. Dahmardeh (2009), through a collaborative approach with scholars and pedagogues, agreed on a list of 18 principles that reflect a communicative learning context, such as purposeful communication in task-based exercises, intercultural awareness, the inclusion of semantic notions and social functions, pair and group work, use of authentic materials to create access to real-life situations, integrated skills learning, regarding comprehension as an active process, learner-centredness and others. He then researched to what extent these principles have been practiced and found that, they were largely missing

from the curriculum and the learning contexts created and a reliance on traditional methods, such as grammar-translation were asserted.

As revealed by Dahmardeh (2009), English language teaching methods in Iran are still traditional in nature and it is essential to modify these teaching methodologies in order to improve Iranian learners' pragmatic knowledge. In a recent study by Mirzaei and Rezaei (2012), it has been reported that pragmatic teaching in the TL classroom in Iran is severely underrepresented. They also state that EFL teachers tend to isolate the mechanical aspects of the language, focusing on grammar, reading skills and new vocabulary, as these tend to be emphasised in the curriculum; typically, Farsi was the language of instruction, and predominant teaching strategies employed were summarising and L1 translation.

### **5.5.6 Pragmatic Input**

It has been stated that the availability of pragmatic input in instructional contexts also influences the development of pragmatic competence, which can be provided by means of teacher talk and/or materials. However, as often as not, textbooks cannot be trusted to provide reliable pragmatic input since this input is not always presented in a realistic and contextualised way to language students (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001). More precisely, Bouton (1990 as cited in Kubota, 1995) found that there are few examples of implicatures in ESL textbooks and they are not usually dealt with explicitly. Assisting learners with authentic input should be aimed at pedagogy so as to attempt to reduce the pragmatic differences between learners and native speakers (Takahashi, 2001). By way of example, watching videos is an appealing way for learners to notice the TL area in natural discourse since it gives learners the chance to access and integrate sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic knowledge fast and efficiently (Tateyama, 2001). Moreover, textbooks play an important role

in English Language Teaching (ELT), particularly in an EFL classroom where it provides the primary (perhaps only) form of linguistic input (Kim & Hall, 2002). However, research into the adequacy of textbooks to teach communicative practices that are reflective of authentic conversation has found that ELT textbooks rarely include adequate or comprehensible explanations of how conversation works in English (Berry, 2000; Burns, 1998; Cane, 1998; Grant & Starks, 2001). This issue is more visible in Iran as the textbooks that are used at schools do not represent any authentic material. This makes the acquisition of pragmatic competence in English for Iranian students through textbooks very highly unlikely, as all contents of textbooks including the topic of conversations, characters that are involved in that conversation, the settings and everything that appears in textbook is not only non-authentic, but also they have been localised to avoid the transfer of any cultural aspects of the TL to Iranian students.

Previous ELT textbook research has focused on the authenticity of language samples included in textbooks as well as explanations of appropriate usage, typically using speech acts as units of analysis. Despite a decade of complaints of the inadequacy of textbooks' language (Bardovi-Harlig, Hartford, Mahan-Taylor, Morgan & Reynolds, 1991; Boxer & Pickering, 1995; Cane, 1998; Grant & Starks, 2001; Wong, 2001), little seems to have changed in the authenticity of language samples. Bardovi-Harlig points out that "it is important to recognise that in general, textbooks cannot be counted on as a reliable source of pragmatic input for classroom language learners" (2001, p. 25). Criticism deals primarily with the omission or disregard for authentic language samples in language textbooks, and researchers argue that language samples in textbooks need to more closely approximate results found in studies of conversation analysis. Often, pragmatic rules governing native speakers' pragmatic performance are not intuitive, and therefore require analysis of naturally occurring language samples, just as presentation of grammatical forms necessitates analysis

of authentic language (Biber & Reppen, 2002; Garcia, 2004). Presentation of language (including grammatical forms and conversational norms) is problematic at best when invented scripts and intuition are used to create and explain language samples. “Only through materials that reflect how we really speak, rather than how we think we speak, language learners will receive an accurate account of the rules of speaking in a second or foreign language” (Boxer & Pickering, 1995, p. 56).

Also, on using textbooks to teach pragmatics, Bardovi- Harlig (2001) suggests that:

Any textbook should be used judiciously, since it cannot cater equally to the requirements of every classroom setting. In bilingual and multilingual situations, there are special limitations on the amount of English language teaching that can be done via the textbook. The textbook can present examples of common difficulties, but there are problems specific to different language groups which are left for the teacher to deal with. It is also likely that a textbook will outlast its relevance because of changes in the language policy of the community for which it was written (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001, p. 24).

While everybody is aware of the importance of materials to improve pragmatic competence, the truth is that ELT textbooks do not offer much. Bouton (1990) reviewed the latest available textbooks and reported that many of them have failed to teach the ability to interpret implicatures to second language learners. Moreover, there are many aspects of pragmatics that cannot be included in ELT textbooks. As argued earlier, many cultural aspects of the TL which are crucial for foreign language learners to understand the NSs utterances or to generate appropriate utterances when communicating with NSs cross the borderline for many countries and cannot be included in their teaching curricula. Therefore, even those teachable aspects of pragmatics cannot be simply added to teaching materials in many contexts like Iran.



### **5.5.7 Point of focus: Production or Perception**

So far, interlanguage pragmatics research has mainly concentrated on the study of production rather than judgement and perception. Studies on judgement and perception examine the differences that may arise in L2 speech and written simulations between native speakers and learners which, in comparison with production studies, are not easily observable but equally important. They show that native speakers' and learners' judgements and perceptions often differ (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001). Studies on perception also reveal valuable information on the types of utterances learners receive as input and their awareness of the similarities and differences between their mother tongue and the TL (Rose & Kasper, 2001). Many of these studies have focused on FL learners because, compared to SL learners, they tend to receive less TL input or their chances to produce the TL outside the classroom are rather scarce. Moreover, learners do not always use their existing pragmatic knowledge in comparable TL situations and this also lends support to the inclusion of instruction in interlanguage pragmatics to raise their awareness of their available L1 knowledge and promote its use in TL contexts (Rose & Kasper, 2001). In their review of empirical pragmatic studies on both production and comprehension, Rose & Kasper (2001) conclude that native speakers and SL learners exhibit marked differences in their pragmatic systems. These differences can sometimes be equated with areas of difficulty, which warrant pedagogical intervention in learners' comprehension of the TL pragmatic aspects. The need for instruction validates Schmidt's (1993) Noticing Hypothesis which posits that awareness is necessary to make input into intake (Takahashi, 2001). In other words, linguistic features will become intake only if learners consciously notice them (Rose & Kasper, 2001). As Bardovi-Harlig (2001) states: "Without input, acquisition cannot take place...we owe it to learners to help them interpret indirect speech acts as in the case of implicatures" (p. 31).

### **5.5.8 Target Language Proficiency**

The findings of this study demonstrated a significant difference in the answers given by native and non-native speakers to questions about CI and presupposition. This comes as no surprise as when we go through the literature, we find many studies that have been carried out in this area and several researchers have reported the lack of pragmatic knowledge in L2 among second language learners. Considering the linguistic knowledge (IELTS score between 6-7) of non-native speakers who participated in this study and the fact that they have been admitted by UK universities, it can be stated that their linguistic knowledge which was at a reasonable level did not help them much to respond to questions about pragmatics.

Even though it has been claimed that grammatical competence and pragmatic competence do not necessarily coincide, it is still unknown to what extent grammatical competence limits the value of the input to the learner (Olshtain & Blum-Kulka, 1985; Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 1990; House, 1996; Bardovi-Harlig, 1999a, in Rose & Kasper, 2001). Some studies have reported that proficiency may have little influence on pragmatic competence and performance since the strategies used by learners at an intermediate and advanced level were found to be similar (Kasper & Schmidt, 1996, in Rose & Kasper, 2001). Even though none of the published studies have included low proficiency learners (Kasper, 1996; Kasper & Schmidt, 1996; Kasper & Rose, 1999, in Rose & Kasper, 2001), Rose & Kasper (2001) hypothesise that, beginning language learners might not be able to use certain strategies due to their not having acquired sufficient linguistic knowledge. A study conducted by Koike (1996) to evaluate the pragmatic knowledge of EFL and ESL learners from Hungary, found that both sectors of advanced learners were undoubtedly more pragmatically competent than intermediate students.

