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Second language pragmatic ability: Individual differences according to environment

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Abstract

The aims of this paper are to review research literature on the role that the second language (L2) and foreign language (FL) environments actually play in the development of learners' target language (TL) pragmatic ability, and also to speculate as to the extent to which individual factors can offset the advantages that learners may have by being in the L2 context while they are learning. The paper starts by defining pragmatics and by problematizing this definition. Then, attention is given to research literature dealing with the learning of pragmatics in an L2 context compared to an FL context. Next, studies on the role of pragmatic transfer are considered, with subsequent attention given to the literature on the incidence of pragmatic transfer in FL as opposed to L2 contexts. Finally, selected studies on the role of motivation in the development of pragmatic ability are examined. In the discussion section, a number of pedagogical suggestions are offered: the inclusion of pragmatics in teacher development, the use of authentic pragmatics materials, motivating learners to be more savvy about pragmatics, and supporting learners in accepting or challenging native-speaker norms. Suggestions as to further research in the field are also offered.

Keywords: L2 vs. FL pragmatics; pragmalinguistics; sociopragmatics; pragmatic transfer; motivation; DCT

1. Introduction

This article is intended to be a think piece regarding factors in the development of target language (TL) pragmatic ability with an eye to how nonnatives (NNSs) can best attain it. No effort here is made to provide a comprehensive review of literature on second language (L2) versus foreign language (FL) pragmatics since that can be found elsewhere (e.g., Cohen, in press). Rather, some of the more seminal works involving language transfer and motivation as regards pragmatic development are cited in an effort to better understand the factors that actually determine pragmatic ability. After defining pragmatics, the article considers the factors involved in the learning of pragmatics in an L2 context as compared to an FL context. Research on the transfer of pragmatic knowledge across languages and on motivation to improve pragmatic ability are then addressed. The discussion section provides pedagogical suggestions such as that of including pragmatics in teacher development, the use of authentic pragmatics materials, motivating learners to be more savvy about pragmatics, and supporting learners in accepting or challenging native speaker (NS) norms. Suggestions as to further research in the field are also offered.

2. Defining pragmatics

In recent decades, the goal of most L2 learning has been to become communicatively competent and to use the language necessary for a given social context (Hymes, 1972). The construct of pragmatics has been recognized as an essential aspect of communicative competence (Canale & Swain, 1980; Canale, 1983), especially as it is tied to grammatical knowledge (Bachman & Palmer, 1996). Only recently, however, has pragmatic ability been recognized as a distinct construct worthy of research and assessment in its own right to discover implied meaning through the use of contextual, sociolinguistic, sociocultural, psychological, and rhetorical factors (Purpura, 2004). Attempts to define pragmatic ability require a definition of pragmatics as a whole, a task that has been difficult given the inherently fluid nature of this construct—namely, the fact that pragmatics manifests itself in context-dependent ways (Grabowski, 2009). Perhaps the clearest and most concise is an oft-cited definition from Crystal (1985) that focuses on the interactional nature of this construct:

Pragmatics is 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. (p. 240)

So, pragmatic ability can be defined as knowledge of how to use language to achieve goals in language interaction, or rather, competence at handling language interaction in a sociocultural context (Kasper, 1997). Pragmatic ability entails knowing the extent to which an utterance is acceptable and appropriate to other users of the language in conveying the speaker's intended meaning. But here is where the definitional problems start. Whose pragmatics serve as the benchmark? What pragmatics are appropriate for what has now become the typical U.S. K-12 public school classroom with English native-language (L1) instructors, where both the more traditional and the more alternative classroom environments are increasingly multiethnic? And what if the teachers are highly competent NNSs of English? To what extent would their pragmatics be mainstream? And is the preservation of mainstream pragmatics (whatever that might be from an academic or sociocultural perspective) even a value worthy of promoting, in the face of pressures to promote diversity and to respect students' wishes to express their own self-identity?

There are always likely to be subcultures according to region of the USA, the age of the instructor and of the students, the socioeconomic status of those involved, and the domains of language and cultural interaction (e.g., hobbies, sports, schooling, and religion; cf. Boxer, 2002). In addition, the intellectual and emotional mindset and aspirations of the individuals play a role. Certain students may, for example, desire to adopt a new or different identity, perhaps because of peer pressure, or because of the frustration inherent in language learning. For example, some students who constantly compare themselves to NSs or more advanced NNSs may have the feeling that if only they were so-and-so, then they could perform this or the other function without problems. The Concordia Language Villages in Minnesota intensive summer courses give students the option when they design their wooden nameplate to change their name to whatever TL name they would like, partly to have this new persona be learning the language. Many EFL programs around the world adopt a similar system, allowing students to pick an English name for the class. This practice is not without criticism, however. When the first author worked at a private English language school in Vietnam, many fellow teachers felt the adoption of English names within a classroom was more for the benefit of a teacher unschooled in the pronunciation of Vietnamese tones, rather than to aid learners in adopting a TL persona. It is therefore evident that the real purposes of such practices should be relayed to the students who are meant to benefit from their adoption.

In addition to variations in L1 pragmatics according to subgroup, there are the situations where L2 speakers of American English need to interact without any L1 speakers around. As English is no longer the sole property of Anglophone countries (Rossner, 1990), NSs of British and American English are currently a

minority compared to L2 speakers of English. Whose pragmatics should be used in such situations? This is clearly an important issue for consideration.

For the purpose of simplicity in this article, we will assume that we are talking about learners of the mainstream variety of the TL, and that this is the variety upon which norms for pragmatic appropriateness are based. These then are the norms relied upon in the instructional materials and popular media both for learners studying in the community where the language is spoken (i.e., L2 learners) and for learners studying outside of this community (i.e., FL learners), presumably at some distance, in another country.

Certain pragmatic behaviors have been further categorized in the research literature into pragmlinguistic and sociopragmatic components, a distinction which may be familiar to some readers of this article and not to others. According to Leech (1983) and Thomas (1983), *pragmlinguistics* refers to the linguistic resources needed for communicative acts or *speech acts* (e.g., requests, apologies, compliments, and complaints) involving pragmatics, and pragmlinguistic failure may occur when interlocutors use inappropriate linguistic forms. It may seem trivial but use of a given language form may be what irks an NS. So, for example, the NNS of English accidentally bumps into another holiday shopper causing the other person some physical discomfort. Taking a line from the textbook, the NNS says, "I'm very sorry." The disgruntled shopper is not assuaged by the apology because she would expect at least "I'm really sorry," if not an offer for repair since it conveys more concern. The problem is pragmlinguistic since it is a question of choosing appropriate intensifiers for expressing the apology (see Cohen, Olshtain, & Rosenstein, 1986, p. 69).

Sociopragmatics, on the other hand, refers to the sociological realm of pragmatics—to appropriate social behavior in the TL community. Sociopragmatic failure takes place when the language user, say, chooses to employ a speech act such as complimenting someone in a context where it is inappropriate within the given culture to do so. For example, complimenting Israeli secretaries for doing a perfunctory job well is not necessarily positively received since the implication is that the other work that they do is not up to par. This is a challenging area both because what is sociopragmatically problematic is not necessarily easy for learners (and sometimes even NSs) to identify. It was perceived as a sociopragmatic violation in November of 2014 when a Republican staffer criticized President Obama's daughters for their dress and their expressions of boredom at a White House turkey pardoning ceremony. Even the staffer's fellow Republicans felt that she was treading on dangerous ground since the children of a sitting president are considered "off limits" when it comes to criticism. The backlash from this pragmatic failure resulted in her resignation.

In addition, the conditions of what is sociopragmatically appropriate are not static. This is not necessarily just because of normal changes in societal discourse but also due to the mode in which such communication takes place. For example, it is interesting to note that the Republican staffer mentioned above chose Facebook as her platform to vent. While this Internet tool allows for asynchronous communication, it lacks the anonymity of other Internet arenas (e.g., YouTube comments), and so her diatribe and the inevitable fallout were visible to the general public in a way that previous sociopragmatic failures would not have been. Thus, the consequences of sociopragmatic failure can often seem to be or become much larger than they are depending on the mode of communication used.

An obvious area for sociopragmatic investigation would be taboo topics, but this can vary depending on the subgroup within a culture. For example, in a given subculture can you ask someone how much they make a month or how much their new car costs? Whether or not it is acceptable could depend in part on the age of the interlocutors, the closeness of their relationship, their gender, and the context in which the question was asked. While these questions are asked all the time in the Middle East, they are asked sparingly in the US as money is often a taboo topic. Another example of a culturally sensitive topic is in vitro fertilization (IVF), as it may well be considered inappropriate to ask a married couple in the US whether they are trying to have a baby and whether they are using in IVF to do so. This question would be sociopragmatically acceptable, however, if asked in Israel, especially since the government pays all expenses for IVF, and it is therefore part of a larger public discourse.

