2. Researching L2 pragmatics

This chapter introduces several key principles behind L2 pragmatics research. The chapter begins by briefly charting early language competency models alongside more detailed accounts of contemporary schools of thought regarding what makes a successful 21st century L2 language user. This is followed by an overview of pragmatics-related SLA theories which help us gain a better understanding of language learning processes to facilitate more effective research and pedagogical practice. The chapter concludes with building a case for why pragmatics instruction is needed in the context of an academic setting within a study abroad sojourn.

2.1. Pragmatics and language learning

The notion of communicative competence in language learning was first introduced by Hymes (1972) as a shift away from the Chomskyian (1965) view of language as a system isolated from context and use. Hymes introduced the importance of situating both the knowledge of language and the ability to use it in social contexts within the construct of communicative competence, thereby guiding the design of later influential frameworks. Researchers such as Canale and Swain (1980), Canale (1983), Bachman (1990), Bachman and Palmer (1996, 2010) are among those credited with attempting to capture the essential components of communicative competence in second language acquisition (SLA). Whilst Canale and Swain's (1980) and Canale's (1983) work implicitly embeds a pragmatic component, referring to the rules of use and appropriateness within sociolinguistic competence, Bachman and Palmer (1982), subsequently Bachman (1990), were the first to explicitly categorise it as a discrete element.

Collectively, these models of communicative competence demonstrated that it is not only grammatical knowledge that is a key tenet to communicative competence, but the acquisition of a functional and sociolinguistic control of language. The importance of the social aspects of interaction is echoed by a number of researchers who suggest that pragmatic competence must be reasonably well developed for successful communication in the L2 (Bardovi-Harlig 2001; Kasper & Rose 2003; Rose 2005).

In today's globalised world, where multilingual and multicultural interactions are commonplace, research is increasingly drawing upon alternate competency theories which more adequately reflect the modern-day language user. Early frameworks of the 1980s and 1990s, as described above, overlooked the importance of both the situational context and dynamic, interpersonal nature of communicative encounters. Also spurred on by English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) debates and English user demographics, pragmatics research is aligning itself more to the idea of multiculturalism. More recent pragmatic investigations are rightly concerned with how today's intercultural speakers achieve success through co-constructed understanding, social actions and shared goals. This contrasts with the historical focus on the individual and their interlanguage shortfalls, often measured against a fixed set of competencies or a native speaker ideal. With this revised positioning, communicative competency is now being analysed through a multilingual lens, underpinned by notions of *interactional* and *intercultural competencies,* for instance, and situated within branches of SLA such as *intercultural pragmatics.* These three areas will be addressed briefly in the next sections.

Ishida (2009), Masuda (2010) and Taguchi (2014) are recent examples of investigations in the study abroad context which incorporate interactional competency models to developmental second language pragmatics investigations (see Hall, Hellerman & Pekarek Doehler 2011 for a review of other studies). Interactional competency is characterised as learners bringing a variety of linguistic and semiotic resources to jointly contribute to ongoing discourse and co-accomplish specific language goals (Young 2002). It is differentiated from communicative competency in the following way: ‘Interactional competency is not what a person *knows*. It is what a person *does* together with others’ (Young 2011: 430, emphasis in the original). Applying an interactional competency framework to pragmatics study has a considerable role to play from an L2 instructional perspective. Adopting teaching approaches and implementing instructional materials which help develop interactional competence may already be salient techniques to classroom practitioners. For instance, incorporating authentic written and spoken samples to contextualise language, and encouraging learners to notice target language features through guided self-discovery, are already considered good practice in language learning. Similarly, studying transcriptions of naturally-recorded data with language learners or eliciting recent interactions in the target language for reflective purposes (as adopted in the present volume) have been advocated as beneficial teaching tools for enhancing pragmatic development for some time.

In the field of language learning and teaching, studies underpinned by the notion of intercultural competency are also gaining traction. Intercultural competence involves ‘a complex of abilities needed to perform effectively and appropriately when interacting with others who are linguistically and culturally different from oneself’ (Fantini & Tirmizi, 2006: 12). Theorising intercultural competence most often draws on the work of Byram (1997, 2012) who attempts to integrate both communicative competence and intercultural competence within a set of savoirs (knowledge) about oneself and others. Most influentially, Byram’s model acknowledges the importance of how communicative actions are managed between intercultural speakers whose diverse set of language, culture and belief systems will affect participant interaction. Recent studies adopting an intercultural stance in pragmatics investigations include McConachy (2018), Sánchez-Hernández and Alcón-Soler (2018), Shively and Cohen (2008), and Taguchi, Xiao and Li (2016).