## **5.6 Recommended Techniques in Teaching Pragmatics**

This study investigated Iranian learners' knowledge of the pragmatic aspects of CI and presupposition. The results showed a major difference between the answers given by the target group and the control group. Previous researchers who had investigated Iranian learners' pragmatic competence in TL, had also reported the lack of pragmatic knowledge among Farsi speakers; although, they had investigated the knowledge of speech acts including: gratitude (Farnia and Raja Rozina, 2009; Pishghadam and Zarei, 2011), apology (Afghari, 2007; Shariati and Chamani, 2010), compliments (Karimnia and Afghari, 2011), request (Eslami-Rasekh and Noora, 2008; Jalilifar, 2009), condolence ( Lotfollahi and Eslami-Rasekh, 2011; Samavarchi and Allami, 2012), disagreement ( Parvaresh and Eslami Rasekh, 2009; Farnia, Sohrabi and Musarra, 2010), reprimands (Ahmadian and Dastjerdi, 2010), refusal (Allami and Naeimi, 2010), complaints (Eslami-Rasekh, 2004). Therefore, it is essential to concentrate more on raising Iranian learners' pragmatic knowledge. The reality is that the whole area of pragmatics is not teachable; however, this study suggests a number of activities that are useful to develop some aspects of pragmatics and raise the foreign language learners' awareness of the importance of pragmatic competence in becoming a successful communicator with native speakers. The following procedures and techniques can be used not only to improve the Iranian learners' pragmatic competence, but also for other foreign language learners that may lack the required pragmatic knowledge in the TL.

### **5.6.1 Improving the Linguistic Knowledge**

Thomas (1983) argues that the division of language competence into grammatical and pragmatic competence suggests a weak relationship between the two. This assumption is based on the fact that the branching of any area of human knowledge into various classes by

means of categorisation is a way of emphasising essential differences. On some level, the division of language competence into grammatical competence and pragmatic competence highlights a recognition that the two rely upon essentially different learning processes: one based on form (grammatical), the other based on experience (pragmatic). Many definitions of pragmatic competence state that it goes beyond what grammatical competence can provide, suggesting a different kind of knowledge or awareness (Crozet, 2003). However, having made this assumption, a survey of the literature does not explicitly state that research evidence proves the two competences are completely independent. It is therefore a worthy area of investigation to test this assumption and examine the relationship between the two. If grammatical competence only focuses on form and the meaning is supplied by form, does this knowledge in any way contribute to pragmatic competence?

If the two are completely disassociated, is it reasonable to assume that EFL/ESL learners with differing levels of grammatical competence will not display corresponding differences in their levels of pragmatic competence? That is, if we compare two learners, one showing a high level of grammatical competence gained through formal instruction, and the other showing a low level of grammatical competence, the assumption is that if their exposure to real life interactions in English is similarly limited, then we should expect no appreciable difference in their levels of pragmatic competence. Clearly, drawing a line between grammatical competence and pragmatic competence not only does not seem reasonable, but also it does not contribute to improve the pragmatic competence among EFL learners.

Considering these discussions, separating pragmatic and linguistic classrooms for EFL learners should be avoided as learners will assume that these two notions have no common grounds and are totally separated. Instead, EFL teachers by incorporating the pragmatic aspects of the TL into a grammatical syllabus can find a way of bringing grammar and the

real world together. In this way, learners will have the opportunity to learn both the linguistic device and the methods of using in real world settings.

Bardovi-Harlig (1996, p. 5) finds two reasons why learners typically show different patterns of realisation than native speakers do. “First, cross-cultural pragmatics has shown that different mature first languages have different realisation patterns, and second is the fact that learners are learners. They do not have the full range of linguistic devices at their disposal. It is the second source of differences that is particularly susceptible to change in the course of acquisition and potentially through instruction” (p. 5). Therefore, as argued by Bardovi-Harlig (1996), one of the main reasons behind foreign language learners’ pragmatic issues while communicating with native speakers is that, they simply do not possess a comprehensive linguistic knowledge of the TL and this can affect their use of language while interacting with native speakers. Even though pragmatics has been known for decades to be separate from the linguistic aspects of language, the dual relationship between the two and the impact that the linguistic knowledge can have on one’s pragmatic competence cannot be denied. Therefore, it seems impossible to teach pragmatics without referring to linguistic elements and devices in the classroom. Moreover, while different aspects of pragmatics in English involve various degrees of involvement with linguistic knowledge, with some being at least partly linguistic and some being non-linguistic (PCIs), focusing on those aspects of pragmatics which are closely associated with linguistic knowledge would be more beneficial for EFL learners. One of those aspects that can benefit from focusing on certain linguistic features is presupposition. Presupposition and conventional implicatures in English are directly related to certain vocabularies and no one can deny the fact that vocabulary is an inseparable part of linguistic knowledge. However, the challenge would be to design a teaching methodology that focuses on the hidden meaning of these words that cannot be found in any dictionaries.

In addition, a number of previous studies have reported a positive correlation between the level of linguistic knowledge of research participants and their pragmatic competence, meaning advanced English learners performed better than intermediate English learners when were exposed to questions targeting their performance in using language appropriately. On the other hand, some researchers (Bardovi-Harling and Hartford, 1990) state that even at the advanced level, linguistic competence is not a sufficient criterion to guarantee pragmatic competence. While I agree with Bardovi-Harling and Hartford's (1990) claim to some extent, I also believe that this should not lead us to believe that we should treat pragmatic and linguistic knowledge as two separate territories. Improving grammatical proficiency can contribute to acquire a higher level of pragmatic competence in the TL. This was also confirmed by Hoffman-Hicks (1992) who argued that linguistic competence is a pre-requisite to pragmatic competence. Therefore, developing foreign language learners' linguistic knowledge can have a positive impact on their ability to use language appropriately as well.

### **5.6.2 Awareness Raising**

Raising non-native speakers' awareness of pragmatic competence and its important role in having successful interactions with native speakers can have a significant impact on their pragmatic performance. 65 non-native speakers of English including 50 participants from my study group and 15 participants from my pilot group took part in this study. While they were from different backgrounds including Iranian, Chinese, Japanese, Saudi Arabian, etc., what they all shared was that they had neither heard about the notion of pragmatic competence in EFL classrooms, nor experienced any similar questions that was about their English knowledge, without focusing on their linguistic knowledge. It should be noted again that both the study group and the pilot group had a good general English knowledge and were admitted

by reputable UK Universities at undergraduate and postgraduate level respectively. Considering the fact that all of them had attended IELTS preparation courses and the majority of them had also participated in private English institutes in their countries to improve their general English before coming to the UK, it comes as a big surprise that there had been no mention of pragmatic competence in their EFL classrooms. Therefore, awareness raising activities will play a vital role in introducing this unfamiliar aspect of language to foreign or second language learners.

Awareness raising activities are activities designed to develop recognition of how language forms are used appropriately in context. As stated by Schmidt (1993), through awareness raising activities, students acquire information about pragmatic aspects of language. For example, what strategies are used for apologising in their first language and target language? What is considered an offence in their culture compared to the target culture? What are different degrees of offence for different situations in the two languages? And how the nature of the relationship between the participants affects the use of apologies? The aim is to expose learners to the pragmatic aspects of language (L1 and TL) and provide them with the analytical tools they need to arrive at their own generalisations concerning contextually appropriate language use. These activities are designed to make learners consciously aware of differences between the native and target language speech acts. The rationale for this approach is that such differences are often ignored by learners and go unnoticed unless they are directly addressed (Schmidt, 1993). Especially for Iranian learners who are not familiar much with pragmatic aspects of the TL and the difference that it makes when it comes to use the TL to communicate with a native speaker, these techniques are very beneficial. In order to raise the pragmatic awareness of students, several techniques can be used. The two major techniques commonly used are teacher presentation and discussion of research findings on different aspects of pragmatics, and a student-discovery procedure in which students obtain

information through observations, questionnaires, and/or interviews (Kasper, 1997). One of the ways to raise this awareness is through classroom discussions on the importance of pragmatic competence in TL communications. Teachers can use presentation/discussion techniques to relay information drawn from research on pragmatic issues to students. This can be done inductively (from data to rules) or deductively (from rules to data). To show the importance of contextual variables in the use of different language forms, teachers need to provide detailed information on the participants, their status, the situations, and the speech events that are occurring. The information provided to students in awareness raising activities will help learners build awareness of pragmatic features in both L1 and TL. For instance, teacher can present a conversation between a NS and a NNS talking about a topic, while NNS's inappropriate answer has led to a misunderstanding by the NS. Then, teacher asks the learners to identify the inappropriate response and replace it with a more appropriate one. Meanwhile, he/she can focus on the contextual factors to help students to provide more appropriate responses.

### **5.6.3 Raising Motivation**

Motivation is assumed to play a crucial role in the acquisition of the TL pragmatics because it determines learners' level of attention to the pragmatic information to be acquired, leading to more noticing or awareness of the target language features and this awareness is necessary for converting input into intake (Kasper and Schmidt, 1996; Schmidt, 1993). According to Rose (1999), in pragmatics lessons, learners should be motivated, their interest gained, and their attention focused on the activities to follow. Schmidt (1993) refers to the following two reasons behind the role of motivation in pragmatic competence in TL: Firstly, learners with a desire to establish a relationship with L2 community tend to pay more attention to the



pragmatic language features in the input compared with those less motivated (p. 36). Secondly, motivated learners' efforts and persistence to understand these language features may also help to achieve higher level of awareness and lead to more achievements (Schmidt 2010). One of the researchers who has carried out several studies to examine the relationship between motivation and pragmatic competence is Takahashi (2005, 2012, 2013). Takahashi (2005) investigated Japanese EFL learners' awareness of the TL pragmalinguistic features and found that intrinsic motivation was more correlated with learners' allocation of attention to pragmatic input. Takahashi (2012) studied the relationship again using structural equation modelling with different subscales of motivation: class enjoyment, communicative interaction, confidence, and competitiveness. She (2012) found a direct relationship between awareness and class-oriented motivation that emphasised classroom activities. Takahashi (2013) re-examined the influence of motivation as a part of her study on the effects of Japanese EFL learners' awareness on their learning of bi-clausal request forms and internal modifiers. The study identified two motivation factors, class enjoyment and communicative interaction, which directly and indirectly influenced awareness respectively.