Then there are the speech acts that have to be performed indirectly if at all. For instance, public complaints are rarely used in Japanese culture. Performance of the speech act calls for an awareness of the sociopragmatic norms regarding its use in the given context (e.g., do you complain in a restaurant in Tokyo about the soup not being hot enough?) and also the pragmalinguistic norms regarding the acceptable language structures to use if a complaint is possible in that context. It may be necessary to perform the speech act in a most obsequious, indirect manner (e.g., "I am so, so sorry to trouble you, but do you think it be possible to heat my soup up just a little more? I would be so appreciative."). In such situations it can be crucial to have a good handle on pragmalinguistic forms because only with the proper use of them, coupled with the proper intonation, can you make a speech act such as a complaint work in a sociopragmatically delicate situation. A friend of the second author requested from two different waiters at a trendy restaurant in Palo Alto, CA that they turn the overly-loud music down a little so he could visit. Neither request was acted upon, so it may have been seen as an unreasonable request. The waiters and the other patrons were probably quite happy with the somewhat raucous music.

3. Learning pragmatics in an L2 compared to an FL environment

The consequences of pragmatic failure (both sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic) can be serious in a variety of domains, from formal international politics (e.g., translation errors that impede diplomacy) to interpersonal interaction among friends (Takahashi & Beebe, 1987, p. 133). If pragmatic ability is essential to successful communicative language ability, what is the effect of the environment on the development of this pragmatic ability? In particular, do levels of pragmatic ability differ between L2 and FL learners? To date, most studies have shown greater pragmatic awareness among L2 students than FL students (e.g., Bardovi-Harlig & Dörnyei, 1998; Schauer, 2006; Tagashira, Yamato, & Isoda, 2011), thus indicating that the TL environment has a positive influence on the appropriate use of sociopragmatics. L2 learners invariably receive more pragmatic input in their daily lives if they are motivated to interact with the TL community and have positive social interactions.

The classroom also provides a setting for learning about pragmatics to the extent that teachers usually model and demonstrate how to perform tasks in a pragmatically appropriate way. In addition, questions about language use in context naturally arise in a safe L2 classroom environment when students bring in their outside experiences, for example, and ask why something happened to them in a particular way when communicating with an NS, or if a word or phrase could be used to convey alternative meanings.

Some studies have yielded findings that not only challenge previous research but defy the common sense assumption that living in the TL environment with exposure to authentic input would better help pragmatic ability develop in L2 learners than in their FL peers (e.g., Niezgodá & Röver, 2001; Taguchi, 2008). These studies shed light on the notion of individual differences in motivation and in the willingness to use pragmatic transfer, both positive and possibly negative—individual differences which can result in successful learning of pragmatics despite the fact that the learning is taking place in an FL rather than in an L2 context (Schumann, 1986). These conflicting research results may also suggest that in the hybrid world that is rapidly unfolding in front of us, the L2-FL distinction may be overly simplistic. Is it not the case that some L2 students lack the pragmatic awareness that they presumably were to have acquired from being in that TL setting? And could it not be the case that FL learners do, in fact, acquire pragmatic awareness without having direct contact with L2 contexts?

The goal of this article is to investigate the role that the L2 and FL environments actually play in L2 learners' pragmatic ability and whether individual differences can have a more effective influence than the constraints of the language learning environment itself. First, the effect of the environment on developing pragmatic ability

will be addressed with regards to the role of pragmatic transfer. The effect of motivation on pragmatic knowledge will then be discussed, followed by a discussion of the findings and methodological issues in measuring pragmatic ability in L2 and FL settings. Finally, recommendations for future research as well as important sociological considerations with regards to NS norms will be addressed. A caveat for the descriptions of research in this paper has to do with study abroad context. Not all abroad situations are equal. We need to be cautious about generalizing from the experiences of Irish students in an abroad program in Germany to that of U.S. students in Spain, Israel, or Jordan. There are most likely going to be major differences.

4. The role of pragmatic transfer

One factor which is both a positive and a negative force in the development of pragmatic ability in an L2 is pragmatic transfer, the “influence of the learners’ knowledge of other languages and cultures on their pragmatic use and development on the use of the L2” (Ishihara & Cohen, 2014, pp. 78-79). There are cases where some sociopragmatic behavior is more or less universal (Ochs, 1996), such as conveying condolences to someone on the loss of a loved one. The pragmalinguistics may vary—that is, how the condolence is conveyed, both verbally and nonverbally—but usually the speech act is performed. The qualifier *usually* is added since, for example, when sitting *shiva* as a way to mourn with the family of a deceased at their home in Israel, while words of condolence may be appreciated, it is not necessary to say anything. The second author found from personal experience that being present was enough of a (nonverbal) statement.

Then there are numerous instances where sociopragmatic behavior transfers nicely between two or more language and cultural communities. This would be an instance of positive transfer from the L1 (Kasper, 1997). This may just be the result of commonality across the two groups, such as in the example of a request that a friend babysit in the USA or in Israel. The two societies clearly share numerous pragmatic commonalities, while they differ strikingly in other areas. In this instance of babysitting, such a request to arrange for a babysitter would likely still be seen in Japan as shockingly countercultural in numerous families since some family members (say, a grandparent) would most likely be expected to provide the child care.

There are also those sociopragmatic instances that are associated with one language and culture more than with another. For example, in Japanese culture, it may be totally inappropriate to compliment professors by saying that they gave a good talk since who are you to evaluate the quality of their talk?¹

¹ Refer to <http://www.carla.umn.edu/speechacts/japanese/Compliments/FeedbackEx1.htm> for a summary of compliments to a professor in Japanese and for references as to the sources.

Performing this type of compliment (instead of “I got a lot from your talk”) would be an example of negative transfer from U.S. culture where professors would be pleased to get such a compliment. Depending on the particular professors, they could either be annoyed, amused, or dismiss the behavior since after all it was performed by a naïve *gaijin* (‘Westerner’), since the popular press in Japan makes it clear that Westerners are treated differently from locals.²

The tricky thing about positive and negative transfer is that it is not a given that differences between two languages and cultures in the area of pragmatics will lead to difficulty. It depends on numerous factors. The NNSs may have been explicitly taught the pragmatics and consequently are mindful of the differences. Likewise, while they may not have been taught the differences, they may have somehow figured them out for themselves, whether through the use of media or by way of extreme motivation. There can be other reasons as well for why the NNSs’ pragmatic behavior does not infringe upon NS norms. In addition, the specific pragmatic behavior may infringe upon local norms, but the NSs allow a wide margin of pragmatic inappropriateness given that the behavior is generated by an NNS. On the other hand, there are the numerous cases where violations of the norm are both noticed and negatively received, resulting in pragmatic failure. In those cases, it is then a matter of what the NS response will be—whether to dismiss the behavior as understandable and trivial, or irksome, annoying, and a cause for social friction. The main issue in such cases is that the NSs do not necessarily share their annoyance with the NNSs.

5. The incidence of pragmatic transfer in FL situations as compared to L2 situations

One of the earliest investigations into the differences in pragmatic awareness between ESL and EFL populations was Takahashi and Beebe’s (1987) qualitative study with Japanese L2 learners of English. The researchers sought to find evidence of pragmatic transfer while investigating the effects of L2 proficiency levels and environments. The researchers analyzed the written refusals of Japanese ESL and EFL learners, compared to Japanese and American NSs’ respective refusals. All of the participants completed a discourse completion task (DCT) where participants had to insert a refusal to interlocutors of different statuses in the following categories: requests, invitations, offers, and suggestions.³

After examining the typical order of formulas for Japanese NSs and American English NSs, Takahashi and Beebe (1987) compared the refusal data of the

² See, for example, <http://www.japantoday.com/category/lifestyle/view/5-reasons-foreigners-find-it-hard-to-become-friends-with-japanese-people>

³ Comments will be made in the limitations section below as to possible drawbacks associated with DCT data.

ESL and EFL participants, finding evidence of pragmatic transfer in both the ESL and EFL contexts, as well as at both proficiency levels. In particular, there was more evidence of pragmatic transfer in the EFL context than in the ESL context, despite the EFL learners' higher average proficiency. The tendency toward pragmatic transfer was explained by the fact that the EFL learners had fewer opportunities for authentic input, causing them to rely more heavily on their L1. Alternatively, the ESL respondents' greater directness in their refusals (which was more TL-like) was seen as a function of their lower proficiency and lack of knowledge of less direct and more complicated expressions. Nonetheless, the EFL learners appeared to have less pragmatic ability than their ESL peers because they used their more advanced L2 skills to convey L1 expressions and sentiments. While this study has historical value since it was seminal at the time, it was conducted almost thirty years ago. The hybrid, globalized world we are now in might mean that Japanese EFL students are receiving more ESL-like exposure, given access to the Internet and to U.S. sitcoms.

Another study of negative transfer in the performance of refusals was conducted with nine ESL learners (Yamagashira, 2001). A DCT and a follow-up interview were used to study how participants reacted to refusals and to determine whether pragmatic transfer occurred when Japanese speakers refused in English, whether time spent in the TL community affected pragmatic transfer, and whether explicit metapragmatic instruction had an effect as well. As in the Takahashi and Beebe (1987) study, lower proficiency participants tended to transfer more often than their higher proficiency peers. However, results also indicated that increased time spent in the TL environment caused participants to respond in a more TL-like fashion, thus indicating that the length of exposure in the environment had an effect on transfer. In addition, explicit instruction in pragmatics—whether in the formal classroom setting or through interactions with NSs where attention was directed to pragmatic norms and their violation—allowed participants who took advantage of such instruction to become more pragmatically competent.

