Learning and teaching L2 pragmatics: Setting the scene

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Pragmatics broadly concerns the way in which language is used in its social context. The increasing visibility of pragmatics on research agendas highlights the importance of its role in foreign language learning, to the extent that pragmatics now appears as a regular fixture of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) studies and applied linguistics research. In the globalised context of intercultural communication, pragmatics can be viewed as combining the knowledge of linguistic forms and their functional meaning, knowledge of the sociocultural context within which language is used, and the ability to use these knowledge bases in social interaction (Taguchi 2018). Special attention is paid to the jointly constructed nature of pragmatics, involving repeated adjustment and negotiation as L2 interaction unfolds in any manner of dynamic social contexts.

Pragmatics is an important and valuable area of inquiry since language learners find developing the form-function-context mapping a challenging endeavour. Ishihara and Cohen (2021) liken learning a language to joining a new community which demands both an understanding of linguistic forms and the social norms and cultural practices which are commonly shared and locally constructed. Learners often come pragmatically unstuck when these local norms are not obvious or explicitly stated, and which may vary considerably across languages and cultures. The degree of success by which a language choice is realised and perceived can have real-life consequences. This special issue reflects the research-informed and pedagogically-oriented nature of pragmatics study and the central role it plays in foreign language learning.

This guest editorial brings together a distinguished group of international contributors to offer new perspectives on how learners deal with their evolving pragmatic knowledge at different stages of development, and in different contexts, and how language educators can better prepare learners to avoid pragmatics missteps in the first place. The collection of studies includes selected papers from one of the first UK-based conferences dedicated to pragmatic language learning and teaching that took place at the University of Central Lancashire in northwest England. In this special issue of *Language Learning*, eight studies are presented that look at various aspects of learning and teaching L2 pragmatics.

Wang and Halenko's opening study investigates the immediate and sustained effects of a pre-departure study abroad training on the oral production of L2 Chinese formulaic language across a range of social and transactional interactions. The quantitative and qualitative findings demonstrate the longitudinal benefits of pre-SA instruction. Results show that the instructed group outperformed the control group immediately after the pre-SA instruction, as well as after the year abroad.

Nguyen and Pham's article examines the role of instruction in developing Vietnamese EFL learners' ability to comprehend two types of implicatures: indirect refusals and indirect opinions. While learners improved their comprehension of both types of implicatures, instruction produced a larger effect on indirect refusals. Findings from the interview also revealed more effective use of inferencing strategies by the learners after the treatment.

Almaki and Jones's study looks at the immediate effects of instruction on Saudi Arabian EFL learners' recognition and production of informal direct complaints in peer interactions. They found that the five-hour instruction had produced a positive impact on recognition but not on production.

Continuing the instructional theme, Caprario, Taguchi and Reppen's paper delves into the operational details of pragmatics instruction. They reported on how the corpus-informed instruction on the pragmatic marker *I mean* was planned and carried out in an American university EFL classroom. An explicit-inductive approach was adopted and the materials are designed to raise L2 English learners' awareness of multiple functions that *I mean* serves in university classrooms. The corpus results enabled the authors to identify the three main communicative functions and then develop the curriculum around them.

Similar to pragmatics instruction, young learners constitute another relatively under-researched area in L2 pragmatics. Savić, Myrset and Economidou-Kogetsidis' article explores the ways in which young Greek Cypriot and Norwegian EFL learners draw on lived experiences to ground their metapragmatic understandings. Their analysis of the young learners' task-based group discussions reveal that lived experiences were spontaneously used by all age groups, most often to ground understandings of the interplay between language and context, and to make generalisations about in/appropriate pragmatic behaviours and ground explorations of similarities and/or differences between L1 and L2.

Schauer's article also studies young learners. It explores the potential of graphic novels for L2 pragmatic teaching and learning. Graphic novels were defined as books featuring one or

more stories that are presented in a comic style format. The study provides an overview of the number of speech act occurrences of eight speech acts as well as a more detailed analysis of individual speech act expressions and formulaic routines of six of the eight speech acts.

Pragmatic development without targeted instructional intervention presents a diverse picture. Halenko and Economidou-Kogetsidis' paper examines Japanese learners' spoken requests in the study abroad context in terms of appropriateness, speech rate and response time. With the exception of appropriateness which had the most positive change, they found that the SA had minimal positive impact on the variables examined, suggesting that activation and processing of pragmatic knowledge needs enhancement from other sources and that learners need a longer period of time to develop appropriate pragmatic output across a range of academic encounters.

Wang and Ren's study analyses the effects of proficiency and study abroad on Chinese EFL learners' refusals. They compared three groups of Chinese university students: low-proficiency learners without SA experience and advanced learners with/without SA. Results reveal that the significant effects of L2 proficiency on appropriateness and of SA on syntactic complexity.