#### **5.6.4 A Functional-Lexical Syllabus**

In comparison to conversational implicature, questions about presupposition generated fewer correct responses in this study. Out of the 12 questions about presupposition, the majority of them are either lexical triggers that presuppose a condition or words that conventionally implicate something but have been studied under presupposition in this research. These words are *but, even, managed to, realise, regret, return, still, too, and who*. Clearly, most of them are simple words that can be used in different contexts and respondents who took part in this study with an IETLS score between 6 and 7 must have been aware of the literal meaning

of them. But, these lexical triggers convey an extra layer of meaning that is not related to the literal meaning of word which is neither presented in any dictionary for learners to grasp nor has been focused by teachers or textbooks to be covered in EFL classrooms so far. Moreover, knowing the literal meaning of these lexical triggers also does not seem to contribute to identifying what has been presupposed. As the results of this study revealed, the average correct response to twelve questions about presupposition and conventional implicatures was very low (62.83%), confirming that a large number of respondents were unaware of the presuppositions that are associated with these lexical triggers, or the conventional meaning that they implicate. Moreover, among questions about presupposition, two questions generated very low scores (the mean score to question 4 and question 6 were 16% and 20% respectively). These results indicate a major gap between Iranian English learners' linguistic and pragmatic knowledge. While Iranian learners have not been exposed to learn about pragmatic aspects of English language in English classrooms and they have very restricted access to authentic English materials, we cannot expect any different results in terms of their pragmatic competence in English. Each year, the majority of Iranian English learners who have not found their English classrooms at schools enough to acquire a reasonable level of communicative competence, opt to benefit from extra English lessons at private institutes (all 50 Iranian learners participated in this study had attended English classrooms at private English institutes in Iran for at least 2 years); however, they still lacked the required pragmatic knowledge as reported in this study. Therefore, it seems essential for Iranian learners to improve their pragmatic knowledge to avoid communication breakdowns with English native speakers.

Based on the findings of this study, it is crucial to include English materials that are designed specifically to improve those teachable aspects of pragmatics in the TL. One of the ways to extend the EFL learners' knowledge of the lexical triggers and the presupposition they carry

is to incorporate them into a lexical syllabus with activities set by teachers involving real language use. I call such a syllabus a functional-lexical syllabus which can be very beneficial to teach those vocabularies that are associated with presupposition and conventional implicatures and learners not only will become familiar with those lexical triggers, but also will have the opportunity to learn how to use these words in different contexts as well. The main difference of such an approach for teaching lexical triggers to a normal lexical syllabus is that, here the focus is not on the literal meaning, but on the information that has been presupposed in the context that these words have been used. These vocabularies can be introduced either deductively or inductively; although, an inductive teaching methodology of these words may provide better understanding opportunities as learners will be exposed to examples first, and then they need to work out the presupposition that is associated with that particular vocabulary. Providing examples from real language use of these words by native speakers will provide an opportunity for EFL learners not only to practice using these words in a sentence, but to compare their sentences with those by native speakers in order to identify possible differences. I have used the following example to clarify this point:

We suppose that a teacher is going to introduce the presupposition that is associated with verbs of judging like *accuse* and *criticise*. As stated by Levinson (1983), judging verbs carry a presupposition as when we criticise/accuse somebody for doing something, it presupposes that something has already happened. The teacher can use these words in different sentences and ask the learners of the information that whose truth is taken for granted by the speaker's utterance.

Here, the teacher can write the following sentence on the board and simply ask the learners to write down any information that they think might have been taken for granted by Joe before uttering his utterance.

(4) Joe criticised Mary for being late for the lecture.

Next, he/she can highlight the judging verb of criticise to draw the learners' attention.

Comparing the learners' responses and agreeing on the final answer could be followed.

Finally, he/she will write the correct presupposition on the board.

(5) >> Mary was late for the lecture.

The inclusion of such simple activities will provide an excellent opportunity for EFL learners to become familiar with lexical triggers and that extra layer of meaning that they contain which is hidden behind their literal meaning, but is crucial in having a smooth interaction with native speakers.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **Conclusions and Discussions**

#### **6.1 Introduction**

This chapter provides a summary of the main topics that were covered in this study. In the first section, it refers to the findings of the first part of research which was a critical analysis of the theories of communicative competence as well as the main data collection methods in cross-cultural or interlanguage pragmatics research. In the second section, it reviews the results of the quantitative research which was collected through the questionnaire that was developed to measure CI and presupposition. Finally, it presents some recommendations for future studies in this area.

#### **6.2 Research Outcome from the Review of Literature**

The first part of this study focused on the main concepts that underline the current status of the notion of pragmatic competence in the TL. The clarifications of these concepts like the relationship between communicative and pragmatic competence in the main theories of communicative competence as well as the teachability and measurability of pragmatics provided a clearer picture of this notion and revealed those aspects of it which have been less explored in previous studies. The main attainments of this section have been listed below.

##### **6.2.1 Shortcomings of the Theories of Communicative Competence**

One of the main research questions that this study aimed to answer was whether current theories of communicative competence are capable to address all aspects of pragmatics or

not. As discussed in chapter two, recent theoretical and empirical research on the communicative and pragmatic competence is largely based on main theories of communicative competence developed by Canale and Swain (1980, 1981), Bachman and Palmer (1990, 1996) and Celce-Murcia et al. (1995). While these theories have been introduced more than three decades ago, they are still used as main references when talking about communicative competence in the TL. One of the common drawbacks among these models is their interpretation of the concept of pragmatic competence. In the model presented by Canale and Swain (1980, 1981), communicative competence consists of grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic competence. In their model, pragmatic competence is a part of sociolinguistic competence. Canale and Swain (1980, 1981), define sociolinguistic competence as the knowledge of rules and conventions which underlie the appropriate comprehension and language use in different sociolinguistic and sociocultural contexts. The definition provided by Canale and Swain (1980, 1981) for sociolinguistic competence applies to pragmatic competence as well as it is talking about the knowledge of conventions and rules about using language appropriately which can be related to the area of pragmatic competence. Therefore, while they refer to the two concepts as different competences, they fail to present this difference in their definitions.

According to Bachman and Palmer (1990, 1996), pragmatic knowledge consists of lexical, functional and sociolinguistic knowledge. Therefore, in contrast to Canale and Swain's classification of communicative competence where they study pragmatic competence under sociolinguistic competence, Bachman and Palmer's (1990, 1996) model views this relationship differently and it is the sociolinguistic knowledge which is a part of pragmatic knowledge. Another difference between the two is that, while Canale and Swain find the knowledge of lexis as a grammatical knowledge, Bachman and Palmer study lexical knowledge as a category of pragmatic knowledge. The third main model of communicative

competence was introduced by Celce- Murcia et al. (1995). According to this model, pragmatic competence consists of sociolinguistic, discourse and actional competence. As argued by Celce-Murcia et al. (1995), actional competence is the knowledge of speech acts and cannot address the other aspects of pragmatics. Celce-Murcia et al. (1995) do not provide any reason for the separation of the knowledge of speech acts from other aspects of pragmatics. Considering this model, the question is that where do other aspects of pragmatics like conversational implicature stand? It seems that in this model speech acts have been interpreted as an equivalent to pragmatics, while they are an important part of pragmatics, they cannot represent the whole area of pragmatics.

Besides, all these models have tried to present the relationship between pragmatic and communicative competence, but the picture that they display from pragmatic competence addresses only parts of pragmatics rather than all aspects of pragmatics. Moreover, all three models view the relationship between sociolinguistic and pragmatic competence differently, meaning they have different interpretations of both pragmatic and sociolinguistic competence.

Another ambiguity surrounding pragmatic competence is its relationship with communicative competence whether, as stated by Candlin (1976) and Schmidt & Richards (1980), they are synonyms and can be used interchangeably or as argued by Canale and Swain (1980), pragmatic competence is a small part of communicative competence. Referring to the initial definitions of these two concepts proposed by Chomsky and Hymes can contribute to clarify this relationship. Chomsky (1980, p. 224) defined pragmatic competence as the “knowledge of conditions and manner of appropriate use (of the language), in conformity with various purposes”. On the other hand, Hymes (1972) defined communicative competence as the ability to use grammatical competence in a variety of communicative situations. According to Hymes, the ability to speak competently not only involves the grammatical knowledge of a

language, but also knowing what and how to utter something in any circumstances. Comparing these two definitions, it can be concluded that there is not much difference between the definition of pragmatic competence proposed by Chomsky and communicative competence provided by Hymes, as both focus on the ability to use language appropriately. Thus, if the two terms share common grounds and as advocated by Candlin (1976) and Schmidt & Richards (1980), they can be used interchangeably, the models of communicative competence need to be reconsidered as they have referred to these concepts as separate notions.