Since most study abroad research uses a single semester as the time frame, a study involving two semesters such as the one by Barron (2003) added the dimension of a prolonged stay in the TL community to the development of L2 pragmatic ability. The researcher focused on a group of 33 advanced Irish L2 learners of German over a 10-month study abroad period in Germany. She performed a quantitative analysis in the form of production questionnaires administered before and after the study abroad experience, as well as a qualitative analysis focusing on retrospective interviews. Data were elicited three times over the year abroad and comparison was made to responses from 34 German NSs.

The study showed that exposure to L2 input helped many participants achieve more TL-like pragmatic ability. The Irish learners' increased use of pragmatic routines

indicated an increase in fluency, efficiency in communication, and an increased potential for gaining membership into the L2 speech community. The NS norm, however, was rarely reached. Data revealed that many of the learners “associate(d) language use with an individual’s personality and identity rather than with the foreign language itself” (Barron, 2003, p. 349). Given that the participants reportedly felt secure in their own personalities, they did not see any reason to change their L1 language use patterns as they transferred (either consciously or not) their L1 sentiments into the L2. Therefore, pragmatic transfer had a mostly negative effect on these participants, who, in addition, may not have taken full advantage of the study abroad experience by not establishing deep relationships with NSs (Schmidt, 1993), thus failing to either notice or be motivated to change their speech behavior.

Like Barron (2003), Shimizu (2009) chose to study the development of L2 pragmatic ability in a language other than English. He investigated compliment responses produced by learners of Japanese as an FL (JFL) and as an L2 (JSL) when administered an oral DCT. He opted for the oral version of the DCT because he felt that it generated more natural and spontaneous speech production than written DCTs. The oral DCTs were analyzed for compliment response strategies, patterns of semantic formulas, and lexical/phrasal characteristics to determine adherence to Japanese pragmatic norms. He found that although JSL and JFL participants differed from Japanese NSs in their use of positive and negative strategies, the JSL group used responses that were more TL-like. Only the JSL participants used TL-like avoidance strategies, and they used more pragmatically appropriate and TL-like avoidances in compliment responses, while JFL learners at three different proficiency levels favored the strategy of denying the compliment.

Interestingly, Shimizu (2009) found that unlike in Takahashi and Beebe’s (1987) Japanese ESL and EFL data, his JSL and JFL responses differed significantly from the American NSs responses, thus implying that L1 transfer alone does not account for the divergences in Japanese. Instead, he implied that it was the effect of instruction and instructional materials that could account for the emphasis on denial strategies (see Ishihara & Cohen, 2014, pp. 84-85). The researcher contended that the teachers and textbooks encouraged learners to overuse the response strategy of denial, consistent with the modesty maxim in Japanese culture (Shimizu, 2009, p. 182). Follow-up participant interviews confirmed his assumption that it was more the influence of the textbooks that led to the overuse of the denial strategy than simply transfer from L1 sociocultural norms, though this influence would certainly give the learners a predisposition to favor modesty.

Importantly, it is possible that the JSL learners’ interactions with NSs gave them opportunities to modify the knowledge gained from textbooks. In line with both the interaction hypothesis (Long, 1996) and the noticing hypothesis

(Schmidt, 1993), the JSL participants noticed that Japanese NSs used the strategies of either agreeing with the compliment or avoiding comment about it more frequently than had been taught in JSL classes. This finding would speak in favor of having teachers use more authentic, real life examples of language use and not rely on textbooks to provide accurate pragmatic instruction, given that textbooks often include gross oversimplifications in terms of pragmatic instruction (Ishihara & Cohen, 2014; Vellenga, 2004). Shimizu added that this conclusion would be especially relevant to EFL learners who have “little opportunity to engage in authentic interaction and revise their hypothesis about the target pragmatic norms formed through transfer of training” (p. 187).

The finding that the context had a definite but complex role to play in the acquisition of pragmatic ability led Taguchi (2008) to investigate whether there were differences in the development of speedy and accurate comprehension of implied speaker intentions between learners in ESL versus EFL contexts. Her study included 60 Japanese EFL learners in Japan and 57 ESL learners in the USA, all enrolled in college and between the ages of 18-28. Importantly, three of the EFL students had 9-11 months prior residency in a TL country, thus making them unique in comparison to the EFL participants in previous comparison studies. Nonetheless, both participant groups had beginning level proficiency based on TOEFL scores obtained at the start of the study, thereby eliminating proficiency as a factor.

The researcher administered a computerized listening task that measured the ability to comprehend indirect refusals (e.g., providing an excuse for not honoring a request without explicitly rejecting the request) and indirect opinions (e.g., expressing a negative opinion of a movie by saying, “I’m glad the movie is over.”), and analyzed the results for speed and accuracy to provide a developmental account of pragmatic comprehension. The task was administered to each group twice, before and after approximately 120-130 hours of classroom instruction. Results indicated that the EFL learners made many more gains in accuracy than speed, while the ESL learners greatly improved their speed, but only minimally improved their accuracy. In particular, the EFL group made significantly greater improvement than the ESL group in the accurate comprehension of indirect refusals, but not indirect opinions. Taguchi provided two interpretations for the EFL-group findings: The first was that refusals tend to be learned before the giving of opinions, and the second was that it might have been an instance of pragmatic transfer. Both Japanese and English share certain patterns for making refusals (e.g., providing a reason for refusing an invitation), but not for stating indirect opinions.

Based on the EFL learners’ wide gains over their ESL peers in the realm of indirect refusals, it seems that pragmatic transfer had more of an effect on the development of pragmatic ability than context in this instance. As Taguchi put

it, “[t]he actual environment of learning may thus be of secondary importance as long as it affords sufficient instruction and practice to promote general listening skills” (Taguchi, 2008, p. 443). Taguchi speculated that it may not have been the context (ESL vs. EFL) that had an effect on pragmatic competence in this study, but rather what she referred to as “depth of interaction” that led either to the development of pragmatic ability or to an awareness of the importance and relevancy of transfer. Consequently, Taguchi argued that length of residency alone was not necessarily a deciding factor in the development of pragmatic ability. In addition, as there were greater pragmatic gains among the EFL participants, it is important to note that these students were studying in an English immersion program in Japan, a rather unique EFL scenario. These particular EFL students expressly chose their institution because of their strong motivation to study English at an advanced level. The results of these studies that investigate the effect of transfer on pragmatic ability demonstrate that failure to acquire L2 pragmatic ability cannot be fully accounted for by proficiency or by length of stay alone.

While the studies reviewed in this section tended to support the view that L1 transfer plays a significant role in TL pragmatic performance, especially for FL learners, it leaves the door open to the view that interactions both in class and beyond can offset this pattern and may provide clues to the nature of how pragmatic ability actually develops. The next section will focus directly on the role of motivation in developing pragmatic ability in L2 and FL contexts.

6. The role of motivation in the development of pragmatic ability

L2 classroom evidence attests to the fact that motivation is a key factor in successfully learning a language (Brown, 2001). It is no surprise then that many studies in the last few decades have focused on the relationship between L2 language learning contexts and motivation, with special attention to pragmatic ability.

Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei’s (1998) seminal study showed the advantage of the ESL over the EFL environment in attaining pragmatic ability, particularly in terms of the motivation that positive experiences in the TL community gave to the ESL learners. Their two participant samples contained a total of 708 participants. The primary sample consisted of 173 mixed proficiency ESL students in the USA and 370 EFL students in Hungary. In addition, 28 NS ESL teachers and 25 Hungarian EFL teachers participated in the study. The second sample consisted of 112 Italian EFL teachers. The authors developed a video with contextualized grammatical and pragmatic judgment tasks to measure sentences that were pragmatically appropriate but ungrammatical, sentences that were grammatical but pragmatically inappropriate, and sentences that were both grammatical and pragmatically appropriate. The speech acts included were apologies,

refusals, requests, and suggestions. Participants also completed a questionnaire on their language learning background and proficiency.

In terms of the findings, both the EFL learners and their teachers identified and ranked grammatical errors as more serious than pragmatic errors, while ESL learners and their teachers did the opposite, ranking pragmatic errors as more serious. The Hungarian and Italian EFL students both rated the grammatical errors significantly higher than the pragmatic ones, and as the two groups had different language backgrounds but were both in an EFL environment, their ratings were attributed to their environment. One reason for the difference in reaction between the ESL learners and the EFL learners both in Hungary and Italy may be the nature of EFL tests, which often focus on form rather than communicative ability (Hudson, Detmer, & Brown, 1992). Nonetheless, the Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei (1998) study provided evidence that ESL and EFL learners differ in the development of pragmatic knowledge. One obvious factor is proficiency, as a learner with limited grammatical knowledge would not have the resources to select alternative utterances. On the other hand, even with a sufficient command of L2 grammatical and lexical knowledge, adult FL learners often are incapable of producing pragmatically appropriate language (Koike, 1989). Put humorously some years ago by Takahashi and Beebe (1987), they alluded to the dangers of having high proficiency without pragmatic ability: “. . . their fluency gave them ‘the rope to hang themselves with’ – i.e., the control over English vocabulary to express Japanese sentiments” (p. 151).

