Forum: Acquisition of Pragmatics

Sayoko Yamashita
Tokyo Medical and Dental University
Martin Willis
Tokyo Woman's Christian University

This forum, sponsored by JALT Pragmatics Special Interest Group (SIG), focused on the acquisition of pragmatics as shown by longitudinal and cross-sectional studies on young learners and adults. The four presenters were: (1) Machiko Achiba, Tokyo Women's Christian University; (2) Kenneth R. Rose, City University of Hong Kong; (3) Donna Tatsuki, Kobe University of Commerce; and (4) Sayoko Yamashita, Tokyo Medical and Dental University, and Martin Willis, Tokyo Woman's Christian University. The discussant was Gabriele Kasper, University of Hawaii at Manoa. Megumi Kawate-Mierzejewska, Temple University, the moderator, began the session by outlining the theme of the forum, and introducing the four presenters and the discussant.

本フォーラム「語用の習得」はJALT語用論部会がスポンサーになって開催され、年少者や成人を被験者とした縦断的および横断的手法による４つの研究が発表された。発表者は(１)阿知波真知子（東京女子大学）、(２)ケネス・ローズ（香港市立大学）、(３)立木ドナ（神戸商科大学）、(４)山下早代子（東京医科歯科大学）・マーティン・ウィリス（東京女子大学）で、コメンテーターはガブリエル・キャスパー（ハワイ大学）である。川手恩（テンプル大学）がモデレーターとしてフォーラムを進行させた。

Achiba: The Development of Requests in a Child's Learning of a Second Language

This study examined the acquisition of requests in English by a seven-year-old Japanese girl, over a period of seventeen months from the beginning of her second language learning experience in Australia.

The paper addressed the research question: What range of strategies and linguistic forms does a child use to realize requests in a second language and what is the pattern of their development?

The data were collected in the child's home in Australia during her natural, everyday interactions with four different types of interlocutor: peers, a teenager, an adult neighbor, and her mother. The child's interaction with each addressee was both audio- and video-recorded. These recordings were supplemented by diary data.

The coding scheme for the analysis of strategies developed for this study was based on the CCSARP strategy types (Blum-Kulka, House & Kasper, 1989), modified to fit the naturally occurring data gathered during the research.

There were 1413 requests produced during the data collection period. The developmental profile demonstrates that the strategies and linguistic exponents followed a steady pattern of development through four phases. The development moved from initially formulaic and routinized constructions to progressively more differentiated forms. The expansion of her repertoire of indirect strategies grew significantly over the length of the study, especially in mitigated forms. By the end of the data collection period, when she was eight and a half years old, she had begun to produce a variety of indirect forms comparable to those used by her native-English-speaking contemporaries. Once she had the grammar necessary for request realization in L2, she became progressively more able to produce the appropriate indirect forms when she recognized the potential for imposition on an addressee or sensed a potential obstacle to her obtaining compliance. While not necessarily evidence that she was consciously aware of selecting one means of expression over another, the fact that she had become better able to alternate appropriately between more and less direct requests indicates that she had noticed not only the existence of various request forms (a pragmalinguistic insight) but also how they should be deployed (a sociopragmatic insight).

Although the subject's pragmatic competence increased significantly during the period of observation and consequently her requests became noticeably more sophisticated, we cannot conclude that the developmental process was complete. The fine-tuning that allows the appropriate use of English in certain situations is yet to come.

The findings of this study also demonstrated, through the child's metalinguistic comments recorded in the diary, how she was perceiving her acquisition of a second language.

Rose: Research methods for interlanguage pragmatics research with children and adolescents

The second presenter, Kenneth R. Rose focused on children and adolescent learners of English and discussed the design of pragmatic production tasks using cartoons in research, on the development of English pragmatics by learners ages 7 to 17 in Hong Kong. The study was unique in that most interlanguage pragmatics research has focused on adults, and little attention has been paid to developing appropriate research methods for use with young learners.

Tatsuki: Expressions of aggression and assertion in pragmatic development

The third speaker, Donna Tatsuki, reinterpreted the data in the Japanese manual for Rosenzweig's Picture Frustration Study (1978; Sumita & Hayashi, 1987) from a pragmatic development perspective focusing on complaints and apologies. The test consists of 24 cartoon prompts that depict frustrating or stressful events. The characters depicted in 24 items are carefully controlled for age and sex of the *frustrater* or *frustratee*. According to projection theory, the subject's response is more likely to reflect the person's own spontaneous reaction to a situation than it would if the person had been asked, "What would YOU say?" The written responses can be coded for direction and

type of aggression, which combine to make 9 factors, each centering on a particular speech act strategy: E1 (complaint - expression of annoyance - focus on frustration or situation), E (complaint - explicit accusation - denial of responsibility - focus on *frustrater*), e (complaint - threat, warning, demand for repair - focus on solution), I1 (apology – embarrassment - reframing as beneficial - concern about situation), I (apology - self blame, censure - concern for other person), i (apology - offer of repair - focus on solution), M1 (denial of frustration - minimizing of severity), M (evasion of blame for self or others - unavoidable circumstance - absolution), m (hope for repair by non specified agent - focus on patience, forbearance)