The complex nature of understanding, theorising and articulating the specifics of intercultural competency makes the task of promoting it in the language classroom more challenging for teachers and curriculum designers. As Liddicoat (2011) notes, intercultural language teaching and learning does not come with a standardised set of pedagogical techniques which can be adopted wholesale into the language classroom. Instead, practitioners should be led by a mutual understanding of what it means to teach language in an intercultural way in order to inform their own classroom practices. In terms of operationalising this intercultural understanding, Liddicoat and Scarino (2010) offer a useful starting point by encouraging the design of activities which engage learners to 'notice', 'compare', 'reflect' and 'interact' with language materials to explore and advance their own intercultural experiences. By initiating this sequence of steps, learning becomes meaningful, contextualised, thought-provoking and personal. These four steps are, in fact, not dissimilar to existing frameworks designed to support pragmatics instruction (as discussed in chapter three) and underline the existing interrelationship between intercultural and pragmatic competencies.

Within the field of SLA, intercultural pragmatics, is broadly defined as 'the way in which the language system is put to use in social encounters between human beings who have different first languages, but communicate in a common language, and, usually represent different cultures' (Kecskes & Assimakopoulos, 2017: 1). At the heart of this post-2000 discipline is a socio-cognitive approach which encapsulates the modern, multilingual language user. Intercultural pragmatics outlines the process by which participants of different linguistic and cultural backgrounds establish common ground by negotiating their way through the influences of their unique cultural and linguistic groups to bring about a shared understanding and communicative goal. This co-constructed ‘third way’ (House 2008), or ‘third culture’ (Kecskes 2014) involves L2 speakers establishing their own ‘intercultural positions’ (McConachy 2018) within shared communicative spaces. As a sub-field of pragmatics with a multilingual focus, intercultural pragmatics seems fit for purpose to represent today’s L2 learners and users, as well as providing a legitimate discipline within which the next wave of L2 pragmatics research can be taken forward. For the reasons described above, studies aligned to the concepts of interactional and intercultural competencies, as well as intercultural pragmatics as a disciplinary field, are likely to continue gaining momentum in the coming years. Since L2 language behaviour needs to be increasingly explained and understood in multilingual and multicultural terms, this is an area of SLA within which we should all seriously consider grounding our future research and teaching practices. In addition to SLA theory, research initiatives also typically draw on relevant theory from language learning and teaching disciplines, as discussed in the following section.

2.2. Some theoretical links for pragmatics research

For those less familiar with L2 pragmatics research, it is timely to consider some of the key theoretical frameworks typically associated with the field which are used to ensure research design is approached in a principled way. As is the case with this volume, reviewing related teaching and learning theory helps to understand the best way of achieving the research goals. Some of the key SLA and pragmatic-related theories, which are pertinent to the empirical study, are described below as an introduction for further reading outside of this volume.

Given the classroom setting of the present investigation, research into *instructed second language acquisition* (ISLA) is the obvious first link to be made. ISLA is most often linked to acquisition in the formal L2 classroom, but it could equally occur as a result of exposure to the target environment or through self-directed study. According to Loewen (2015: 2) ISLA 'aims to understand how the systematic manipulation of the mechanisms of learning and/or the conditions under which they occur enable or facilitate the development and acquisition of a language other than one's first'. Manipulation can occur by altering the instructional input to facilitate learning (e.g. this study's manipulation of authentic written and spoken dialogues to include a range of request and apology expressions), or altering how learners engage with the input (e.g. the differentiated training materials in this study comparing the effectiveness of paper-based vs. computer-based learning activities). Research linking ISLA and pragmatics has received only limited attention, despite pragmatic development being a key component for successful communication and the well-documented challenges of acquiring pragmatic knowledge without planned instructional intervention.

Regarding the language learning process, Kasper and Rose (2002) contend, interventionist studies are generally underpinned by three interrelated SLA hypotheses; Schmidt's (1993, 2001) *Noticing Hypothesis*, Swain's (1996) *Output Hypothesis*, and Long's (1996) *Interaction Hypothesis*. The study in this volume is no exception. The first two hypotheses relate to separate stages in the language learning process. Firstly, given the explicit instructional approach adopted in this study, the proposal in the noticing hypothesis that linguistic forms can only serve as intake for learning if learners ‘notice’ them drives this present investigation. Secondly, the Output Hypothesis suggests several acquisitional roles for second language production, namely learners may notice gaps in their interlanguage during utterance production, learners require analysed knowledge for productive language use beyond formulaic speech, and repeated productive language use is requisite for automatization. The third, the Interaction Hypothesis, draws on Schmidt and Swain by positing that negotiation of meaning through interactional adjustments facilitates acquisition by connecting input, output and learner internal capacities. The metapragmatic input and reflective discussions, followed by opportunities for collaborative communicative practice which were incorporated into this study, attend to these acquisitional needs outlined in these hypotheses.