Another issue raised by Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei (1998) is residency, as the length of stay in an English speaking country has been seen in numerous cases to have at least some impact on the perception of pragmatic appropriateness. The authors found that the longer an ESL student lived in the USA, the higher their awareness of pragmatic errors. This finding was interpreted as a function of time spent outside of the classroom in English speaking contexts interacting in the TL, as well as the result of more hours spent in the classroom with NS teachers of the TL and having to deal with administrative tasks for successful residency in the TL community.

Most importantly, Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei's (1998) results underscored Schmidt's (1993) noticing hypothesis that in addition to salient input, the motivational factor of wanting to establish relationships seemed to lead to pragmatic awareness. According to Schmidt, “those who are concerned with establishing relationships with the TL speakers are more likely to pay close attention to the pragmatic aspects of input and to struggle to understand than those who are not so motivated” (p. 36).

A replication of the Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei's (1998) ESL-EFL comparison study was conducted with ESL learners in Hawaii and EFL learners in the

Czech Republic (Niezgoda & Röver, 2001). Specifically, the authors wanted to test Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei's results by discovering if the handicapping effects of the EFL were context-inevitable, or if a group of particularly advanced students could "overcome" these effects (Niezgoda & Röver, 2001, p. 63). The ESL participants comprised 48 L2 learners of various proficiency levels studying English at a private language school in Hawaii. Participants came from six different countries and had been living in the USA for an average of 4.7 months, close to the 5.3 months' residence average for Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei's ESL participants. The 124 Czech EFL learners, however, represented a particularly advanced group of students studying to become English teachers who all received 14-20 hours of monolingual English instruction weekly for the duration of their 5-year program, providing them with a more ESL-like input environment than in the traditional EFL scenario.

Using Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei's (1998) video instrument and questionnaire, Niezgoda and Röver (2001) reached contradictory results as compared to the original study. The EFL participants in this second study recognized more pragmatic errors than the ESL learners and rated those errors as more severe than their ESL counterparts. In addition, the low proficiency learners in both ESL and EFL environments recognized more pragmatic than grammatical errors and rated the pragmatic infelicities as more severe than the grammatical ones. Niezgoda and Röver did, however, observe one important similarity when compared to Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei's original results: The ESL participants also rated pragmatic errors as more severe than grammatical errors.

Based on their results, Niezgoda and Röver (2001) concluded that environment "may not be the most important factor accounting for learner's pragmatic awareness" (p. 76), given that pragmatic ability was acquired in their Czech EFL setting. Furthermore, they asserted that their findings could be attributed to "an interaction between exposure to grammatical and pragmatic input and individual learner characteristics, specifically the degree to which learners actively attend to input" (p. 77). The authors pointed out that the Czech EFL students, as future English teachers in training, were highly motivated to gain pragmatic awareness, and they speculated that this motivation may have accounted for their increased sensitivity to pragmatic errors.

That same year, another pragmatics study appeared that used different degrees of input enhancement to determine Japanese EFL learners' development of the ability to make requests (Takahashi, 2001). While there were four different treatment groups, only one received metapragmatic instruction. All groups completed pre- and posttest DCTs, engaged in communicative practice, supplied written retrospectives, and responded to follow-up questionnaires measuring motivation. The group receiving metapragmatic instruction outperformed all others in

the development of pragmatic ability. The self-reports, however, revealed that the more motivated learners noticed and readily adopted TL norms, thereby gaining confidence in their accuracy, while less motivated learners were more resistant to abiding by these norms. The lack of motivation then caused the input enhancements themselves to be less effective teaching tools in the development of pragmatic ability. Takahashi's findings thus took Niezgodna and Röver's (2001) belief that motivation had a crucial role to play in directing learner attention to pragmatic input one step further by suggesting that motivation was perhaps the most significant variable in directing learner attention to TL cultural perspectives. In addition, her study revealed the potentially positive value of explicit metapragmatic instruction.

Takahashi (2005) went on in a subsequent study to corroborate these findings. A group of Japanese college students first completed a motivation questionnaire and a proficiency test. They then took part in a noticing-the-gap activity as the treatment task. The degree of the learners' awareness of the target pragmalinguistic features was assessed through a retrospective awareness questionnaire administered immediately after the treatment. The results indicated that the learners differentially noticed the target pragmalinguistic features and that the learners' awareness of the target features was correlated with motivation subscales but not with their proficiency. In particular, the learners' intrinsic motivation was found to be closely related to their pragmatic awareness.

In another replication of Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei's (1998) EFL versus ESL study, Schauer (2006) allowed participants to correct errors in post hoc interviews, thereby providing a link between pragmatic awareness and pragmatic production, or proof of ability. She used Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei's videotape instrument and questionnaire, and, unlike Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei or Niezgodna and Röver's (2001) replication, she conducted original post hoc interviews. There were 53 university participants in total: 16 German ESL students studying in the UK, 17 German EFL students studying in Germany to become interpreters and translators—none of whom had ever lived in an English speaking country, and 20 British NSs. However, unlike Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei's study yet similar to that of Niezgodna and Röver, the EFL students received much more classroom-based input because of their accelerated language program. Thus, Schauer sought to determine if mixed proficiency ESL students exhibited more pragmatic awareness than their advanced EFL counterparts.

Schauer's (2006) interview component was an important addition because it allowed her to discover whether the participants had selected a true error or a "false error" (p. 272), as well as to shed light on their decision-making process and their experiences interacting with NSs. These interviews were recorded in the participants' L1 and were later translated. Her data, as further corroborated

by qualitative interviews, confirmed Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei's (1998) original findings and did not support Niezgodna and Röver's (2001) opposite results, as the EFL participants were less aware of pragmatic errors than their ESL counterparts, and EFL students perceived grammatical errors to be more salient than did the ESL students. Schauer found the EFL results disturbing because "it means that individuals who are studying to explicitly help people to be effective in intercultural communication are less aware of one of the central building blocks of successful communication – pragmatic rules and regulations" (p. 307), echoing Takahashi and Beebe's (1987) fears about the severity of pragmatic failure.

Lastly and most importantly, the length of residency in the UK had a positive impact on pragmatic awareness for the ESL students because of exposure to authentic input, as indicated by Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei (1998). Schauer (2006) found that her participants' pragmatic awareness continued to improve during their time in the TL community, particularly because they had rich opportunities to observe everyday NS interactions and become aware of their own output, thus allowing them to modify their language. Motivation not only to become aware of their language use, but also to try to adapt it to the TL norm appeared in this study to contribute to her ESL participants' development of more TL-like pragmatic ability.

A study that was primarily looking at sociolinguistic variation in French among study abroad students to France also produced results that bore on the issue of motivation (Kinginger, 2008). The researcher studied 24 American learners of French over the course of one semester and assessed gains through a pre- and postsemester interview that attempted to measure learner knowledge of address forms, colloquialisms, and other speech acts (e.g., leave-taking expressions). While the TL context allowed all participants to gain significant pragmatic knowledge, qualitative data revealed that the learners who were most motivated to interact in the TL and with NSs made the most gains. Interestingly, while access to NSs and therefore the theoretical potential to establish relationships was available to all participants, those who were lucky enough to have engaging host families, for example, developed much more pragmatic knowledge than their peers who were not so lucky and maintained their closest home relationships with friends and family over the Internet. While positive interactions with NSs are surely a motivating factor to engage in more interactions, Kinginger's findings are important in that they reveal the potential to "become discouraged" (p. 608) and not to take full advantage of the study abroad context as a constant learning environment in which to develop NS-like pragmatic ability.

Yet another study taking as its departure point the work by Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei (1998) focused its attention solely on the relationship between motivation and pragmatic awareness among Japanese EFL learners (Tagashira et al.,

2011). This study set out to take a close look at just how motivation related to pragmatic development. The large participant group was comprised of 162 Japanese university EFL learners who were all at an intermediate proficiency level in English. Participants completed a questionnaire that helped to group them according to four motivational levels:

- moderate motivation (e.g., such as the average EFL student might have),
- self-determined (e.g., intrinsic) motivation,
- lack of motivation (e.g., when learners are simply fulfilling a course requirement),
- externally regulated motivation (e.g., extrinsic motivation, such as when motivation is more for a grade than for acquisition of knowledge).

The researchers also used Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei's (1998) original questionnaire, although, for practical purposes, they did not employ Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei's video format and instead converted it into a written questionnaire. In addition, they changed part of the original answer sheet to separate items for pragmatic and grammatical appropriateness to overcome the vagueness that Schauer (2006) reasoned might account for a "false error" (p. 272).

The results showed that motivation accounted for differences in recognition of pragmatic errors, but not grammatical errors. Additionally, the self-determined or more intrinsically motivated learners showed the keenest perception of appropriateness of the utterances once they had decided an error was present (Tagashira et al., 2011, p. 19). While it is not exactly clear how motivation has an effect on learners, the researchers believe that it may be motivation's effect on "selective attention," as more motivated learners "will value pragmatic aspects of language use, and they will be inclined to detect the stimuli containing pragmatic information and utilize this information for more elaborate analysis" (Tagashira et al., 2011, p. 20). Their study thus confirms previous assumptions (Niezgoda & Röver, 2001; Takahashi, 2001) of the effects of motivation on pragmatic awareness.