Unfortunately, the main body of the current literature about pragmatic competence is based on the models discussed above; while, as it was discussed here and in chapter two in detail, these models fail to present a clear picture of the true essence of pragmatic competence in the TL and therefore, it seems beneficial to reconsider these concepts and approach them cautiously when using the models of communicative competence as a reference when talking about pragmatic competence in the TL.

### **6.2.2 Shortcomings of Data Collection Methods at Measuring Pragmatic Competence**

Another main focus of this study was on data collection methods when measuring pragmatic competence in the TL and whether it is possible to measure this concept independently or not. Since their introduction in the late 80s and early 90s, Discourse Completion Tasks (DCTs) are by far the dominant tool in ILP and cross-cultural pragmatics studies. However, despite their popularity among different researchers in last three decades, there are some key drawbacks that have been less studied so far. One of the main shortcomings of Written Discourse Completion Tasks (WDCTs) is that they can only target parts of pragmatics. Kasper & Dahl (1991, p. 221), defined WDCTs as “written questionnaires including a



number of brief situational descriptions, followed by a short dialogue with an empty slot for the speech act under study". Therefore, considering this definition, WDCTs can only measure speech acts and cannot be used to evaluate other aspects of pragmatics. Another drawback of WDCT which was explored in this study relates to the structure of this instrument. As discussed earlier in detail (refer to section 3.4.2, page 110), in order to complete the task, learners read a scenario and then they need to complete the conversation between two participants, while considering several factors like the difference in the social distance or the power distance. However, to complete the task, learners' grammatical knowledge would be highly involved. In order to produce an appropriate response, besides considering some aspects like the context in which the conversation is taking place and the relationship between the participants, they also need to focus on their grammar as well to ensure of producing a sentence without any grammatical mistakes. Although in such tests the focus would be mainly on the pragmatic knowledge of the research participants rather than their linguistic knowledge in TL, avoiding grammatical mistakes is always a priority for foreign language learners when taking any tests that are targeting their knowledge of TL. Consequently, their main focus would be to generate a sentence that does not carry any grammatical mistakes. Therefore, their choice of language would be highly affected when completing the tasks and they may easily sacrifice a pragmatically appropriate sentence at the expense of not making a grammatical mistake. Considering these discussions, it can be argued that, WDCTs cannot evaluate the pragmatic knowledge of the learners without involving their linguistic knowledge and unfortunately, the amount of linguistic involvement in these tests is quite high as well.

Moreover, as pointed by Kasper & Dahl (1991), DCTs are only designed to study speech acts which are a very narrow area of pragmatics. Therefore, it comes as no surprise when we find out that the majority of studies in ILP and pragmatic competence in the TL are about speech

acts and reviewing the literature, we find a large number of studies about foreign language learners' knowledge of different speech acts like requests and refusals. As DCTs were not designed to evaluate other aspects of pragmatics, the number of studies that are devoted to explore other areas except speech acts are rare. This can be related to the difficulties that are associated with designing an instrument capable of measuring other aspects of pragmatics like conversational implicatures and presuppositions. One of the first attempts to study a different aspect of pragmatics in the TL was made by Bouton (1988, 1994, 1999) who carried out a series of studies to investigate the knowledge of conversational implicatures among non-native speakers. To conduct his research, he developed a multiple-choice questionnaire focusing on certain aspects of conversational implicatures including the irony, what he called the 'Pope implicature' and Grice's Maxim of Relevance. Therefore, Bouton only focused on certain aspects of conversational implicature in his studies and his questionnaire cannot be applied to measure the whole area of conversational implicature.

### **6.2.3 Teachability of Pragmatics**

One of the main research objectives was to clarify the concept of the teachability of pragmatics domain. Following the introduction of the communicative competence models by Canale and Swain (1980) and Bachman and Palmer (1996), the shift in the view of competence in the foreign language led to the emergence of several theories and methodologies about teaching pragmatics either explicitly or implicitly in the classroom. However, as shown in this study, not only the whole territory of pragmatic is not teachable, but also there are several issues that are associated with the concept of teaching pragmatics which have been less studied before. The clarifications presented below will provide a better understanding of the concept of teaching pragmatics to EFL learners.

One of the issues that is associated with teaching pragmatics is that, most of the theories that advocate this concept only refer to certain areas not the whole realm of pragmatics. The majority of previous studies that have investigated pragmatic competence, the data collection methods and teaching methodologies have a common point which is the choice of speech acts as their subject of study. Therefore, the study of pragmatic competence has been equalled with the study of speech acts. The preference of speech acts over other aspects of pragmatics could be related to the fact that they are simply easier to be taught in EFL classrooms as English learners have a better understanding of refusals and requests, and they are less challenging for teachers to focus on rather than implicatures, presuppositions or even hedges.

While current theories and pedagogies on teaching pragmatics have emphasised on teaching pragmatics in English classrooms whether explicitly or implicitly, and the literature on teaching pragmatics is growing, there are some ambiguities surrounding the concept of teaching pragmatics which have been less explored before. One of the areas which have been neglected so far is, if the concept of teaching can be extended to the whole realm of pragmatics or there are some areas which cannot be taught. To answer this question, this study highlighted those decisive factors like culture that are highly associated with pragmatics, but are difficult to include in any English classrooms. As argued in the previous chapter (refer to section 5.5.2, page 218), the strong correlation between language and culture was the inspiration for a number of researchers to incorporate intercultural aspects of language with language learning pedagogies. However, due to the essence of the concept of culture, combining the two in language classrooms is a difficult task if not impossible.

When we talk about the integration of culture and linguistic aspects of language, we need to consider several issues. First of all, we cannot include all intercultural aspects of a TL in a language lesson as many of them are simply not teachable or if teachable cannot be taught in a language classroom. Even if we manage to include those intercultural aspects of a TL that

are essential to become a pragmatically competent learner, it is very unrealistic to expect that a language learner who has been taught English as a foreign language and has only been familiarised with the intercultural aspects of the English language in textbooks to achieve a similar level of pragmatic competence to those learners who have benefited from staying in an English-speaking country. The knowledge of many cultural aspects can only be acquired by experiencing a real situation or context and this experience cannot be simulated in any language classroom regardless of the setting and whether it is inside or outside the TL environment.

The other issue arises from the term 'culture' itself as when we talk about culture, we cannot define it precisely that what we actually mean. The word 'culture' functions as a large umbrella that covers many areas and is difficult to narrow them down. So, we have a broad field with a long list of subjects that fall within the realm of intercultural language. Consequently, deciding on the inclusion of some intercultural aspects and the omissions of others is another issue when incorporating these two notions.

Besides, the inclusion of intercultural aspects of language in English language classrooms can cause controversy from both the language learners' and their governments' point of view. Culture conveys important concepts like nations' values, beliefs and traditions and many TL learners are reluctant to accept and share the values and beliefs of a TL community. Moreover, intercultural aspects of language and their interpretations vary across different countries and what can be accepted as a formal way of request in one community, could be interpreted as a rude behaviour in another country. Therefore, including the intercultural aspects of language in language classrooms could be detrimental for language lessons as well.

Another issue which is associated with teaching culture of the TL in FL classrooms roots from the resistance of some countries to include the cultural themes of the TL in their

textbooks. For example, as a general national policy, Iranian educational authorities tend to decontextualise authentic or non-authentic English materials to avoid the transfer of any western cultural aspects of English language into Iranian culture. Consequently, in such contexts like Iran, it is nearly impossible to incorporate intercultural aspects of the TL with its linguistic aspects.

Non-linguistic conventions are an important part of the knowledge of pragmatics and without them, acquiring an appropriate level of pragmatic competence is almost impossible. One example of a non-linguistic cultural knowledge is knowing how close we can stand to somebody we are talking to, as keeping distance in real settings varies across cultures. Such information which are culture-specific could be described by verbal means, but it is not linguistic. People learn such social skills through living or staying in that community rather than via classroom simulations. Therefore, it is simplistic and unreasonable to assume that language learners can achieve the knowledge of non-linguistic conventions or the culture of TL only through instructions and in an unreal setting like a foreign language classroom, where in the majority of cases, even the language teachers themselves have not experienced that culture-specific behaviour. Thus, teaching pragmatics cannot be restricted to textbooks and language classrooms as they fail to provide the opportunities to experience and practice non-linguistic conventions of pragmatic knowledge.

The final issue related to the teaching of pragmatics involves those aspects of pragmatics which are non-linguistic. For example, particularised conversational implicatures are crucially dependent on the context in which they take place. Being context-dependent means that these implicatures only exist in that particular context and therefore are not linguistic. Consequently, being non-linguistic means that they cannot be taught in a language classroom as to understand such implicatures, people rely on their general reasoning ability rather than their linguistic knowledge.