New trends in pragmatics investigations have also begun to draw on *Skills Acquisition Processing* (Anderson 1993) and *Input Processing* (VanPatten 1996) theories to describe and better understand the cognitive mechanisms underlying the acquisition and processing of pragmatic rules. Pragmatic studies applying Skills Acquisition theory have focussed on tracking learners’ growth from conscious learning of pragmatic rules (declarative knowledge) to automatic application of these rules in real time (procedural knowledge) as a result of repeated activation (see studies by Li 2012, 2013). As an alternative cognitive focus, Input Processing theory which seeks to understand how learners process input, make form-meaning connections and manage syntactic structures can be found in pragmatic studies such as Takimoto (2009, 2010).

For studies situated in the SA context like the present volume, language socialisation theory (e.g., Duff, 2007; Schiefflin & Ochs, 1986), which argues the acquisition of linguistic and sociocultural knowledge is simultaneously achieved through social interaction, is a necessary consideration. As is claimed, ‘pragmatic skills develop through socialisation in the given speech community' (Kesckes 2014: 65) and the community functions as a place 'where novices participate in concrete activities with experts' (Kasper & Rose 2002: 42). In this sense, language is both a means and a goal of socialisation, and activity is fundamental to its success. The study abroad language contact survey conducted with participants in the present investigation aims to assess the extent of this activity in social interaction with members of the ESL community and its effect on pragmatic development.

2.3. Speech act and politeness theories

Speech act studies principally draw on the work of Austin (1962) and Searle (1969) who are credited with developing speech act theory to provide a clearer understanding of what is required for effective and appropriate communication. It is problematic to assign a clear definition of a speech act given that it is not a sentence or an utterance, but an act in itself. As Austin (1962) describes, language is more than making statements of fact, it has a performative function to carry out social actions such as in stating, 'I apologise', has both a linguistic and social function. With this in mind, Austin (1962) posited that when producing utterances, a speaker actually performs three acts; the locutionary act (the utterances themselves), the illocutionary act (the speaker's intention behind the words, such as requesting or apologising) and the perlocutionary act (the effect of the utterance on the hearer).

Of the three acts described above, the illocutionary act, is said to be the underlying focus of speech act theory. Building on Austin's (1962) classifications of illocutionary acts, Searle's (1969) revised taxonomy is based on functional characteristics and incorporates five major groups; representatives (e.g., assertions), directives (e.g., requests), expressives (e.g., apologies), commisives (e.g., promises) and declarations (e.g., vows). The illocutionary act, also known as illocutionary force, provides a signal as to how the speaker wishes the utterance to be interpreted (Barron 2002), and is typically realised by Illocutionary Force Indicating Devices (IFIDs) such as performative verbs (e.g., requesting or apologising), word order or intonation. For instance, 'Would it be possible to have an extension for my assignment?' functions as a request by the speaker. An IFID is considered successful if the listener obliges and complies with the request. The success of utilising IFIDs appropriately, however, is less commonly achieved by learners of other languages (Barron, 2003), the reasons for which have been one of the motivating drives for ILP investigations.

In order to realise the speech act itself, a number of semantic formulae (consisting of a word, phrase or sentence) may be chosen (Olshtain & Cohen 1983). Yet, it is problematic to define an absolute set for any speech act since the choice of formulae depends on a number of factors. At best, we can estimate through empirical studies which formulae we would expect to encounter in given situations, as will be presented in chapter five. Early research by Searle (1975) and Fraser (1985) proposed that strategies for the realisation of speech acts across languages are essentially universal, or non-language specific, but their appropriate use may differ across cultures.

This notion of universality is reinforced to some degree in some of the earliest work on L2 pragmatics such as Olshtain (1989) where strong similarities in the realisation of apologies were found between Hebrew, Canadian-French, Australian English and German speakers. Around the same period, this idea was strongly contested, however, in a number of studies which attributed language differences to cultural norms and values (Wierzbicka 1985; Blum-Kulka & Olshtain 1986). This suggests semantic formulae are in fact culture- and language-specific- a claim also investigated in this volume. Speech acts are often performed indirectly (Searle 1975) due to the expectancy that politeness be observed during verbal interaction with others. The principles of politeness and its influence on language use are considered in the proceeding sections.

Speech act studies are also closely aligned to the concept of politeness with many empirical studies evaluating pragmatic performance on the basis of politeness theory and the interactants perceptions of politeness relative to the home and target language communities. A comprehensive review of politeness is beyond the scope of this volume but given its prominence in L2 pragmatics research, key principles of politeness do need to be considered in light of their importance in understanding what successful communication entails. Leech (2014: 3) suggests being polite means ‘to speak or behave in such a way as to (appear to) give benefit or value not to yourself but to the other person(s)’. Politeness is characterised as both a linguistic and social/cultural phenomenon, organised by Leech (1983) and Thomas (1983) as *pragmalinguistics* (the range of lexico-grammatical resources) and *sociopragmatics* (the sociocultural context). Acquisition of the former is said to be facilitated more easily as learners can be introduced to different degrees of politeness and their relevant linguistic forms. The latter is based on social and contextual judgements and is, therefore, a more difficult skill to acquire, as empirical research has reported (e.g., Barron 2003; Fukuya & Zhang 2002; Shardakova 2005; Taguchi 2015). Both, however, work in conjunction with one another so competency in both pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic features of language are requisite for successful pragmatic performance.