Another study of pragmatic development and its relationship to motivation was conducted by Taguchi (2011), who looked at requests and opinions in a study abroad context. The participants were 48 Japanese EFL students in an English immersion program who were tested on their ability to produce requests and opinions three times over an academic year using a computerized oral DCT. A subset of 12 participants also provided qualitative analyses in their L1 three times during the second semester. The qualitative data revealed that variation in the quantitative results was closely linked to the students' motivation to interact in the TL. As all participants were part of the immersion program with ample access to TL input, every participant made some gains in pragmatic ability. However, in line with Schmidt's (1993) reasoning on the importance of developing

relationships in the TL, it was the participants who actively sought TL contact and experiences (e.g., through email with NS teachers who provided explicit feedback) who saw the most consistent quantitative gains.

A more recent study sought to determine if familiarity with the cultural features of the TL environment and an interest in learning those features were the main factors in determining how well learners understand the pragmatics of the given culture (Rafieyan, Majid, & Eng, 2013). The researchers collected data through a Likert scale attitude questionnaire and two pragmatic comprehension tests adapted from Taguchi (2008)—a pretest and a posttest after 48 hours of instruction that included authentic videos. The subjects were 32 intermediate level learners from seven countries at a language academy in Malaysia. Results indicated that a positive attitude toward learning the TL culture led to better understanding of pragmatics. There was a strong statistical correlation between interest/motivation in learning about the TL culture and success on the pragmatic comprehension tasks. The L2 learners who had a “neutral” attitude toward learning about the TL culture scored in the middle range of the implicature tasks, while those who expressed positive or highly positive attitudes performed much better. Interestingly, the majority of the L2 learners agreed or strongly agreed that some cultural components should be part of every language class, and they felt encouraged to take classes in American culture. These findings suggest that not only should learners be exposed to positive features of the TL culture, but that those features should also be included in language textbooks, which are often the only direct access EFL learners have to the mainstream TL culture.

This section has demonstrated the pervasive nature of motivation with regard to pragmatic development among both FL and L2 learners of a TL. This and other critical issues will now be synthesized in a discussion of the above studies that also addresses limitations of the research.

7. Discussion

7.1. A summary of the issues

Kasper (1996) describes three conditions to attain pragmatic knowledge: “There must be pertinent input, the input has to be noticed, and learners need ample opportunity to develop a high level of control” (p. 148). The studies reviewed in this paper demonstrate that input alone is insufficient for the development of pragmatic ability. Rather, learners must notice how the pragmalinguistic forms are used, an activity that is easier to engage in when learners are living and functioning in an L2 rather than an FL context. However, while most studies indicate that length of stay in the TL environment has a greater effect on pragmatic ability

than proficiency, a rigorous analysis of research results suggests that individual factors—such as learner willingness to engage in positive pragmatic transfer from the L1 and strong motivation to learn the TL—can offset the handicap from being in an FL context.

A purpose for this in-depth analysis of the L2 as opposed to the FL environment was to gain insights as to why learners in one or another context are more savvy about TL pragmatics. One obvious factor is the access to authentic input, and, in principle, it is greater in an L2 environment, but not necessarily. So if an FL learner has greater intensity of interaction with NSs, whether live or over the Internet, this can lead to the kind of noticing that results in pragmatic awareness. The temporal factor of an extended stay in the TL community is an insufficient variable in developing pragmatic competence (Bardovi-Harlig, 1996; Taguchi, 2008). Instead, it creates more opportunities for relationships with NSs to develop, thus making more salient the pragmatic aspects of the TL language.

The first author found when living in Vietnam that primarily only the male EFL teachers who wanted to date Vietnamese women made an effort to fully learn the language. Nearly everyone else, even those who wished to form deep friendships, just coasted by. The second author saw in Israel that numerous EFL teachers who had lived there for many years mostly tended to interact with other English speakers and did not develop good Hebrew skills. When the first author was a student at the University of Cape Town, she remembers a dean addressing all the international students at orientation and explicitly recommending that they fall in love with a South African to actually be able to experience the culture firsthand and come to recognize the values and pragmatic norms of the culture. She wondered whether in an American context an administrator would ever say such a thing. These examples, then, underscore how the establishment of personal relationships can both heighten pragmatic awareness and potentially lead to increased language ability.

A second major determiner of pragmatic development was seen to be the motivation to learn the TL and keen interest in its mainstream culture(s). High motivation was shown to help a learner to overcome the obstacle of being in an EFL environment with scarce opportunities for authentic TL interaction (Niezgoda and Röver, 2001; Rafieyan et al., 2013; Tagashira et al., 2011; Taguchi, 2011; Takahashi, 2001).

A third major determiner of pragmatic development was seen to be either positive or negative transfer from the L1 language and culture (Barron, 2003; Takahashi & Beebe, 1987; Yamagashira, 2001). So, the learner can successfully carry over patterns that also work in the TL and culture (Taguchi, 2008), or use patterns that are inappropriate for the TL situation. Sometimes, what presents itself as negative transfer is the willful use of material that is counter to the norm

because the learner is exercising agency and resisting the NS norms out of an effort to maintain his/her own L1 identity. Another possible detractor to TL pragmatic development is the transfer of classroom instruction or course materials to the TL situation, usually involving some overgeneralization/overuse of a given form.

Especially in FL learning situations, learners are likely to have less of an opportunity to notice their overgeneralizations because of their limited interaction in the TL environment (Shimizu, 2009). In addition, when the majority of interaction takes place over the Internet, learners can never be certain that their interlocutor is actually an NS, despite what s/he may say or write. The second author can think of an example from his classroom learning of Japanese where he learned that *ano* was the pause filler to use with persons of higher status and *eto* was the form to use for filling pauses when in discussion with those of equal or lower status. He used both extensively, especially the latter, until an NS informed him that he was filling his pauses too much—that NSs did so far less. Neither the textbook nor the teacher had warned him of this possibility.

7.2. Limitations in the studies reviewed

The studies cited above contained various methodological shortcomings, more with regard to the issue of the L2-FL contrast than to that of motivation. In some of the studies one could question the comparability of the L2 and FL learners as to their backgrounds, L1, gender, proficiency level, number of classroom hours, institutional goals, pedagogical approaches, teacher training, and the students' familiarity with the pragmatics tasks that they were asked to perform. In some studies the designated proficiency levels were probably only a gross, rather inaccurate measure of the actual performance levels of the learners, depending on how these levels were determined. One factor that can blur the line between the L2/FL distinction is the case of the FL learners who have studied abroad for varying lengths of time and have returned home. As observed in a study on L2 Spanish refusals (Félix-Brasdefer, 2004), the perceptions about TL norms and social status may be the products of observations after they have returned home and have had the opportunity to compare and reflect.

With regard to the relationship between grammar and pragmatic ability, perhaps it is circular, but if grammatical proficiency is a major determiner in proficiency level, then it has already been demonstrated over the years that grammatical ability does not directly equate to pragmatic ability, as research on speech acts in EFL settings has indicated (Bouton, 1988; Boxer & Pickering, 1995; Kasper, 1997; Kasper & Rose, 2002; Yamagashira, 2001). Even grammatically proficient or advanced learners are likely to encounter pragmatic failure. We have seen that the FL learners are prime targets for this because they may have

learned their grammar rules very well in class but may not have had ample opportunity to try out their language performance in high-stakes pragmatic situations. But even L2 learners can get the grammar right and the pragmatics wrong. One possibility is that just as grammar errors may fossilize, so might inappropriate pragmatic choices. L2 learners may not have been corrected on their error, the correction may not have taken, or they may have been given an insufficient correction from an inexperienced teacher. The result is a pragmatic fossilization, especially with respect to pragmalinguistics. So, for example, the learner says, "I'm very sorry" after smashing into someone at the grocery store—a situation in which a U.S. L1 speaker would say, "I'm really (awfully, terribly, so) sorry."

Another methodological limitation of these studies concerns the structure of the research task itself. Written DCTs often assess pragmatic comprehension or awareness, while oral DCTs assess pragmatic production. Some studies indicated that higher pragmatic awareness did not correspond directly with production (Bardovi-Harlig & Dörnyei, 1998; Taguchi, 2008). Importantly, awareness and ability are often conflated in the studies, even though the former is a necessary condition for the latter. Much of the research does not address this issue. Nor is it clear from these studies if comprehension and production occur simultaneously or if there is even a directional or linear relationship between the two worth researching. While both comprehension and production tasks assess pragmatic knowledge, a direct comparison cannot therefore be made so easily between the responses elicited through the two kinds of measures. The relationship between pragmatic awareness and production among L2 learners has thus not been addressed in these studies. There is the further problem that written answers often serve as an indirect, projected measure of oral production, disregarding the relatively common variation across language skills, as well as the potential for writing fatigue or, worse, that the respondents perceive the tasks as a form of test-taking.

Over the years the DCT format has been utilized by many researchers because of its relative ease of construction, the ease with which it can be administered to large samples at the same time, and the relative ease with which the results can be analyzed and compared to those of others using the same or similar DCT situations. In addition, if researchers just want a rough sense of whether respondents have familiarity with, say, an idealized speech act interaction in terms of what is basic to the interaction, then the DCT fulfills expectations. Yet DCTs have also been criticized for not being sufficiently authentic. The written format gives participants extra time to plan what they would like to say, rather than what they would actually do in an online scenario (Takahashi & Beebe, 1987; Yamagashira, 2001). While this may relate more directly to the types of pragmatic interaction that occur through asynchronous communicative activities

such as email, face-to-face aspects of pragmatic knowledge that can be decoded through gesture, discourse, and sequential features are lost (Taguchi, 2008, p. 445). Furthermore, DCTs employ traditional writing formats that do not include the intonation and tone markers (e.g., capital letters, excessive exclamation points, vowel repetitions) that have evolved in Internet-based communication to link it to more mainstream oral behavior.