Considering these discussions it can be concluded that, while parts of pragmatics are teachable, there are other areas that either cannot be taught or there will be many issues associated with them that makes teaching them a difficult task. Therefore, when we talk about teaching pragmatics, we need to make it clear that we are only referring to some aspects of it, not the whole territory of pragmatics. Also, due to the restrictions that are associated with language classrooms especially in a foreign language setting, teaching pragmatics should not be recommended as the only solution to improve the language learners' pragmatic knowledge of TL. However, there are few researchers like Wallace (2011, p. 274) who have a completely different view as she argues that, “Pragmatics can be successfully acquired in an EFL setting”. To support her claim, she recommends using a situational approach with simulated scenarios or role play as a practical method to teach pragmatics. However, it seems that she has not considered any of the issues that are associated with teaching pragmatics, discussed above.

#### **6.2.4 The Role of Native Speaker**

Another ambiguity surrounding the concept of pragmatic competence which has been studied in this research is the role of native speaker in ILP studies. Unfortunately, previous studies have shown less interest in this salient aspect and the literature does not offer much as well. When assessing the linguistic knowledge of second or foreign language learners, it is easy to idealise a native speaker who has the mastery of the TL and can be used as a model to measure TL learners' knowledge of phonology, syntax or semantics; although, the story is completely different when we deal with pragmatics as there is not a standard definition for a pragmatically competent native speaker. Clearly, we cannot expect every native speaker to be completely competent in the pragmatics as well. The lack of a role model in both cross-

cultural and interlanguage pragmatics studies has led to the assumption that, any native speaker can be employed when measuring non-native speakers' pragmatic knowledge. For example, to interpret the data acquired from the DCTs, researchers use native speakers' responses to evaluate the non-native speakers' answers and any difference between them would be considered as a deviation from the norm. While, we cannot simply accept a native speaker's response as the best choice in that context, since he/she may have deliberately provided an answer which is irrelevant to that context. This view has also been advocated in previous studies. For example, Dewaele (2007) and Siegal (1996) also state that, L2 learners' deviations from the 'native speaker norm' are not necessarily examples of pragmatic failure. Moreover, (Iino 2006, p. 158) argues that, some pragmatic deviations can even be viewed as "charming and cute" in a particular situation.

The use of 'native norm model' in L2 pragmatics has been criticised by many scholars (e.g., Dewaele, 2007; Mori, 2009; Yates, 2010) and challenged by empirical findings (e.g., Barron, 2003; Xu, 2009). Firstly, the problem relates to the concept of 'native', in that whose norm shall represent as the TL norm, as there are several factors that can affect a native speaker's pragmatic competence including socio-economic status, ethnicity, age, gender, education and so on. Secondly, there is little empirical support for the assumption that L2 learners seek to achieve 'native-like competence', which has been assumed in L2 pragmatics literature (LoCastro, 2001). Finally, it has been evidenced that native speakers' interpretation of the TL learners' performance may differ from that of a native speaker (Hassall, 2004). Acknowledging the aforementioned problems, it does not seem ethical to judge foreign or second language learners according to the 'native' pragmatic norm. Consequently, the use of 'native model norm' in current teaching theories of pragmatics and the data collection methods like DCT should be reconsidered.

### 6.3 Developing a Questionnaire

One of the major attainments of this study was designing a new questionnaire to evaluate two important aspects of pragmatics, which are conversational implicatures and presuppositions. Considering the drawbacks of DCTs and other dominant questionnaires including the one developed by Bouton, this study aimed at developing a different data collection instrument which not only does not carry the shortcomings of other tools, but also could be used as a reliable replacement in similar studies by other researchers of this field. To design this questionnaire, following points were considered:

(a) To reduce the impact of the respondents' linguistic knowledge in the TL when answering the questions about their knowledge of pragmatics, the Likert Scale was preferred to open-ended questions that were used in WDCTs and multiple-choice questionnaire developed by Bouton. Unfortunately, previous studies have not considered the impact of the learners' linguistic knowledge when measuring their pragmatic competence and there has not been any major attempt at separating the two when evaluating the latter. The use of the Likert Scale decreases the involvement of learners' linguistic knowledge and responses acquired from this questionnaire are more likely to represent the respondents' pragmatic knowledge.

(b) The inclusion of conversational implicature and presupposition has been one of the first attempts so far to evaluate the knowledge of these two important aspects of pragmatics among foreign language learners in a single study. As discussed earlier, the majority of previous studies that have investigated pragmatic competence among second or foreign language learners have used the knowledge of speech acts as their subject of study, with a few exceptions like those studies by Bouton (1988, 1994, 1999) and Taguchi (2002, 2007).

(c) One of the issues related to the questions used in DCT, like the one designed by Blum-Kulka (1982) or Beebe et al. (1990) which have been used extensively whether in original



format or as a modified version by many researchers across the world is that the initial scenario prior to each question or the conversations are long. The inclusion of a long scenario or conversation makes the reading time and response time longer as well. Through the inclusion of a very short summary about the context or the relationship between people that are involved in the dialogue, this issue has been resolved in this questionnaire.

(d) Another feature of the questionnaire developed in this study is the inclusion of various aspects of both implicatures and presupposition. Unlike similar questionnaires developed by Bouton and Taguchi that focus on certain aspects of implicatures, this questionnaire targeted a broader range of implicatures. Among the twelve questions about conversational implicatures, the Gricean Maxims including the Maxim of Relevance, various aspects of the Maxim of Manner and the Maxim of Quantity were all included. Moreover, the other half of the questionnaire covers a wide range of lexical triggers that generate presuppositions as well as some general English words that convey a conventional meaning. Therefore, in comparison to the other existing questionnaires, this is a more reliable data collection instrument.

(e) Unlike the DCTs which use a 'native model norm' to evaluate the responses gathered from non-native speakers in terms of using the appropriate strategy when refusing an offer or making a request, this questionnaire was designed in a way that it did not need a control group to evaluate the collected data, since the correct response to each question was clear and it was not at question. The native speakers who took part in this study just contributed to the researcher to evaluate the reliability of the instrument and to control the level of difficulty of questions.

(f) The response time to questionnaire developed by the researcher and the DCT developed by Beebe et al. (1990) was similar and respondents were given thirty minutes to answer each

one of them; however, the number of questions in the questionnaire developed in this study (24 questions) were twice as the number of questions in the DCT developed by Beebe et al (1990). Using the Likert scale contributed to decrease the response time to each question. This led to the inclusion of more questions to cover different aspects of CI and presupposition in this study which increased the reliability of the collected data. On the other hand, the DCT developed by Beebe et al. (1990) uses open-ended questions. Writing down a sentence while considering the social status difference among two people will increase the time that each respondent need to respond. Considering the number of questions that were covered in the questionnaire and DCT, it can be argued that the data acquired from the former with more questions is more reliable as well.

#### **6.4 Main Research Findings from the Questionnaire**

In the second part of this research which was a quantitative study, three different groups including the pilot group, the control group and the study group answered to 24 questions about conversational implicatures and presuppositions in English. The outcome of the pilot study which was carried out earlier was used to examine the reliability of the questions and to make any possible amendments prior to applying them to the other two groups. The study group were fifty newly-admitted international students of UK universities whose their first language was Farsi. The results of the study indicated that Iranian English learners who have learned English as a foreign language in Iran and have not stayed in an English-speaking country, lack the required pragmatic knowledge. This findings of this research also overlap with the outcomes of other studies that have been carried out in recent years to evaluate Iranian English learners' pragmatic knowledge, although nearly all of them have focused on the knowledge of speech acts and this is the first attempt at measuring two other aspects of

pragmatics among Iranian English learners. According to the findings, while the mean score of responses to all twenty four questions that were used in this study was 73.25%, this figure for questions about conversational implicature and presupposition were 84.50% and 62.83% respectively. While there was a major gap between the mean score to questions about CI between the study group and the control group, the gap was even bigger for questions about presupposition, as there was a significant difference (around 22%) in Iranian learners' responses to two various aspects of pragmatics. As discussed earlier, Iranian students learn English as a foreign language and with restricted access or no access to teaching materials that have been enriched with intercultural aspects of the TL. They also have a with very slim chance of contact with English native speakers before entering English-speaking countries for higher education or other purposes. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that they do not have the required pragmatic knowledge when interacting with native speakers. Comparing the responses to conversational implicatures and presupposition, it is quite clear that they performed better when answering the questions about the former. If we consider Grice's Cooperative Principle and his claim that the four Maxims that he introduced function universally, we can probably explain why Iranian learners achieved higher scores when answering the questions about CI in comparison to questions about presupposition. On the other hand, the study group's low mean score (62.83%) on the other half of questions which were about presuppositions and conventional implicatures indicates that the respondents were not aware of the extra layer of meaning that is associated with certain English words used in this study. To identify the presuppositions or the implicatures that are conventionally linked with these words, learners must know more than the literal meaning of them. Unfortunately, Iranian English learners who have only been taught about the literal meaning of vocabularies and were unaware of the hidden meaning of the lexical triggers, were unable

to identify them. To highlight the study group's failure to respond to questions about presupposition I refer to two questions that generated very low scores in this study.