Culture, in particular, has a strong influence on politeness and is a factor which occupies much of the debate when analysing language from a cross-cultural perspective (the next section includes an extended discussion of this in the East Asian context). The acknowledgement that there are different ways of performing politeness in different cultures is recognised as one of the main sources of pragmatic miscommunication. For instance, the notion of directness (Searle 1975) underpins both Leech's (1983) and Brown and Levinson's (1987) widely cited politeness theories. Both comment on the close relationship between politeness and indirectness in many Western traditions, yet this is not the case for all cultures. China and Japan, for instance, are said to value directness as a key principle to being polite under the tenets of economy and clarity of language use, most apparent when performing requests (Lee-Wong 1994). What is problematic for L2 communication is when this cross-cultural variation is applied incorrectly to the target culture- a common feature of pragmatics research.

Central to the concept of politeness within Brown and Levinson's work, developed from Goffman (1967), is the notion of 'face'. Parallels between this concept and the phrase losing face, can be drawn. When loss of face occurs, we damage our public self-image which can lead to embarrassment so maintaining face is a sensitive issue. In Brown and Levinson's model, face comprises 'negative face' (the right to privacy and freedom, unimpeded by others) and 'positive face' (the desire to be liked and approved of by others). For Brown and Levinson, acts which fail to satisfy face needs are termed face threatening acts (FTAs), which also underpin politeness theory. The speech acts of request and apology, which form the basis to the present study, are both considered inherently face-threatening (see chapter four). To counter this effect, participants must engage in redressive action to maintain polite behaviour and social harmony.

Further important components of the Brown and Levinson model, which are likely to influence a speaker's linguistic choices are the social variables of power (P):

interpreted as power of control, social rank or authority, distance (D): classified as social similarity or familiarity, and imposition (R): understood as the burden placed on the addressee in terms of time, effort, financial or psychological cost. Furthermore, the model suggests a positive correlation between these variables and the degree of indirectness employed so that the greater the hearer's power, social distance and degree of imposition of a request act, for instance, the greater the face threat will be. A greater threat leads to increased indirectness in the strategies employed. For instance, a request to borrow a book from an academic tutor, with whom you are not very familiar, is likely to be formulated with more indirectness than borrowing a book from a friend. Partial support for this correlation between politeness and indirectness has been identified in a number of pragmatic request studies, with a range of languages: Spanish (Félix-Brasdefer 2006; Marquez Reiter 2000); Hebrew, German, Argentinian (Blum-Kulka et al. 1989); Greek (Economidou-Kogetsidis 2010); and Chinese (Chen & Hu 2013). As for social variables, what is problematic for L2 communication is the different perceptions of power, distance, imposition amongst different cultures and speech communities.

Exploring politeness theory as a means of understanding its function within language, Brown and Levinson's landmark work has encouraged discussions around politeness to flourish, whilst, at the same time, been subject to heavy criticism. The main areas of critique include failure to acknowledge the social interdependence of 'face' (e.g., Spencer-Oatey 2000), the emphasis on politeness as means of mitigation for face threatening acts (e.g., Leech, 2014), and the *universal* claim of politeness theory (e.g., Wierzbicka 1985), specifically its Western (Anglo-Saxon) bias (e.g., Matsumoto 1988) which promotes an overemphasis on individual freedom and autonomy (e.g., Gu 1990). Contemporary alternate perspectives on the constituents of politeness have been motivated by this early work such as Spencer-Oatey's (2000) 'rapport management' and Watts' (2003) 'politic behaviour' which underline the interpersonal and social perspectives of interaction. From an East Asian perspective, Gu (1990) and Ide (1993) maintain politeness needs to be considered in relation to cultural traditions which concern the role individuals play within the larger context of the group and the traditional hierarchical society.