In addition, whereas multiple-choice tasks and DCTs could measure the effect of input and receptive knowledge, it is likely that only role plays and other forms of language production can actually measure those aspects of pragmatic knowledge that come to the fore when learners are called upon to perform their knowledge (Grabowski, 2009; Tsutagawa, 2012). Needless to say, even oral role plays are not necessarily problem free. In oral DCTs or post hoc interviews, for instance, participants may still provide what they believe is expected of them (Shimizu, 2009; Taguchi, 2011), rather than behaving as they normally would if they were not having their pragmatic performance measured and assessed by an external researcher. In addition, the acting ability of the individual may come into play, as well as any emotional issues tied to one's performance history. Ultimately, some tasks really would benefit from the kinds of instructions and stage directions that accompany scripts for plays, namely, just how the given speech act or other pragmatic material is to be delivered (e.g., lovingly, happily, angrily, happily, teasingly, cynically, or sarcastically).

Another problem with perhaps any elicited measure of pragmatic ability is that of agency. Respondents may deliberately choose to avoid approximating NS norms (Ishihara & Cohen, 2014). As noted in the studies where L2 learners used the L2 to express L1 sentiments (Barron, 2003; Takahashi & Beebe, 1987), the refusal to give up aspects of one's linguistic identity may make an L2 learner appear less pragmatically competent than may objectively be true. Any study that compares L2 speakers to NSs assumes that the L2 speakers wish to emulate their NS peers, and that this is the group whose pragmatolinguistic and sociopragmatic choices they should adopt. L2 learners, however, may deliberately diverge from the norm so as not to identify with the L2 community and instead retain their L1 identity (Ishihara & Cohen, 2014, p. 86). Studies situated in a controlled research scenario that lacks the authenticity of online, real-world interaction often ignore the conflicting concepts of respondents' differential willingness to adhere to another group's norms (e.g., adopting slang).

On the other hand, there is the real possibility that the NS interlocutors may hold negative views of the learners' L2 pragmatic ability. For example, Janicki (1985) has shown that NSs often dislike L2 learners' use of in-group membership speaking styles, such as slang, obscenities, or very informal speech. So, given that the NSs may harbor negative attitudes towards NNSs trying to sound

too much like the in-group, it may paradoxically be to the learners' benefit not to sound too native-like and hence not to attempt to get the pragmatics right. Thus, ironically, not sounding too much like members of the TL group may work to the benefit of learners. This is an issue that obviously extends to NSs where a black woman may not appreciate a white woman's use of African-American Vernacular English because it is not perceived as hers to use.

Lastly, as students do not always make use of potential positive pragmatic transfer (Kasper, 1997), the studies that were reviewed characteristically lacked detailed interviews or think-aloud protocols to allow the researchers to find out just why the participants employed a particular strategy, or if they were even cognizant of their choices. Since some of the measures used in the reviewed studies called for responding to online or videotaped measures, it is important to note that in responding to an off-line questionnaire, learners have more time to think about their answers and are not overloaded by stress or other factors that tend to hinder on-line data collection (Barron, 2003). Nevertheless, what remains unclear is what effect the off-line questionnaire itself has on the measurement of pragmatic knowledge and the extent to which the results from it are comparable to those of an on-line one.

7.3. Pedagogical suggestions

Thinking practically, how can the research findings presented in this article regarding the accessibility of the TL, pragmatic transfer, and motivation to learn the pragmatics of the TL be translated into actual recommendations to the classroom teacher? Perhaps catering to the differential success of learners depending on their proficiency level and the nature of the task, a graded approach to teaching pragmatics should be developed, with the knowledge that lower level learners may simply not have the grammatical ability to produce the range of options considered pragmatically appropriate. However, learners with high motivation to learn and to interact with the TL community can be identified at the outset so that teachers have a better sense of whether inability to develop pragmatic ability is due to low proficiency, to a high sense of agency and a resistance to TL norms, or whether it is more an artifact of the challenges all learners face in getting the TL pragmatics right. The variables at play are both the sophistication of the pragmatics information and the amount that is accessed at any one time. Also, learners may have differing needs as to what they are called upon to do pragmatically in the given TL, depending on their uses for the language. For example, one learner may need the language of the office, while another exclusively needs some familiarity with the pragmatics of peer-based social interaction.

Let us now consider issues of including pragmatics in teacher development with regard to pragmatics, motivating learners to be more savvy about pragmatics, using authentic materials, and relating to NS norms.

7.3.1. Including pragmatics in teacher development

It is encouraging that models guiding L2/FL teaching and assessment such as the Standards for Foreign Language Learning/Proficiency Guidelines (ACTFL) do, in fact, endorse instruction in pragmatics (see, for instance, Dykstra, 2009 for a discussion about the potential role of pragmatics instruction to educate learners to be truly competent users of the TL). Since research indicates that L2 learners improve as a direct result of pragmatic instruction within the classroom environment (e.g., Ishihara & Cohen, 2014), it is then imperative that FL teachers also incorporate pragmatics in their instruction, particularly if student motivation is lacking to pay attention to the subtleties associated with this construct. However, while many L2/FL teacher development courses stress a theoretical knowledge of pragmatics, few provide practical techniques for teachers to integrate into their respective classrooms (with regard to ESL/EFL, see Vásquez & Sharpless, 2009). Therefore, if pragmatic knowledge is indeed essential for any language teacher, L2/FL teacher development courses should mandate coursework in pragmatics and its instruction, not necessarily to provide “learners with new information but to make them aware of what they know already and encourage them to use their universal or transferable L1 pragmatic knowledge in L2 contexts” (Kasper, 1997, p. 4). A demonstrated proficiency in this area should be a requirement for a certificate or diploma for any future L2/FL teacher (see Ishihara, 2011).

An assumption is usually made that teachers are aware of the pragmatics themselves and just need to pass this information and these insights on to their students. But in fact, FL teachers who themselves are NNSs and are not necessarily highly competent in the TL may not understand the importance of teaching pragmatics, let alone know much about pragmatics in the TL context. Even if the teachers make some effort to teach pragmatics, they may shy away from assessing it, despite the fact that pragmatic ability is measured in the ACTFL standards. They may feel incapable of judging whether one pragmalinguistic form or another is more consistent with the norms that are being used as the benchmark than is some other form. In addition, NS L2 teachers may never have studied pragmatics in their course work, and so they inadvertently pass on this lack of knowledge to students who may view it as a silent acknowledgement that pragmatics is either unimportant or does not exist. Based on the results of the Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei (1998) study, one might advocate a survey that teachers take to realize where they stand on pragmatic awareness, followed by

a course of action that they could take to help their students engage more in the TL community.

That there are the somewhat subtle pragmalinguistic differences that could take years to simply acquire in the L2 context suggests that explicit instruction is the way to go. This presupposes that the requisite knowledge is available to be taught, and that there are teachers or websites that can provide this information. For example, the second author spent over 16 years in Israel but did not acquire the continuum of phrases for how to apologize in Hebrew according to the severity of the infraction. It was not until he conducted formal research on apologizing in Hebrew and English that he became acutely aware of the pragmalinguistic distinctions from *s'licha* 'sorry' (at one end) to *ani nora mitztaer* 'I am really sorry' (in the middle) to *ani mitnatzel* 'I apologize' (at the other extreme), with various other forms in between. This continuum can be taught to learners relatively easily.

So, perhaps teachers can present to their students the possible continua in pragmatics behavior. L2 students are used to learning grammatical rules for their own sake and often in an isolated fashion. They may not be at all sure as to when to use one or another form in order to achieve the desired pragmatic effect. Providing teachers with ways of presenting material on a continuum may make it easier for them to relay these ideas to students. For example, the first author has used continua and other visual enhancements for students to respond to the pragmatic appropriateness of email requests to their professors. By allowing the students to mark on a scale the level of seriousness of the infraction, the students are reminded that pragmatic knowledge is not simply about learning right from wrong, but investigating the degrees of rightness and wrongness in assessing one's linguistic behavior, as well as all the factors that may have an effect. If the teachers are NNSs and not sure, they can verify the continua with NSs or have their students do so as part of a homework assignment.

7.3.2. Using authentic pragmatics materials

Because of the dearth of pragmatic information in many textbooks, the responsibility of conveying pragmatic awareness usually falls on the teacher (Vellenga, 2004). This is not, however, guaranteed—especially in FL environments where the teachers may not be knowledgeable themselves about the TL pragmatics as indicated above. Thus, learners need authentic materials and exposure to the TL culture because these unfamiliar aspects may not be salient enough to be noticed (Bardovi-Harlig, 1996). One source of this information is websites like the one created at the Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition (CARLA) at the University of Minnesota. With funding from the Office of International Education

to CARLA, a project was initiated in 2001 to provide self-access Internet sites for the learning and performance of L2 pragmatics. A website was constructed for teachers, curriculum writers, and learners, Pragmatics and Speech Acts, with information about 6 speech acts: requests, refusals, apologies, complaints, compliments, and thanking, in as many as ten different languages.⁴ The website is replete with suggested strategies for teaching the particular speech acts and sample teaching materials are provided, along with an annotated bibliography (updated in 2012) which includes information on other areas of pragmatics as well.