*Question (4)*

*Jack who participated in a marathon race for a charity is talking to her mum, Margaret.*

*Margaret: Did you finish the race, Jack?*

*Jack: I had almost finished the race that felt a sharp pain in my left knee, and hardly managed to do it.*

*According to this conversation, Jack didn't finish the race because of a pain in his left knee.*

Among twelve questions about presupposition and conventional implicatures, question number four led to the least number of correct responses among all twenty four questions. Only eight respondents answered correctly to this question which was about the lexical item of 'managed to' and the mean score was 18%. The term 'managed to' which is considered as a presupposition trigger as argued by Karttunen (1971b) or a lexical item for a conventional implicature as stated by Huang (2007), conveys the meaning that despite a difficulty, something has been fulfilled; nevertheless, only few respondents were familiar with this associated meaning. While only few respondents answered correctly to this question, the inclusion of the adverb of 'hardly' could be have affected the responses to this question.

*Question (6)*

*John is talking to his brother, Josh, about their neighbour who is a wealthy man.*

*Josh: I saw our neighbour in his new Rolls Royce yesterday.*

*John: He is rich, but he is not a happy man.*

*On the basis of John's utterance, you are likely to conclude that rich people are usually happy as well.*

Another question with a very low mean score (20%) was question number six which was about the conventional meaning that is associated with the word 'but'. As argued by Huang (2007, p. 56), the term 'but' contains the conventional implicature of contrast. Therefore, the sentence above implies that rich people are happy too.

Presupposition triggers that were employed in this study are general lexical items in English that can be used in various contexts and conversations. Therefore, to guarantee a successful conversation with English native speakers and without any communication breakdowns, it seems essential for Iranian English learners to improve their knowledge of these words and the presupposition that is associated with them.

## **6.5 Discussions on the Data Collected from the DCT**

In line with the questionnaire, the study group also completed the DCT developed by Beebe et al. (1990) to further demonstrate the weaknesses of this instrument at measuring pragmatic knowledge. They responded to twelve questions about the speech act of refusal and the responses of 37 American NNSs from another study by Allami and Naeimi (2011) were used as the control group. All the collected data were coded based on the taxonomy of refusals (see Appendices) developed by Beebe et al. (1990). As expected, the findings only suggested a difference in employing strategies by NSs and NNSs when refusing. However, as discussed in chapter four (see section 4.12, page 193), even employing different strategies cannot be considered as the lack of the knowledge of speech acts among NNSs.

One of the major differences between Iranian NNSs and American NSs is the use of regret by Iranians as a strategy while refusing an offer. Showing regret prior to a refusal is a polite way of turning down an offer in Iranian culture. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that we find

that a number of respondents chose to use this strategy in their sentences. According to this study, 4% of Iranian respondents who were refusing an offer from a person with a lower status, 30% of them who were refusing an offer from a person with equal status and 24% of them while refusing an offer from a person with a higher status used the regret strategy. On the other hand, among 37 American respondents who participated in Allami and Naeimi's (2010), only 4% of who were refusing an offer from a person with higher status, used regret prior to a refusal. Despite turning down an offer, through using a regret strategy, Iranian respondents are trying to seem polite. But can we interpret extra politeness as the lack of pragmatic competence in the TL? To clarify this point, I have used the example below:

(1) A father is talking to her five year old daughter.

Father: Could you please bring me a glass of water, my sweetie?

Daughter: Yes!

Here, we have a father who as a person with high status making a request from his daughter with a low status. Considering this difference, we should not expect him to be very polite and he should be making a more direct request; however, he does not follow the expected rule and makes his request to sound very polite. But do we label this father and his extra politeness as a person with the lack of pragmatic knowledge? The answer is no, as in many circumstances and for different reasons we would like to sound more polite and we cannot relate this to the lack of pragmatic competence.

Another issue that was observed in this study was the existence of several grammatical mistakes in answers given to the DCT. As discussed earlier, in the DCT developed by Beebe et al. (1990), respondents should complete the task by answering to the open-ended questions. So, as foreign language learners, there is a high possibility of making grammatical mistakes when completing the task and Iranian learners were no exception. However, Beebe et al.

(1990) do not have any recommendations of how to address these mistakes, whether to simply ignore them or they should be considered when evaluating the responses. As there is no mention of this matter in their study, I assume that they only target the strategy that was used by non-native speakers when refusing an offer, not any possible grammatical mistake. However, in real L1 settings, we do not expect people just to follow the pragmatic rules and ignore their linguistic accuracy as the latter can affect the success or failure of our communication.

## **6.6 Challenges of improving Iranian Learners' Pragmatic Competence**

In this part, I present the main issues that Iranian learners are currently facing which will act as major barriers for them to improve their pragmatic competence in the TL. The listing of these issues and the recommendations of how to tackle them may contribute to a reconsideration of the decisions to be made by Iranian authorities in terms of the way English language is viewed and presented at schools and universities.

Since many aspects of pragmatics are context-dependent and associated closely with the TL environment, it seems illogical to expect foreign language learners to demonstrate a reasonable level of pragmatic competence without experiencing any sort of stay in that setting. Therefore, they should be given the opportunity to spend a semester in an English-speaking country to familiarise themselves with those rules and conventions of appropriate use of language. But considering the current status of the Iranian educational system and its weaknesses, the following recommendations may contribute to improve the general pragmatic knowledge of Iranian English learners.

One of the main challenging factors for Iranians is the classroom environment. Compared to the environment outside the classroom, language classrooms have been considered poor

environments for developing pragmatic ability in a target language because they generally offer low interaction with native speakers of the target language. Moreover, as the medium of instructions and interactions in Iranian English classrooms is Farsi, this does not provide any opportunity for them to use their English knowledge in any context. Therefore, schools and colleges should use English as the medium of instruction and interaction in English classrooms to provide more time and opportunity for students to practice what they learn in real communications.

The pragmatic proficiency of EFL teachers is another decisive factor which can have a positive or negative effect on learners' communicative knowledge. In a foreign language context like Iran, teachers are non-native speakers of English language and they need to be well-prepared for teaching the pragmatic aspect of knowledge of language. Unfortunately, many Iranian English teachers are not aware of the important role of pragmatic aspects in learners' communication. As somebody who studied all educational levels from primary school to university, I hardly encountered any English teacher who had focused on pragmatics in an English classroom.

Another important factor that can possibly contribute to improve the pragmatic knowledge of Iranian learners is integrating the intercultural aspects of language into ELT textbooks. Language teaching materials need to frequently include pragmatic materials so as to help learners to develop pragmatic competence. However, language class activities in Iran usually focus on decontextualised language exercises, which do not expose learners to the types of sociolinguistic input that facilitates pragmatic competence acquisition.

Another challenging subject is the size of English classrooms in EFL contexts. Teachers in most cases complain for the unmanageable class size in Iranian schools. Large classes, limited contact hours and little opportunity for intercultural communication are some of the



features of the EFL context that hinder pragmatic learning (Eslami-Rasekh et al., 2004; Rose, 1999). As pointed by Eslami- Rasekh (2004), this problem is quite visible in Iranian schools where a high number of students and limited English teaching hours may force the teachers to focus more on raising learners' grammatical competence at the expense of ignoring pragmatic competence.

Finally, understanding teachers' perceptions and beliefs is important because teachers, heavily involved in various teaching and learning processes, are practitioners of educational principles and theories. Teachers have a primary role in determining what is needed or what would work best with their students. Findings from research on teachers' perceptions and beliefs indicate that these perceptions and beliefs not only have considerable influence on their instructional practices and classroom behaviour, but also are related to their students' achievement. In most cases teachers do not give attention to pragmatic/communicative functions in the classroom. Omaggio (as cited in Martinez-Flor, 2008) gives the following three reasons for neglecting intercultural/pragmatic competence in the language class:

- (a) Teachers usually have an overcrowded curriculum to cover and lack the time to spend on teaching culture, which requires a lot of work;
- (b) Many teachers have a limited knowledge of the target culture and, therefore, afraid to teach it;
- (c) Teachers are often confused about what cultural aspects to cover (p.165).

Although typically an ESL environment is thought to be superior to an EFL environment for learning language, especially the pragmatics of a language, some studies show that this is a weeping generalisation and not necessarily true. Furthermore, some think that lack of exposure to the target language in an EFL setting hinders students' development of pragmatics. While we cannot expect to cover all aspects of pragmatics in an EFL classroom,

as previous studies have shown, well-designed textbooks and explicit pragmatics instruction could be effective at least to teach those more tangible aspects of this concept like speech acts.

Savignon (2006, p.10) discusses about shaping or designing language curriculum that entails five components out of which one is “language for a purpose, or language experience”. Language for a purpose or language experience is “the use of language for real and immediate communicative goals”. She argues that for not all learners are taking a new language for the same reasons, teachers should do the following in selecting language inputs:

It is important for teachers to pay attention, when selecting and sequencing materials, to the specific communicative needs of the learners. Regardless of how distant or unspecific the communicative needs of the learners, every program with a goal of communicative competence should pay heed to opportunities for meaningful language use, opportunities to focus on meaning as well as form (pp. 11-12).