As noted, the Brown and Levinson model is said to place an unbalanced emphasis on the rights of the individual without due consideration of how politeness operates in other cultures. Such distinctions have naturally led to cultural labels or stereotypes, such as many Western European societies being considered negative-politeness oriented (focussing on the individual and their rights of privacy) e.g., Marquez Reiter (2000); Sifanou (1992), and non-Western East Asian societies such as China and Japan, positive-politeness oriented, (emphasising a 'collectivist' group culture) e.g., Gu (1990); Yu (1999). To some degree, the notion that English-speaking countries operate within the norms of negative politeness has been empirically confirmed in terms of social behaviour e.g., Hofstede (2005); Ogiermann (2009), and production of request language showing a greater preference for indirect strategies e.g., Blum-Kulka et al. (1989); Sifanou (1992). Equally, in terms of categorisation, empirical research also applies the terms positive-politeness and collectivist to many non-Western societies, particularly in China, Japan and Korea in East Asia (Gu 1990; Ide 1989; Mao 1994; Matsumoto 1989; Yu 1999, 2011). These findings need to be viewed, however, under the caveat that there will be group differences within societies which do not necessarily conform and fall neatly into one or the other category. For instance, Culpeper and Haugh (2014) note that in the North of England, where the present study is based, terms of endearment such as, 'love' (e.g., Can I help you, love?) and 'pet' (e.g., Are you OK, pet?) are common features of discourse within the public domain (as opposed to academia) which, in fact, relate more to aspects of positive rather than negative politeness. Regarding the East/West debate, Leech (2014: 83) invites us to consider the concepts of Eastern group culture and Western individualist, egalitarian culture as simply positions on a scale, rather than absolutes. Since, he argues, all polite communication involves observation of both individual and group values, it appears that group values appear to dominate in Eastern culture and individual values appear to dominate in the West. In considering the evidence, this stance seems a perfectly plausible suggestion from which to begin.

In line with the aforementioned studies, the study in this volume will continue to adopt the terms positive and negative politeness in the ways described for convenience and general understanding, whilst acknowledging that these categorisations can be over simplistic. Despite the criticism levied towards Brown and Levinson's politeness theory, this too will be the main theory applied to the current data and utilised in the discussions for three main reasons. Firstly, as noted by prominent figures in (im)politeness research (Culpeper & Haugh 2014; Leech 2014), a replacement account of politeness which is as accessible and thorough in its description has yet to be found. Secondly, to maintain cross-research comparisons, this model most favoured in ILP research is also adopted here to contextualise the current findings amongst existing investigations on requests and apologies. Finally, Chen and Hu's (2013) recent study suggests that a number of features of request behaviour such as high frequency of indirectness and observation of power and distance, show little variation between American and Chinese speakers, in spite of previous claims. Chen and Hu contend cultural differences may not be as extreme as to lead to the conclusion that there is an East-West divide in terms of politeness, at least as defined by Brown and Levinson. This is also a valuable area of investigation- determining the extent to which the notions described so far have a bearing on the linguistic output of the Chinese learners employed in this study.

2.4. Politeness and culture

A number of researchers investigating cross-cultural and interlanguage behaviour in Chinese cultures have contributed to the debate of universality versus cultural-specificity, arguing that deep-rooted cultural values and conventions directly affect pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic behaviour in the L2. While Yu (2003), amongst others, suggests the ultimate goals of polite facework proposed by Brown and Levinson are not so different from those of Chinese speakers, researchers suggest that the concepts of face are fundamentally based on Western cultural norms which prioritise the self (Gu 1990; Lin 2009; Wang 2011; Yu 1999; Zhang 1995). In contrast, social harmony and seeking the respect of the group are central to Chinese culture (positive politeness), rather than accommodating individual desires and freedoms (negative politeness) which are said to be more of a concern in Western societies (Gu 1990; Lin 2009; Wang 2011; Zhang 1995). The Chinese appear to be motivated by being part of the whole and are communally-driven in direct contrast to the self-oriented image of a Western society. In this case, it is unreasonable to assume Chinese speakers will automatically enter into and participate in interactions in this same way as native speakers of English in Western cultures.

Research on other non-English speaking cultures have also contested the applicability of Brown and Levinson’s theories, supported by empirical evidence which suggests they have negligible relevance in collectivist societies such as Japan (Hill, Ide, Ikuta, Kawasaki & Ogino 1986; Matsumoto 1988, 1989), Poland and Hungary (Suszczyznska 1999), Poland (Wierzbicka 1991), Greece and Germany (Pavlidou 1994) and China (Gu 1990; Mao 1994). Secondly, Lee-Wong (1994) and Yu (1999) are among studies reporting directness as a common strategy for Chinese speakers in conversation- a marker of both politeness and sincerity in Chinese culture. Yu (2011) claims that whilst the typical conventionally indirect structure using the modal *could* may be regarded as an acceptable request by English speakers, this tentativeness potentially questions the sincerity of the interlocutor in Chinese culture and may therefore cause offence. As a result, Chinese beliefs heavily influence the semantics of their utterances adopting brevity and directness to display politeness: a feature of positive politeness societies. Kasper and Zhang (1995) note study abroad students in China concluded the interpretation of politeness in China was very different to their Western expectations. The students reported comments concerning age, salary and obesity were approached in too direct a manner in China compared to Western conventions e.g., 'you are really fat', 'you have a big nose' (1995: 18), in addition to suggestions being perceived as directives because of the linguistic forms chosen. Such comments are not impolite in China and directives are considered appropriate in Chinese culture but can be unfamiliar and uncomfortable for Westerners.