In addition, teachers should push their learners not to engage only with materials developed for L2 learners but also with those for NSs. Internet sites such as blogs, comments sections, and message boards, provide authentic examples of how NSs interact with texts and where and how they share their opinions in the back-and-forth exchanges that inevitably accompany any original publication. By participating online, L2 learners can receive feedback on their communicative efforts from those already in the TL environment with or without accompanying metalinguistic feedback. Simply put, they can forge their own relationships, but because of the relative anonymity of many websites, learners are free to disengage from any interactions that may become uncomfortable, an option not open to those whose only interactions with NSs occur face-to-face.

Several summers ago at Teachers College, Columbia, USA as the first author was helping her students learn how to write reviews, she had them put all their reviews on Yelp.com for the various places they had visited. While the activity did not represent direct face-to-face contact, the learners mentioned that they started to feel part of the New York City community by being allowed to offer their opinions and watch people respond to them, and then engage with the responses. Because there was a “real” component of actually visiting restaurants based on reviews they had read, they felt motivated to communicate in an online thread. Writing effective reviews undoubtedly has a pragmatics component to it. The writer needs to be mindful of the element of tact involved in review writing, for example, coupled with the desire to communicate feelings and tell the truth to one’s peers, even if one is a NNS in the TL community.

In teaching pragmatics workshops for ESL students at Baruch College in NYC, the first author has used video clips found in everything from *Mean Girls* to *The Joy Luck Club*. While still definitely inauthentic in that they are rehearsed and often exaggerated for comedic effect, these sources are perhaps better than written text because they include intonation and gesture. For this reason, a valuable source of authentic material are anecdotes from the teacher’s own experiences. For example, the first author made a pragmlinguistic error by using *Je*

⁴ See <http://www.carla.umn.edu/speechacts/index.html>.

suis plein, which can be interpreted to mean 'I am pregnant' in French, when she meant to say she had had enough to eat (*J'ai mangé assez*) while studying abroad in France. She found that sharing her pragmatic goof was a good stimulus to get students talking in groups and with the whole class about their own experiences. Then, once the students generated their own scenarios, they had a rich pool to analyze. The students noted that these exercises were useful not just because they became *aware* of something new, but because they were then motivated to incorporate the cultural *and* linguistic knowledge into their L2 systems, all the while having learned that perception will precede production and that they need to be patient.

The second author had a resounding language experience when he failed to initiate a conversation with a French NS by means of a greeting. He was unaware of the *illocutionary force* or pragmatic function of *bonjour* in a French-speaking community. The pragmatics of this apparently simple greeting may have a subtle function attached to it, namely, to establish contact politely, which the less savvy NNS may miss. Several years ago, he approached a man on the street in Martinique and launched directly into a request for help in interpreting a confusing parking slip issued by a machine and intended to be put on the dashboard of the car. Instead of responding to the author's question (asked in fluent French), the man on the street said with a decisive tone, "Bonjour." So an L2 speaker of French needs to know what that *bonjour* means, most likely "I was put off by your focusing immediately and exclusively on the parking slip, without going through the courtesy of extending a morning greeting." A strategic approach to dealing with the pragmatics of greetings is to have a classroom teacher or other highly competent speakers of the language provide guidance as to the function of such greetings in the given language. It is not enough just to memorize the various greetings for different times of day. It is crucial to know the when, how, and why of using them. In the above example, the author was operating from a US-based pragmatics mode and simply transferring this approach to this parking slip situation.⁵

One of the tricky factors in perceiving the pragmatics of an interaction is that of tone or attitude (Beebe & Waring, 2002, 2004). NNSs may not understand whether an utterance is delivered straight or whether the speaker is being facetious, sarcastic, cynical, angry, or whatever, especially in asynchronous Internet-based communication where there is no facial expression or gesture to reference. Aside from that, learners need to check out their own attitude toward the situation, given the role of agency in pragmatics. They may not be so receptive

⁵ This anecdote is taken from an article (Cohen, 2012) which provides numerous examples of pragmatic inappropriateness in various languages.

to what it is they are being asked to respond to or engage in. This may be an opportunity to look at the continuum from openness to the speech act on the one end to a more closed and negative response to it on the other.

7.3.3. Motivating learners to be more savvy about pragmatics

Once teachers themselves recognize the importance of pragmatics instruction and have taken steps to include it in their teaching, they then encounter the challenge of motivating their students to actively notice the role of pragmatics in communication. Teachers could encourage students to obtain a tandem partner locally or in the TL country (e.g., through Skype). Consistent with the Taguchi (2011) study, which underscored the value of the students contacting their teacher by email, there is value in having a NS or highly competent NNS who students can contact whenever they have questions. For numerous learners, asking questions through email or through the chat mode can help avoid any embarrassment associated with the face-to-face asking of a question which they feel they should know the answer to, regardless of whether it was taught or not. The second author has sent many emails to his Mandarin-English tandem partner to clarify semantic distinctions.⁶ He is amazed at just how unhelpful dictionaries can be—since, like many textbooks that lack pragmatics, they tend not to give sample sentences to help get the usage right. Maybe this type of pen pal situation could be accessed on an Internet message board. The teacher might want to help moderate the flow of information, stepping in from time to time to comment on language issues. It may be especially helpful to develop tools for teachers to use in this endeavor. Since something as basic as how to request something from teachers (and others) may result in pragmatic failure, teachers could have a “requests” tool kit ready for student use.

The onus is on teachers and teacher developers to figure out a way to enhance learners’ pragmatic awareness so that added proficiency is not just providing them more rope with which to hang themselves (using the metaphor from Takahashi and Beebe, 1987). The issue of NS norms and motivating learners to be aware of them, as well as avoiding L1 transfer,⁷ deserves more attention. Indeed, “the choice of an L2 norm involves consideration of regional, gender, social class, and age-based variation” (Barron, 2003, p. 75). Two points could be made here, namely, that in the real world there are no teachers around

⁶ She is now studying for an MA in the teaching of Chinese, as a consequence of 3 years of English-Chinese tandem exchanges.

⁷ While the reference is made here to L1 transfer, the reality is that at times the learners’ dominant language may not be the L1. Also, in the case of multilinguals, the transfer may be from some other language that they know well or at least better than the TL.

to help direct traffic—so all the more reason to get the most mileage from teachers while it is still possible. And secondly, while it is true that using NS norms as a benchmark for behavior may not be so crucial in an FL situation, it can still be valuable for learners to at least have some familiarity with what these norms are, regardless of whether they attempt to adhere to them and continue to seek out TL relationships after their final language class. By sharing personal examples of pragmatic failure with students, a teacher can help push learners to figure out not only what went wrong but also ways in which such pragmatic failures could be avoided in future interactions.

Another motivating option would be to have a pragmatics show-and-tell where each day different students are responsible for bringing in an aspect of language that they heard or saw in print. Ideally, they then take the initiative to figure out for themselves what the pragmalinguistic and/or sociopragmatic ramifications of the language behavior are, such as thorough checking it with an available NS of the language (possibly through an Internet contact). The student then gives a short presentation to the rest of the class and, in a sense, becomes the expert on this behavior. In an FL context, this type of activity, while possible, is more of a challenge. It may call for an assiduous use of the Internet, such as through chat rooms. In addition to specific activities, it is also important for teachers to help students to get in touch with what they do not know about TL pragmatics and to become more independent at finding out about it by themselves.

7.3.4. Supporting learners in relating to NS norms

Relating to NS norms starts with the realization that NSs tend to do things that NNSs do not simply acquire. Here is an example: knowing how to respond to the proprietress upon leaving a restaurant in Japan, after being thanked for having eaten there. The second author was oblivious to the limitations of *doo itashimashite* 'you're welcome' until using it upon leaving a restaurant and learning from colleagues that this was totally inappropriate. He was to say nothing, perform a slight bow, or say *domo* 'thanks.' And he had exited restaurants in Japan many times before without paying attention to what NSs did. So, armed with this new information, students of Japanese could, in fact, try to sit at a table near the door to the restaurant so that they can overhear what NSs say and/or do in the restaurant-leaving exchange.

Especially in an FL context, language teachers could help learners develop pragmatic awareness by having them compare their performance with that of an NS. Students could be asked to reflect on two questions:

1. What do you think a native-like response would be?

2. How do you think your own L2 pragmatic performance might depart from the NS norms if you are unwilling to do it the way NSs would?

Here is where the teachers' expertise may be crucial in evening the playing field since some learners are bound to be more self-aware and critical than their peers. Some may have a more refined grammatical proficiency, which may be crucial in understanding what may be subtle grammatical distinctions that have an important pragmalinguistic role to play. The teachers then need to coach learners in being more astute observers of the target culture and to make clear to them that such observation can increase their motivation to improve their TL pragmatics. This presupposes that the teachers already have this fine-tuned pragmatic knowledge of the target culture. If they do not, then all the more reason to rely on NS or near-NS informants, whether in the local environment or through the worldwide web.