According to the results for a sample of 2,700 children aged 4 to 14 there is a steady decrease in the frequency of extraggression from 4 (54%) to 14 (41.5%). Over the same period, intragression and imaggression both rise from 23.1% to 28.1% and 23% to 30.3%. The group conformity rating (a measure of social adjustment) also rises from 48.7% to 65.5% over the same period (all comparisons significant at $p < .01$). This pattern has also been found across different cultural groups such as French, German, Indian, Italian, and Swedish although the time at which this shift takes place may vary with culture. The Japanese manual also reports the mean percentages for direction and type of aggression in a sample of 1580 students aged 13 to 19 grouped by

grade level and sex. Adolescence heralds a predictable increase in extraggression with a commensurate fall in intraggression and group conformity. The highest E-A percentage is visible in males at the 3rd year of high school and freshman year of university, which also corresponds with their two lowest percentages for group conformity. For females group conformity dips during the 1st and 2nd year of junior high but rebounds from the 3rd year onwards. The most distinctive gender-based differences are in factors E (complaint - explicit, accusation - denial of responsibility - focus on *frustrater*) and i (apology - offer of repair - focus on solution). The use of explicit complaint is higher at all ages for males than for females but peaks in the 3rd year of high school and remains higher until the 2nd year of university. The use of the apology with offer or repair strategy in contrast is consistently higher for females and peaks during the 2nd year of junior high. The lowest point for the use of this strategy for males coincides with the peak of their use of explicit complaint.

Yamashita & Willis: Acquisition of pragmatic competence in refusals: A cross-sectional study

The fourth presenters investigated role-play data from 33 North American English speaking learners of Japanese as a second language as well as native Japanese speakers (as baseline data) to see whether or not there are differences in the patterns used by the native speakers and the learners at the three levels of proficiency (beginners, intermediate, and advanced). The presenters used data taken from Yamashita (1996) for this study in order to answer the research questions:

1) What are the characteristics of refusal realizations by native Japanese speakers?
2) What are the characteristics of refusal realizations by JSL learners?
3) Are they differences between the levels? The refusal speech act formula and strategies were adapted from Beebe, Takahashi, and Uliss-Weltz (1990), and Yamashita and Willis (2000). The frequencies of use of the different strategies by each group were entered and analyzed statistically by means of Correspondence Analysis and qualitatively.

The findings indicate that in some situations the more advanced learners are, the more similar their refusal strategies are to native speakers (such as frequent use of set phrases such as *kekko desu* or "No thank you" and the use of rich variety of other strategies). On the other hand, in certain situations, a couple of the advanced learners were verbose (spoke too much) than expected and produced more language than the native speakers. Another finding is that the lower the level of the learners, the greater the tendency to refuse directly,

which may be rude in some situations.

Overall, even though no clear statistically significant differences were found (probably due to somewhat rough-grained coding scheme), careful qualitative analysis suggested that there were differences, sometimes quite subtle, between the levels. In other words, the acquisition of pragmatic competence in refusals American learners of Japanese appears to have some systematic features. One of the implications of the study is that studying the acquisition process of the learners at different levels of proficiency helps us to understand how learners acquire pragmatic competence and will give hints about how to teach them.

Kasper: Pragmatic Development: Comments on the Forum Presentations

How do the four presentations relate to the existing research literature on pragmatic development? This question has guided my comments below. For ease of comparison, the four studies are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Some design features of the present studies

Presenter	Pragmatic focus	L1/L2	Age	Overall design	Data collection	Data analysis	Theory
Achiba	request	Jpns-ESL	child	longitudinal	authentic: audio, video, diary	CCSARP	?
Yamashita & Willis	refusal	Engl-JSL	adults	xsectional	roleplay	Beebe et al. 1990	?
Rose	request	Chin-EFL	Adolescents mixed	xsectional	oral DCT	CCSARP	?
Tatsuki	complaint & apology	Jpns	children adolescents	xsectional	cartoon written DCT	direction & type of aggression	social psych theory of aggression

The studies examined the development of speech acts in learners with different combinations of native and target languages and different ages. This brings up the question whether the findings may be age-related, which is demonstrably the case in the data cited by Tatsuki. In the published literature, too little attention has been paid to learners' age as a factor in pragmatic development. The variety of age groups included in the forum papers is indicative of the need for more focused study of age effects.