## **6.7 Research Contributions and Recommendations for Future Studies**

This study attempted at highlighting those salient factors that are associated with pragmatics, including those elements that are involved in teaching or measuring this aspect in cross-cultural pragmatics or ILP research, but have been either disregarded or been less investigated in previous studies. Through finding the gaps in the literature of pragmatic competence in target language, I demonstrated that most teaching methodologies and pedagogies in this domain suffer from two drawbacks and they need to be revised. Firstly, they refer to some aspects of pragmatics like speech acts while ignoring the other aspects of pragmatics. Secondly, these theories and pedagogies are based on one major assumption that

the whole area of pragmatics is simply teachable, but as shown in this study, this is an incorrect assumption.

This study also revealed the ambiguities that have surrounded the notion of pragmatics in communicative competence theories and tried to provide a clearer picture of this concept. Although, some of these topics that have been listed in this research like 'the role of the native speaker' in pragmatics research have the potential to be the subject of a separate study.

Another major objective of this research has been the introduction and development of a new data collection instrument in cross-cultural and interlanguage pragmatics studies. To design a new data collection tool in pragmatics domain, I looked at similar data collection tools and questionnaires in order to identify their shortcomings. Previous studies that had evaluated the advantages and disadvantages of DCTs had failed to identify a structural issue with this popular data collection tool. While DCT aims at measuring only the pragmatic knowledge of participants, it involves their linguistic knowledge to a high degree as well. Through replacing the open-ended questions with a Likert scale, I minimised the involvement of learners' linguistic knowledge when answering questions about pragmatics. As argued earlier, in comparison to similar data collection devices in this area, the questionnaire developed in this study is easier to apply, the collected data can be interpreted quickly and it does not need a control group to analyse the data. Moreover, while for the purpose of this study, I only focused on two aspects of pragmatics including implicatures and presupposition, with minor adjustments, this questionnaire can be used to measure other aspects of pragmatics as well.

## **6.8 Research Limitations**

While this study revealed a broad variety of findings and implications, it should be noted that the research was also constrained by a number of limitations, which the most relevant ones are discussed below:

Some of the ideas outlined in my study are still under development. Therefore, these ideas will not replace, but rather complement the existing theories and approaches to teaching pragmatics in EFL settings. Moreover, some limitations were arisen from the research participants and the process of data collection. Due to the restricted number of Iranian students who were meeting the research criteria, I could only include 50 participants as my study group. Clearly, the inclusion of more participants could improve the validity of my data. Besides, despite administering the questionnaire on my pilot group, I feel that a couple of questions targeting the knowledge of presupposition (e.g. question 4) could be amended to avoid any confusion among respondents. The difference between the background of my pilot group and study group has been another limitation of my study and it would have been more ideal if the former were also native speakers of Farsi. However, a limited access to native speakers of Farsi forced me to include participants with different nationalities, but with similar knowledge of English as a foreign language (Overall IELTS score of 6-7). Although this research did not aim at comparing the data collected through the DCT and the questionnaire developed in this study, the findings could even be more useful if the latter could also investigate the knowledge of speech acts as well.

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## APPENDIX A

This Appendix is the questionnaire that was developed and applied in this study.

1) Holly and Nick are having lunch at the university café.

Nick: 'One Direction' is coming to Manchester this weekend.

Holly: I have two term papers due this Monday.

On the basis of Holly's response, Nick is likely to conclude that Holly will attend the concert.

a) Strongly disagree   b) Disagree   c) Neither agree nor disagree   d) Agree   e) Strongly agree

2) Being asked 'Who left the door open?' would lead you to believe that someone left the door open.

a) Strongly disagree   b) Disagree   c) Neither agree nor disagree   d) Agree   e) Strongly agree

3) Susan is talking to her friend, Amy, about her graduation ceremony.

Amy: Have you invited Isabella and Julie to your graduation ceremony?

Susan: I've invited Julie.

On the basis of Susan's utterance, Amy is likely to conclude that Isabella is not invited to Susan's graduation ceremony.

a) Strongly disagree   b) Disagree   c) Neither agree nor disagree   d) Agree   e) Strongly agree

4) Jack who participated in a marathon race for a charity is talking to her mum, Margaret.

Margaret: Did you finish the race, Jack?

Jack: I had almost finished the race that felt a sharp pain in my left knee, and hardly managed to do it.

According to this conversation, Jack didn't finish the race because of a pain in his left knee.

a) Strongly disagree   b) Disagree   c) Neither agree nor disagree   d) Agree   e) Strongly agree

5) Joe and Kate are colleagues.

Joe: Would you like a cup of coffee?

Kate: We have run out of sugar and I like mine sweet.

According to Kate's response, Joe is likely to conclude that she will have a cup of coffee.

a) Strongly disagree   b) Disagree   c) Neither agree nor disagree   d) Agree   e) Strongly agree

6) John is talking to his brother, Josh, about their neighbour who is a wealthy man.

Josh: I saw our neighbour in his new Rolls Royce yesterday.

John: He is rich, but he is not a happy man.

On the basis of John's utterance, you are likely to conclude that rich people are usually happy as well.

a) Strongly disagree   b) Disagree   c) Neither agree nor disagree   d) Agree   e) Strongly agree

7) Katie and George are jogging together.

George: Can we slow down a bit as I am out of breath?

Katie: I am glad that I don't smoke.

If you hear this conversation, you are likely to believe that George smokes.

a) Strongly disagree   b) Disagree   c) Neither agree nor disagree   d) Agree   e) Strongly agree

8) Leanne is talking to her friend, Julia.

Leanne: I saw Sally's husband in a new car yesterday.

If you hear this utterance, you are likely to believe that Sally is married.

a) Strongly disagree   b) Disagree   c) Neither agree nor disagree   d) Agree   e) Strongly agree

9) If you hear the sentence 'No horses in the farm have been vaccinated', you are likely to believe that there are not any horses in the farm.

a) Strongly disagree   b) Disagree   c) Neither agree nor disagree   d) Agree   e) Strongly agree

10) John and Thomas are trying the new buffet restaurant in town. John is eating something but Thomas can't decide what to have next.

Thomas: "How do you like what you're having?"

John: The cutlery set is new.

Based on John's utterance, Thomas is likely to conclude that John does not like his food.

a) Strongly disagree   b) Disagree   c) Neither agree nor disagree   d) Agree   e) Strongly agree

11) Amy and Lucy are housemates. Amy expects a parcel from her family via post.

Amy: Has my parcel arrived?

Lucy: Your parcel still has not arrived.

If you overhear this utterance, you are likely to conclude that Amy's parcel was expected to have arrived by now.

a) Strongly disagree   b) Disagree   c) Neither agree nor disagree   d) Agree   e) Strongly agree

12) Joseph and Arthur are professors at a university. They are talking about the essay of a student called Jessy.

Joseph: How did you find Jessy's term essay on thermodynamics?

Arthur: It was well-typed.

According to Arthur, Jessy's term paper was good.

a) Strongly disagree   b) Disagree   c) Neither agree nor disagree   d) Agree   e) Strongly agree

13) Joe and Allen are Friends.

Joe: How is your neighbour now?

Allen: He stopped ignoring my morning greetings.

According to Allen, his neighbour didn't use to greet him in the morning.

a) Strongly disagree   b) Disagree   c) Neither agree nor disagree   d) Agree   e) Strongly agree

14) The sentence, 'Sally regrets telling Bob the truth' would lead you to believe that the truth hasn't been told to Bob yet.

a) Strongly disagree   b) Disagree   c) Neither agree nor disagree   d) Agree   e) Strongly agree

15) Nigel has a meeting with his mortgage advisor to apply for a mortgage on a house he has seen.

Mortgage Advisor: To be eligible for the loan, you must have 10% deposit which is £15,000. Do you have this amount, sir?

Nigel: Yes, I do.

According to the Nigel's response, he has £15,000 deposit, maybe more.

a) Strongly disagree   b) Disagree   c) Neither agree nor disagree   d) Agree   e) Strongly agree

16) Ryan and Leighton are talking about their friend, Alex.

Ryan: Do you know where Alex has planned to go this summer?

Leighton: He will either return to France or will go to Spain for his holidays.

Based on Leighton's utterance, you are likely to conclude that Alex has been not in France before.

a) Strongly disagree   b) Disagree   c) Neither agree nor disagree   d) Agree   e) Strongly agree

17) Adam and Sarah bought an apartment in New York.

The sentence above sentence is likely to lead you that Adam and Sarah bought separate apartments in New York.

a) Strongly disagree   b) Disagree   c) Neither agree nor disagree   d) Agree   e) Strongly agree

18) Julie and Janet are friends. Janet goes to bed early when she is tired.

Julie: Shall we go to the cinema tonight?

Janet: I've had a long day.

Based on Janet's response, Julie is likely to conclude that Janet is interested to go to cinema tonight.

a) Strongly disagree   b) Disagree   c) Neither agree nor disagree   d) Agree   e) Strongly agree

19) I went to our local pub last night. I had two pints.