It might be valuable to make an *observation toolkit for learners* as a way of instilling within learners the importance of observation. The problem is that learners can only attend to so much information at a time. How will they know which stimuli to focus on in terms of pragmatic information? They may be highly motivated but not good at determining where the key pragmatic information lies. Teachers could, for example, design a type of jigsaw activity where the students are each assigned to observe different aspects of spoken discourse and report back to the group to create a larger observation report. For example, the first author has used such an activity to accompany a video clip from *The Joy Luck Club* where, in groups, some students are responsible for observing non-verbal behavior while others are focused only on what a given actor said. Rather than attempting to notice everything at once, the students focus their observations on, say, a single aspect of an interaction that leads to pragmatic failure. Then, they come together as a group to see and analyze the interaction as a whole.

Teachers can also play a relatively untapped role in heightening student awareness as to similarities and differences in both sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic behavior across cultural groups. Especially having NNS teachers let students get feedback from NSs with regard to pragmalinguistic niceties and sociopragmatic realities can be an effective way to go. It does not put the teachers on the spot. Teachers can ensure that students act as data gatherers and that they bring those experiences into the classroom for analysis. Kasper and Rose (2001) define pragmatics "as interpersonal rhetoric – the way speakers and writers accomplish goals as social actors who do not just need to get things done but must attend to their interpersonal relationships with other participants at the same time" (p. 2). The challenge then for the learners is to be both actors and data gatherers at the same time. The way Shively (2011) did this with U.S.

study-abroad students in Toledo, Spain was to have the students use a hidden tape recorder to gather data from interactions with their host family, with friends, and in service encounters. While in this case the data were collected so that after the study-abroad ended the researcher could chart the students' progress in their use of pragmatics, it might be possible to determine a means by which students could meaningfully access these data along the way.

Considering the global spread of English, conceptions of NS norms vary widely across and within countries (e.g., African-American Vernacular English), cultures (e.g., Afrikaans-English in South Africa), and across formats (e.g., Internet English). As English has become a lingua franca, many L2 speakers have not found it necessary to reach optimal levels of NS interactional behavior. In addition, NSs often do not expect TL-like English from NNSs, and by accepting deviations from the norm, they make non-TL speech acceptable (House & Kasper, 2000, p. 111). In fact, non-TL use can elicit positive responses from NSs, especially when it is considered "innovative, creative, or even charming" (Ishihara & Cohen, 2014, p. 76). For example, let us say that, in the given TL culture, female coworkers often send emojis to one another in emails but do not do that with male coworkers, regardless of age. It would be important to point out this behavior explicitly to learners and to find authentic examples to present so that they feel comfortable with a range of communicative options and can pick and choose successfully.

It can be the role of the teacher to instill a sense of reflection and responsibility for word choice so that learners do not accidentally hurt their chances to develop deep relationships by inadvertently annoying their interlocutors or even making enemies. Many learners get their TL input from internet media and so are exposed to songs and TV shows where they may be oblivious to the fact that a speaker's particular linguistic choices are not necessarily normative ones, but are tied specifically to an individual or to a subculture. It can be the teacher's role to bring this to light for the learners by delving into cursing and other forms of off-colored language. It then becomes the learners' option to determine whether they wish to use such language in their own interactions. But at least they are aware of what the language means and presumably how to use it. As pointed out above, it may not just be an issue of whether the NNS wants to be like NSs by using certain slang, obscenities, or very informal speech. Rather, it may be the case that NSs may harbor negative attitudes towards NNSs who try to sound too much like the in-group (Janicki, 1985).

7.4. Further research

One area of research would be to survey both L2 and FL teachers regarding not just their knowledge of the TL pragmatics, but also their perceptions and beliefs—

investigating what teachers' views are with regard both to L1 pragmatic transfer and to the teachers' role in motivating learners to become more pragmatically aware. FL teachers may not necessarily view the pragmatics of language interaction as important since it occurs infrequently for them. The responsibility for word choice may in numerous cases be left to the textbook, rather than the teacher. The survey could also explore the case of teachers who shy away from both teaching and assessment of pragmatics—why this is and what to do about it. Such a survey could be conducted exclusively to improve pedagogy, but it could also be conducted as a research study.

The level of learner motivation to actively notice their own pragmatic transfer (whether positive or negative) or to take full advantage of explicit instruction in pragmatics is an issue in need of research with a robust number of subjects over a prolonged period of time. A researchable issue, for example, is the development of motivation to perceive and produce NS interactions in FL scenarios. More studies are also needed to investigate the specific relationship between learner motivation and pragmatic acquisition. Specifically, it would be helpful to the field to have more research like that of Tagashira et al. (2011) that investigates the intersection of pragmatic awareness, cognitive processes associated with noticing, and motivation in order to account for learners' transition from simply noticing to actually comprehending pragmatic inappropriateness.

In addition, more attention could be given to the role of pragmatic transfer in both L2 and FL contexts to determine how it is related to awareness, and the pedagogical implications of helping students become aware of universal transfer. This is of particular importance in an FL context where students may also draw on preconceived cultural stereotypes (Ishihara & Cohen, 2014), which can be further reinforced by lack of authentic interaction in the TL with NSs (Barron, 2003). Rafieyan et al. (2013) have shown that the problem of negative transfer can be mitigated when learners are familiarized with and motivated to learn about the L2 culture. Research on the distance between L1 and L2 cultures may have a greater effect on NNS familiarity with TL pragmatic norms (Kecskes, 2003) and inform classroom approaches to making input salient. Furthermore, additional research is needed to account for how much of learners' positive transfer is intentional, how much is luck, and how much relates to the learners' desire to adapt to the NS norm, to express an L1 identity in the L2, or to adopt a new L2 identity solely for L2 communication. We could look both at structured responses, as on a DCT, and at real-time interaction. Sometimes, people just parrot what they have heard and always have a chance of it being correct. It can be difficult if not impossible to measure if they have actually *learned* anything or are just mimicking what they hope is correct. So this calls for systematic follow-up over a prolonged period of time to determine how well the learners have control over this pragmatic behavior.

Perhaps it may be possible with a large scale study to better identify, describe, and predict which learners are likely to gain greater pragmatic awareness than others. This research could ideally give us the tools for gaining further insights into the learning process than we currently have. It really means having a better handle on proficiency at the more advanced levels. These data could potentially reveal nuances about the nature of pragmatic transfer. The question is how best to conduct such research. It would probably call for online surveys, rather than completion of real-time production tasks, but perhaps a combination of the two.

The motivational factor requires closer attention since it relates to how aware learners are about the sociopragmatics associated with the given TL. Furthermore, goals and motivation for learning an L2 differ widely among individuals. Some L2 learners, particularly in an FL setting, may learn the TL only for a specific purpose, such as reading trade articles, thus rendering the bulk of pragmatic knowledge “superfluous” (Barron, 2003, p. 77).

Since pragmatic ability “containing cultural aspects and features of social context and conventions cannot be conceptualized without a target language and culture in mind” (Timpe, 2012, p. 171), future research should also make explicit how the TL features to be measured are tied to the TL culture at hand, and what effect deviations from the pragmatic norm have on overall communicative ability, as well as their relationship to both pragmatic transfer and motivation. Iranian researchers, for example, observed that their EFL learners are highly motivated to acquire how to use language appropriately, and that their high pragmatic motivation can be a strong impetus for their noticing ability (Tajeddin & Zand Moghadam, 2012, p. 367).

Another research concern is that most current research is cross-sectional rather than longitudinal. More longitudinal studies are needed to measure pragmatic awareness and production prior to, during, and after residence in an L2 context (Barron, 2003), and to study the evolution of the L2 learners’ attitudes toward the NS norms. Especially amenable to longitudinal study would be case study research, such as that looking at specific interactions between NNS and NS colleagues where the NS is a mentor to the more junior NNS colleague. This research could track the junior colleague’s efforts to use appropriate TL norms in email exchanges, the type of help offered by the mentor, and the consequences of getting the behavior wrong from time to time, especially as compared to that of a NS junior and a NS mentor.

8. Conclusion

The aims of this paper have been to review research literature on the role that the L2 and FL environments actually play in L2 learners’ pragmatic ability, and

also to speculate as to the extent to which individual factors can offset the advantages that learners may have by being in the L2 context while they are learning. The paper started by defining pragmatics and by problematizing this definition. Then, attention was given to research literature dealing with the learning of pragmatics in L2 and FL contexts, pragmatic transfer and its incidence in FL as opposed to L2 contexts, and the role of motivation in the development of pragmatic ability. A number of pedagogical suggestions were offered, such as including pragmatics in teacher development, using authentic pragmatics materials, motivating learners to be more savvy about pragmatics, and supporting learners in confronting, challenging, and accepting NS norms. Suggestions as to further research in the field were also offered.

While L2 contexts generally afford more opportunities for pragmatic development than FL settings, the dynamic relationships among context, motivation, and pragmatic transfer all indicate that individual differences have a greater role to play than just exposure in the TL community. Thus, theory, research, and, most importantly, language pedagogy must evolve to address the complexity and difficulty of developing and assessing pragmatic ability.

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