Turning to the adopted research methods, we find that the studies are quite representative of the methods commonly used in acquisitional pragmatics. Achiba employed a one-participant longitudinal case study, a classic design in first and second language acquisition research alike. The remaining studies

are cross-sectional and consequently included much larger participant groups. The three cross-sectional studies used different criteria to distinguish between participant groups proficiency level (Yamashita & Willis), grade level (Rose), and age (Tatsuki). Often (though not necessarily), the overall research design is associated with different types of data collection. The four studies illustrate the received association of longitudinal with observational, authentic data and cross-sectional with elicited data. In order to allow for data triangulation, it is increasingly common for longitudinal, naturalistic studies to rely on several data sources—in Achiba's study, electronically recorded discourse and the researcher's diary of her observations. The cross-sectional studies are each based on a single but different data type: open-ended role-plays (Yamashita & Willis), oral discourse completion tasks (Rose), and written discourse completion based on cartoon stimuli (Tatsuki). These data types illustrate well the most common methods of data collection in studies of elicited speech act production. Open role-plays allow researchers to study speech act performance as it unfolds in a discourse context, whereas discourse completion formats are limited to a single-turn-response. On the other hand, once a valid and reliable discourse completion instrument has been designed, it enables researchers to collect larger quantities of data than open role plays do. However, as Rose argued, developing a quality questionnaire is a time-consuming affair which requires several pre-studies and pilots. Pragmatics researchers are urged to consult the research literature in order to familiarize themselves with questionnaire design.

The data analysis, too, reflects for the most part common practice in interlanguage pragmatics. Achiba and Rose analyzed their request data according to the Cross-Cultural Speech Act Realization coding scheme for requests (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989), and Yamashita and Willis adopted Beebe et al.'s (1990) categorization of refusals. Originating in a different disciplinary context, data in the studies cited by Tatsuki were analyzed according to the direction and type of aggression manifest in participants' responses to frustrating events. It would be worthwhile to examine whether and how these social-psychological categories can be mapped on the classification of apology and complaint performance as established in pragmatics.

The final point to consider is what theories informed the studies. Here we see a distinct difference between the studies originating in interlanguage pragmatics and the social-psychological research. Whereas the 'frustration' research explains its findings in terms of a developmental theory of aggression, the request and refusal studies describe developmental patterns without offering explanatory accounts. To some extent, the difference in theorizing reflects maturational differences between social psychology, a discipline with a distinct

history of its own within the larger field of psychology, and interlanguage pragmatics, a domain that emerged fairly recently within second language acquisition (Bardovi-Harlig, 1999; Kasper & Rose, 1999). Yet there are now a number of candidate theories available that developmental interlanguage pragmaticians can draw on. For lack of space, I shall merely list these theories below; the reader will find them reviewed, among other places, in Young (1999) and Kasper (2001).

Candidate theories of L2 pragmatic development

- Developmental psychology & developmental pragmatics
- Cognitive psychology (information processing)
- Bialystok's two-dimensional model
- Schmidt's noticing hypothesis
- Sociocognitive (sociocultural) theory
- Language socialization
- Development of interactional competence
- Identity theories
- Community of practice

References

Bardovi-Harlig, K. (1999). Exploring the interlanguage of interlanguage pragmatics: A research agenda for acquisitional pragmatics. *Language Learning, 49*, 677-713.

Beebe, L. M.,Takahashi, T., & Uliss-Weltz, R. (1990). Pragmatic transfer in ESL refusals. In R.C. Scarcella, E.S. Andersen, & S. D. Krashen (Eds.), *Development Communicative competence in a second language* (pp. 55-73). Cambridge, MA: Newbury House.

Blum-Kulka, S., House, J., & Kasper, G. (Eds.) (1989). *Cross-cultural pragmatics*: *Requests and apologies.* Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

Kasper, G. (2001). Four perspectives on pragmatic development. *Applied Linguistics, 22*, 502-530.

Kasper, G. & Rose, K. R. (1999). Pragmatics and SLA. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics, 19*, 81-104.

Rosenzweig, S. (1978). *Aggressive behavior and the Rosenzweig picture-frustration study.* New York NY: Praeger.

Sumita, K. & Hayashi, K. (Eds.). (1987). *P-F Study: Japanese Version*. Kyoto: Sankyobo.

Yamashita, S. (1996). *Six measures of JSL pragmatics*. (Technical Report #8). University of Hawaii, Second Language Teaching and Curriculum Center.

Yamashita, S. & Willis, M. (2000). Investigating cross-cultural pragmatics using roleplays: Apology, refusal, and request. *Studies in Language Science, 1*, 181-192.

Young, R. (1999). Sociolinguistic approaches to SLA. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics, 19*, 105-132.