As noted above, politeness is generally considered to be marked by indirectness in western societies. Whilst a shared belief exists that indirectness does play a role in polite behaviour in China, the most important point here is that politeness is realised in a different way. In request language, for instance, it is suggested indirectness is measured by the framework of the utterance (Yu 2011; Zhang 1995). External modification devices such as small talk and supportive moves, preceding the proposition, are fundamental to conveying indirectness, rather than internal modification such as modals and pronouns as evidenced in Western utterances. Faerch and Kasper (1989) found that for British English, German and Danish groups, internal modification is obligatory but external modification is optional. According to Yu (2011) and Zhang (1995), amongst others, in fact the opposite is true in Chinese culture. This difference in linguistic sequencing may have a significant impact on the success of the utterance if these are facilitated by negative L1 transfer.

From a cultural perspective, social structures may also play a key role in how interactions are managed in the East and West. Japan and China are described as 'vertical societies' (e.g., Matsumoto 1988; O'Driscoll 1996) where a clear hierarchy exists between social groupings. In contrast, 'horizontal' societies of the West have relatively weak vertical ties and members of groups feel closest to those of the same rank and role. In this case, obligations are few between high-status and low-status members in comparison to vertical societies (O'Driscoll 1996). A small number of studies also report the significance of non-verbal apologetic behaviour in Eastern cultures has been found to be widely misinterpreted by English speakers (Hall 1977; Kim 2008). Hall (1977) describes Japan, South Korea and China as 'high-context' cultures where implicit understanding of the context may negate the requirement of an overt verbal apology, particular amongst in-group members. In the case of minor offences, this is commonly replaced by bowing, smiling and even silence- the latter considered to be one of the most important apologising strategies amongst intimates in South Korea (Kim 2008). By contrast, 'low-context' Western cultures value clarity through explicit verbal communication and it is the speaker's responsibility to ensure meaning is conveyed through these means (ibid.). Kim suggests misinterpretation by

English speakers is common when a smile is used whilst making an apology. For South Koreans this relates to the ‘desire for rapid conflict resolution’ (2008: 268) but is likely to offend English speakers who may doubt the sincerity of the apology and question the speaker’s motives.

As in all of the above cultural variations, there is potential for a mismatch between the approaches taken by learners of English from Japan, Korea and China and those from Western societies. In each case there are defined cultural expectations for what constitutes a successful exchange from both pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic perspectives. There is a need, therefore, for learners to understand how politeness is realised in the target culture, particularly when undertaking a period abroad where L2 interaction will occur on a daily basis. When interacting in the L2, Chinese learners of English are perhaps in a disadvantaged position unless politeness strategies from Western culture are known, and learners are equipped with the linguistic devices and understanding to manage their utterances. At this point, the next section reviews some of the broader issues associated with L2 interaction and study abroad to further build the case for instructional intervention.

2.5. The case for instructed L2 pragmatics

As summarised in chapter one, challenges to improving pragmatic performance exist for both learners (e.g. issues with meaningful pragmatic input and feedback) and teachers (e.g. a paucity of readily available pragmatics-focussed teaching materials). For the reasons listed in chapter one, there is already a valid argument for a focus on pragmatics as part of the learning curriculum. However, since the present study is situated in an academic setting, within a study abroad (SA) environment, an insight into the need for intervention within these two learning contexts will each be addressed in the following sections.

Beginning with the wider study abroad context, Kinginger's (2009: 11) definition of SA suits the purposes of this volume by emphasising the educational context of the period abroad; 'a temporary sojourn of pre-defined duration, undertaken for educational purposes'. Most language learners are keen to exploit L2 opportunities for language development and raising cross-cultural awareness, viewing SA as an integral part of their learning experience. This is evidenced in the continued popularity of SA and high international student mobility for these purposes, though shorter-term sojourns of up to six months appear to be increasingly common. The diversity of opportunities to gain frequent exposure to authentic, contextualised communicative norms means, in principle, the SA environment is an excellent resource. For pragmatic development, the potential for observation of pragmatic norms, situated practice, direct feedback and experiencing real-life consequences of pragmatic behaviour is invaluable (Taguchi 2017).