If you hear this utterance, you are likely to conclude that the speaker went to the pub first and then had two pints there.

a) Strongly disagree   b) Disagree   c) Neither agree nor disagree   d) Agree   e) Strongly agree

20) The utterance, 'Susan didn't realise that Pam had left early' would lead you to believe that Pam had not left early.



a) Strongly disagree   b) Disagree   c) Neither agree nor disagree   d) Agree   e) Strongly agree

21) Sally and Liam who are roommates, are in the university café. Sally start talking about their other roommate Lisa.

Sally: Lisa can be such a cow sometimes.

Liam: Have you heard about the university's new developments?

If you hear this conversation, you are likely to believe that Liam is interested to continue this conversation about Lisa.

a) Strongly disagree   b) Disagree   c) Neither agree nor disagree   d) Agree   e) Strongly agree

22) After Janet has withdrawn money from a cash machine, her friend Mike approaches her.

Mike: Jill, I need some cash.

Janet: Your debit card also works on this machine.

Based on Janet's utterance, you are likely to believe that Janet has no intention of lending money to Mike.

a) Strongly disagree   b) Disagree   c) Neither agree nor disagree   d) Agree   e) Strongly agree

23) Overhearing the sentence 'Peter is in the room too' would lead you to believe that someone else is in the room.

a) Strongly disagree   b) Disagree   c) Neither agree nor disagree   d) Agree   e) Strongly agree

24) Julia and Samantha are talking about Leah's Wedding Ceremony.

Julia: Are you invited to Leah's Wedding Ceremony?

Samantha: Of course, I am. Even Lucy's mum is invited.

If you listen to this conversation, you are likely to conclude that Lucy's mum was among the first people to be invited.

a) Strongly disagree   b) Disagree   c) Neither agree nor disagree   d) Agree   e) Strongly agree

## APPENDIX B

This Appendix is the DCT developed by Beebe et al. (1990) that was applied in this study.

1. You are the owner of a bookstore. One of your best workers asks to speak to you in private.

**Worker:** As you know, I've been here just over a year now and I know you've been pleased with my work. I really enjoy working here, but to be quite honest, I really need an increase in pay.

**You:**.....

**Worker:** Then I guess I'll have to look for another job.

2. You are a junior in college. You attend classes regularly and take good notes. Your classmate often misses a class and asks you for the lecture notes.

**Classmate:** Oh God! We have an exam tomorrow but I don't have notes from last week. I am sorry to ask you this, but could you please lend me your notes once again?

**You:**.....

**Classmate:** O.K., then I guess I'll have to ask somebody else.

3. You are the president of a printing company. A salesman from a printing machine company invites you to one of the most expensive restaurants in New York.

**Salesman:** We have met several times to discuss your purchase of my company's products. I was wondering if you would like to be my guest at Lutece in order to firm up a contract?

**You:**.....

**Salesman:** Perhaps another time.

4. You are a top executive at a very large accounting firm. One day the boss calls you into his office.

**Boss:** Next Sunday my wife and I are having a little party. I know it's short notice but I am hoping all my top executives will be there with their wives. What do you say?

**You:**.....

**Boss:** That's too bad. I was hoping everyone would be there.

5. You are at a friend's house watching T.V. He/She offer you a snack.

**You:** Thanks, but no thanks. I've been eating like a pig and I feel terrible. My clothes don't even fit me.

**Friend:** Hey, why don't you try this new diet I've benne telling you about?

**You:**.....

**Friend:** You should try it anyway.

6. You're at your desk trying to find a report that your boss just asked for. While you're searching through the mess on your desk, your boss walks over.

**Boss:** You know, maybe you should try and organize yourself better. I always write myself little notes to remind me of things. Perhaps you should give it a try!

**You:**.....

**Boss:** Well, it's an idea anyway.

7. You arrive home and notice that your cleaning lady is extremely upset. She comes rushing to you.

**Cleaning lady:** Oh God, I'm so sorry! I had an awful accident. While I was cleaning I bumped into the table and your china vase fell and broke. I feel just terrible about that. I'll pay for it.

**You:** (Knowing that the cleaning lady is supporting three children.)

**You:**.....

**Cleaning lady:** No, I'd feel better if I paid for it.

**8.** You're a language teacher at a university. It is just about the middle of the term now and one of your students asks to speak to you.

**Student:** Ah, excuse me, some of the students were talking after class recently and kind of feel that the class would be better if you could give us more practice in conversation and less on grammar.

**You:**.....

**Student:** O.K., it was only a suggestion.

**9.** You are at a friend's house for lunch.

**Friend:** How about another piece of cake?

**You:**.....

**Friend:** Come on, just a little piece?

**You:**.....

**10.** A friend invites you to dinner, but you really can't stand this friend's husband/wife.

**Friend:** How about coming over for dinner Sunday night? We're having a small dinner party.

**You:**.....

**Friend:** O.K., maybe another time.

**11.** You've been working in an advertising agency now for some time. The boss offers you a raise and promotion, but it involves moving. You don't want to go. Today, the boss calls you into his office.

**Boss:** I'd like to offer you an executive position in our new office in Hicktown. It's a great town only 3 hours from here by plane. And, a nice raise comes with the position.

**You:**

.....

**Boss:** Well, maybe you should give it some more thought before turning it down.

**12.** You are at the office in a meeting with your boss. It is getting close to the end of the day and you want to leave work.

**Boss:** If you don't mind, I'd like you to spend an extra hour or two tonight so that we can finish up with this work.

**You:**

.....

**Boss:** That's too bad. I was hoping you could stay.

## APPENDIX C

### Classification of Refusal Strategies by Beebe et al. (1990)

Refusals can be classified into two categories:

#### I. Direct

1. Using performative verbs (*I refuse*)
2. Non performative statement
  - "No"
  - Negative willingness/ability (*I can't./I won't./I don't think so*)

#### II. Indirect

1. Statement of regret (*I'm sorry.../I feel terrible...*)
2. Wish (*I wish I could help you...*)
3. Excuse, reason, explanation (*My children will be home that night./I have a headache*)
4. Statement of alternative
  - I can do X instead of Y (*I'd rather.../I'd prefer...*)
  - Why don't you do X instead of Y (*Why don't you ask someone else?*)
5. Set condition for future or past acceptance (*If you had asked me earlier, I would have...*)
6. Promise of future acceptance (*I'll do it next time./I promise I'll.../Next time I'll...*)
7. Statement of principle (*I never do business with friends.*)
8. Statement of philosophy (*One can't be too careful.*)
9. Attempt to dissuade interlocutor
  - Threat or statement of negative consequences to the requester (*I won't be any fun tonight to refuse an invitation*)
  - Guilt trip (waitress to customers who want to sit a while: *I can't make a living off people who just order coffee.*)
  - Criticize the request/requester (statement of negative feeling or opinion; insult/attack (*Who do you think you are?/That's a terrible idea!*))

- Request for help, empathy, and assistance by dropping or holding the request
- Let interlocutor off the hook (*Don't worry about it./That's okay./You don't have to.*)
- Self-defence (*I'm trying my best./I'm doing all I can do.*)

#### 10. Acceptance that functions as a refusal

- Unspecific or indefinite reply
- Lack of enthusiasm

#### 11. Avoidance

- Nonverbal
  - Silence
  - Hesitation
  - Doing nothing
  - Physical departure
- Verbal
  - Topic switch
  - Joke
  - Repetition of part of request (*Monday?*)
  - Postponement (*I'll think about it.*)
  - Hedge (*Gee, I don't know./I'm not sure*)

## APPENDIX D



University of Salford  
School of Arts & Media

### Consent form for students

**Title of Study:** A new look at pragmatic competence: an exploration of pragmatic competence of native speakers of Farsi

**Researcher:** .....

**Email Address:** .....

**Telephone Number:** .....

#### Introduction

You are invited to consider participating in this research study. We will be evaluating the notion of pragmatic competence in order to challenge the current theories of communicative competence. This form will explain the research objectives and your rights as participant. If you decide to participate in this study, please sign and date this form.

#### Explanation of the study

This study aims at challenging the current theories of communicative competence as well the dominant data collection instruments in pragmatic research known as Discourse Completion



Task (DCT). To collect the required data, using a questionnaire developed by the researcher, the pragmatic knowledge of an experimental group and a control group will be assessed. These data will contribute to a better understanding of the notion of pragmatic competence and to fill the gap in the literature.

### **Confidentiality**

All the information collected in this study will only be used for research purposes explained above. Also, the researcher will not reveal the identity of research participants at any stage of this study. All the collected data will be saved on a personal laptop which will be secured with a passcode and will be only accessible by the researcher.

### **Researcher's statement**

I have fully explained this study to the participant and have answered all their questions about this study.

Signature of Researcher: ..... Date: .....

### **Student's Consent**

(  ) I confirm that I have read the information provided in this Consent Form and all my questions were answered by the researcher to my satisfaction. I voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

(  ) I do not agree to participate in this study.

Signature of Student: ..... Date: .....