Xiao's (2015) synthesis of studies tracking acquisitional pragmatic development across multiple languages highlights those with largely positive SA effects (e.g. Matsumura 2001, 2003; Schauer 2006a), minimal SA effects (e.g. Barron 2006; Iwasaki 2010) and studies generating a mixed picture (e.g. Barron 2003, 2007; Bataller 2010; Code & Anderson 2001; Schauer 2006b, 2007; Warga & Schölmberger 2007). These linear and non-linear developments as a result of the SA stay are also evident when examining L2 requests and apologies. Moves towards more L2-like norms include a greater use of indirect request strategies over time within English-speaking SA stays (Bataller 2010; Code & Anderson 2001; Schauer 2007; Woodfield 2012) and more frequent use of direct requests in Chinese and Spanish contexts (Félix Brasdefer 2007; Li 2014; Shively 2011). An increase in the use of formulaic language in requests has also been observed over time (Bardovi-Harlig & Bastos 2011; Barron 2003, 2019; Schauer 2007; Shively 2011). Use of internal and external modification devices to mitigate or soften requests is reported to be less successful, however, with highlighting underuse of modification (Schauer 2007, 2009; Li 2014; Woodfield 2008, 2012; Woodfield & Economidou-Kogetsidis 2010) outnumbering results showing improvement in use across time (Li 2014; Schauer 2007; Woodfield 2012). Developing pragmatic competency in apology use has also seen mixed results in a range of languages, with negative transfer from L1 norms being one of the most consistently reported explanations for non L2-like performance (Barron 2019; Sabaté i Dalmau & Currell i Gotor 2007; Shardakova 2005; Warga & Schölmberger 2007; Shively & Cohen, 2008).

To summarise, SA gains are characterised by considerable variation, though such mixed results are not exclusive to developing pragmatic competency alone. It is well documented that SA investigations are highly complex (Bardovi Harlig 2012; Kinginger 2013). Where pragmatic gains are reported, these are said to still fall short of the levels produced by expert users of the target language in almost all of the studies reviewed in this section. A call for targeted instruction to complement the SA experience is therefore a widely recommended conclusion and a line of discussion pursued further in the next chapter.

Turning to the academic context, the empirical study presented in this volume is operationalised within the boundaries of institutional talk (Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford 2005), as described in chapter one. This means academic interactions are typically goal-oriented and governed by conventionalised rules and expectations. Here, the pragmatic emphasis is less about negotiating an intercultural middle ground as in L2 exchanges amongst ELF users. In the case of a university setting, it is about knowing the conventionalised rules of academic encounters and applying this knowledge appropriately to achieve the desired outcome whilst maintaining a long term (and favourable) academic relationship. Although it would be inaccurate to suggest that all international students struggle with adjusting to the host environment in this way, there is sufficient evidence across different languages to suggest that many students lack some pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic means to better achieving their end goals in academic encounters e.g. Brown 2013 (L2 Korean), Félix-Brasdefer 2012 (L2 Spanish), Winke and Teng 2010 (L2 Chinese), Barron 2019 (L2 German), Halenko 2018 and Halenko and Jones 2011; 2017 (L2 English). Examining email requests to faculty in L2 English, for instance, Economidou-Kogetsidis (2011) found her Greek learners of English lacked pragmatic control of acceptable greetings and closings, forms of address, directness and lexical downgraders which impacted on their emails to faculty being perceived as impolite or abrupt. Alcón Soler's (2015) study of Spanish students' L2 English e-requests showed a tendency to rely on directness and only limited internal mitigation. Following a combination of instruction and SA exposure, learners recognised the negative impact of these strategies and subsequently changed their email practices in favour of increased mitigation.

For the Chinese EFL study abroad sojourner, studies examining undergraduate students regularly cite challenges with adjusting to cultural differences in academic practices such as learner independence and class participation, understanding unfamiliar academic norms, and socialising with home students when studying overseas (Campbell

& Li 2008; Major 2005; Ranta & Meckelborg 2013; Spencer-Oatey, Dauber, Jing & Wang 2017; Trice 2003). It is language barriers, however, which are one of the most widely reported factors which can directly affect the day-to-day international student experience. Speech act studies with Asian learners of English almost consistently report that international students, as novice L2 users, are under-prepared to interact in situationally-appropriate ways with expert L1 users in many basic academic encounters in study abroad settings, such as producing written or spoken requests or apologies. Evidence suggests that written email requests to faculty by Chinese learners of English are frequently characterised by directness (Chen 2006; Chen 2015; Lee 2004), verbosity (Chen 2006), incorrect address forms (Chen 2015; Rau & Rau 2016), limited variance in request strategies, mitigation and politeness devices (Chen 2006; Chen 2015; Zhu 2012) and frequently display inadequate sociopragmatic competence to recognise imposition and politeness variables (Chen 2006; Zhu 2012). Oral requests in L2 English between staff and students have also been reported to lack an appropriate range of mitigating strategies and satisfactory levels of internal and external modification in comparison to expert users (Lee-Wong 1994; Wang 2011; Yu 1999; Zhang 1995). A series of studies by Halenko (2018) and Halenko and Jones (2011, 2017) revealed that, without the help of instruction, L1 Chinese EFL learners tended to formulate situationally inappropriate oral requests which overlooked both the status of the interlocutor and the imposition of the request in academic interactions. The hearer-alienating request components, indicated by low rating scores, included an overreliance on modals (typically *can, could)*, instances of direct strategies (*I want, I need)*, and an insufficient range of appropriate mitigating strategies such as grounders (explanations). As highlighted by these, and other authors, the pragmatic gaps in knowledge for

Chinese EFL learners can be traced back to L1 transfer in many cases. Examples of noncongruent oral requests in academic encounters can be found in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1. Examples of Noncongruent Requests in Academic Encounters (data extracted from Halenko (2018) and Halenko and Jones (2011, 2017))

Description of academic request encounter	Sample learner request	Appropriacy rating score* by an EFL tutor
Ask a tutor to write a same-day reference for you	Hi teacher. I need a reference today for my new boss. Thank you for doing this for me.	1 (completely unsatisfactory)
Ask a librarian to extend a library loan beyond the date	Because I need to write my essay in one days so I want to borrow this book for some more time to finish my essay. Is this ok?	2 (unsatisfactory)
Ask a tutor to change the time of your presentation	Hi teacher. I am very busy now and I think a new time would be better for me for my presentation. I cannot do this presentation in this time. Can I change the time?	1 (completely unsatisfactory)
Ask the accommodation office to delay your rent	Hello. I do not want to pay my accommodation now	2 (unsatisfactory)

payment	and I want to pay it next time so is this ok for me?	

* appropriacy rating scores based on a 5-point Likert scale (5= completely satisfactory, 1= completely unsatisfactory)

Producing L2 English apologies which meet academics' expectations have proven to be equally problematic for L1 Chinese learners. Investigations of this speech act are fewer in number but report similar findings between them. Chang, Curran, Hsu and Hsu (2016) reported verbosity to be a key feature of email apologies, whilst Cheng's learners (2017a) lacked the sociopragmatic knowledge needed to make effective apologies in terms of taking responsibility and making adequate repairs. Added to this, Halenko's (2018) Chinese EFL participants tended to undersupply explanations or promises not to repeat the offence, and oversupply repeated, direct apologies.

Table 2.2. Examples of Noncongruent Apologies in Academic Encounters (data extracted from Halenko 2018)

Description of academic apology encounter	Sample learner apology	Appropriacy rating score* by an EFL tutor
Apologise for returning a late library book		1 (completely unsatisfactory)
Apologise for missing classes for one week		2 (unsatisfactory)
Apologise for losing a book borrowed from a tutor		1 (completely unsatisfactory)
Apologise for forgetting		2

monthly accommodation payment		(unsatisfactory)

* appropriacy rating scores based on a 5-point Likert scale (5= completely satisfactory, 1= completely unsatisfactory)

As indicated earlier, pragmatic underperformance in a SA academic context may mean international students are be left without their desired intended outcome. More costly, might be a negative effect on a student's academic trajectory or damage to the longer-term academic relationship, if functions such as requests or apologies are not handled well and are perceived to be abrupt, demanding or discourteous. There is empirical evidence to suggest that faculty members can indeed feel aggrieved or frustrated, when academic interactions do not unfold according to expectations (e.g. Akikawa & Ishihara 2010; Alcón Soler 2015; Economidou-Kogetsidis 2011). As examples, qualitative case studies such as Trice (2003) more broadly indicate that faculty perceive 'functioning in English' and 'cultural adjustment' to be the biggest challenges for international students, causing both personal and academic issues inside and outside the classroom. Directly related to pragmatic success in academic interaction, Cheng's (2017b) survey of instructors found effective email and spoken apologies from international students necessitated, but commonly lacked, the following components: responsibility-taking, acknowledgement of possible consequences and initiating repair (sociopragmatic), in addition to being grammatically sound, and employing appropriate linguistic devices to avoid threatening negative face (pragmalinguistic). Conversely, poorly rated e-apologies, which were common amongst the international group sampled, did not contain these features. Consequently, instructors' negative reactions included questioning students' overall academic potential and recommending remedial help. It is not generally the case that learners intend to convey pragmatically infelicitous messages, but, as discussed in chapter two, indirectness and politeness may be realised in different ways in the L1 and L2, suggesting a need to formally address this knowledge gap.

All the above studies generally agree that learners need pedagogical intervention to advance their pragmatic development since exposure to the L2 environment alone does not facilitate this knowledge to the same high levels as structured input provides. This is critical for enhancing the academic study abroad experience for learners and allowing them to interact confidently and competently in status-unequal encounters. The question of opportune timing for instruction is often dictated by external forces and the logistics of organising an intervention is not a simple task. However, it is suggested that pragmatic instruction should ideally be initiated at the pre-departure stage so early cross-cultural connections can be made in the at-home environment and then revisited post-arrival in the host country (see chapter three for further discussion). This timing of pre-arrival instruction is likely to maximise its effectiveness, is likely to provide a considerable confidence boost for learners at a difficult early stage of adjustment to a new environment and is likely to help prime learners to notice, and implement, pragmatics in action from day one.