



Interlanguage Pragmatics

EDITED BY

Gabriele Kasper
and Shoshana Blum-Kulka

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Interlanguage Pragmatics

Interlanguage Pragmatics: An Introduction

GABRIELE KASPER and SHOSHANA BLUM-KULKA

The Scope of Interlanguage Pragmatics

Interlanguage pragmatics (ILP) is a second-generation hybrid. As its name betrays, ILP belongs to two different disciplines, both of which are interdisciplinary. As a branch of Second Language Acquisition Research, ILP is one of several specializations in interlanguage studies, contrasting with interlanguage phonology, morphology, syntax, and semantics. As a subset of pragmatics, ILP figures as a sociolinguistic, psycholinguistic, or simply linguistic enterprise, depending on how one defines the scope of "pragmatics." For thorough discussion of definitional issues, see Leech (1983) and Levinson (1983). The perspective on pragmatics we adopt is an action-theoretical one, viewing pragmatics as the study of people's comprehension and production of linguistic action in context. Interlanguage pragmatics has consequently been defined as the study of nonnative speakers' use and acquisition of linguistic action patterns in a second language (L2) (e.g., Kasper, 1989b). Yet tying interlanguage pragmatics to nonnative speakers, or language learners, may narrow its scope too restrictively. As Blum-Kulka (1991; Blum-Kulka & Sheffer, Chapter 10) demonstrates through the case of American immigrants to Israel, speakers fully competent in two languages may create an intercultural style of speaking that is both related to and distinct from the styles prevalent in the two substrata, a style on which they rely regardless of the language being used. The intercultural style hypothesis is supported by many studies of cross-cultural communication, notably interactional sociolinguistics (e.g., Gumperz, 1982; Tannen, 1985) and research into the pragmatic behavior of immigrant populations across generations (e.g., Clyne, 1979; Clyne, Ball, & Neil, 1991). It also receives strong anecdotal support, worthy of systematic investigation, by highly proficient nonnative speakers whose L2 conversational behavior carries interlanguage-specific traits, and who claim at the same time that they do not abide by native norms any more when conversing in their native language. For instance, one of us was told by several of her Chinese students that in response to invitations and offers they wish to accept, they no longer engage

in ritual refusal, as required by traditional Chinese culture. Some of her Japanese students claim that they are much more direct in their interaction in Japanese than they used to be before extended exposure to Western ways. Emerging intercultural styles, so prevalent in the international academic community, deserve interlanguage pragmaticists' close attention. Hence, it appears useful to include under ILP the study of intercultural styles brought about through language contact, the conditions for their emergence and change, the relationship to their substrata, and their communicative effectiveness. A look at the literature on ILP (cf. the overview in Kasper & Dahl, 1991), however, suggests that the populations studied have invariably been nonnative speakers, reflecting the status of ILP as a branch of second language research. While the present collection largely follows this line, Blum-Kulka and Sheffer (Chapter 10) extend the perspective to include native speakers' intercultural styles.

Furthermore, according to researchers' labeling of their objects of study, ILP predominantly refers to the comprehension and production of linguistic action, including discourse regulation. An area of study that most investigators would clearly recognize as "pragmatic" yet that is not usually included under ILP is communication strategies. The de facto separation of pragmatics and communication strategies in second language studies reflects different alignments chosen by researchers in each area. The study of communication strategies has predominantly been grounded in psycholinguistic models of cognitive processing (e.g., Poulish, 1990; Bialystok, 1990), whereas ILP has derived its theoretical and empirical foundation from general and especially cross-cultural pragmatics (e.g., Blum-Kulka, House, & Kasper, 1989). For the most part, research on communication strategies has examined learners' solutions to referential problems; ILP has focused on the illocutionary and politeness dimensions of speech act performance. While this division of labor reflects different research traditions, it has little theoretical support. In Bachman's (1990, 84ff.) model of communicative competence, for example, pragmatic competence, a component of language competence, subdivides into sociolinguistic and illocutionary competence, which in turn entails the ability to express a variety of communicative functions, such as making reference. Strategic competence is seen as processing ability, operating on the language competence in its entirety and including "strategic" solutions to comprehension or production problems. In this volume, strategic aspects of speech act performance and discourse participation are examined by Weizman (Chapter 6), Aston (Chapter 11), and House (Chapter 8); processing considerations for pragmatic development are proposed by Schmidt (Chapter 1) and Bialystok (Chapter 2).

Domains of ILP

Pragmatic Comprehension

Early studies focused on learners' attribution of illocutionary force and perception of politeness. Research on the attribution of illocutionary force has centered on the comprehension of indirect speech acts, factors contributing to ease or difficulty of pragmatic comprehension, the role of linguistic form and context information, and

learner variables influencing force attribution. Carrell (1979) demonstrated that advanced L2 learners have complete access to conversational implicature, and make full use of their inferential ability in the comprehension of indirect speech acts. The only stumbling block for these learners was the "poor answer," a highly culture-specific violation of the maxim of relation. Bouton (1988) was interested in the impact of cultural background on the comprehension of indirect answers. He found a significant difference between six groups of learners from different cultural backgrounds and native speakers of American English. Comparison of the learner groups showed similar perceptions for German, Spanish-Portuguese, and Taiwanese learners, differing from those of Korean, Japanese, and Chinese learners from the People's Republic of China. In addition to influence from learners' cultural background, Bouton also established an effect for type of implicature. Comprehension was easiest when the relevance maxim had been violated, whereas understated negative evaluation, a violation of the maxim of quantity, was more difficult to understand, for nonnative speakers as well as native speakers. In examining the relative effect of linguistic form and context information on learners' perception of indirect requests, Carrell (1981a, b) found that learners primarily relied on linguistic utterance features, regardless of their linguistic and cultural background, age, and proficiency. Her findings are at odds with those established by Ervin-Tripp, Strage, Lampert, and Bell (1987), who found that children acquiring their first (L1) and second language strongly base their pragmatic comprehension on situational information, disregarding form. Other studies in developmental pragmatics (e.g., Reeder & Wakefield, 1987) support Ervin-Tripp et al.'s results (cf. Bialystok, Chapter 2). The apparent conflict in outcomes of Carrell's and Ervin-Tripp et al.'s studies can be reconciled by invoking Gibbs's (e.g., 1984) Conventional Meaning Model. In a series of experiments, Gibbs demonstrated that listeners directly access nonliteral meanings if linguistic forms and situational contexts are conventionalized. Absence of familiar and appropriate contexts and novel, nonconventionalized utterances requires (sequential) processing of literal and nonliteral meaning. Carrell's studies precisely illustrate the second condition, since the highly abstract task her subjects were faced with could only be solved via bottom-up processing. Ervin-Tripp et al.'s task conditions, on the other hand, fulfill the criteria that would bias listeners toward immediate processing of indirect meaning: the indirect requests were embedded in everyday situations familiar to the children, allowing them to apply situational schemata to their understanding of directive utterances. In partial replication of Gibbs's research on the processing of conventionally indirect requests (e.g., 1983), Takahashi and Roitblat (1992) examined through latency measurement whether Japanese learners of English reconstruct implied requestive force by processing both literal and implied meanings or immediately recover the nonliteral meaning (see also Takahashi, 1990, for a review of the literature on nonliteral utterance comprehension). Models of pragmatic comprehension, representing a variety of theoretical orientations, are reviewed by House (Chapter 8), who also offers an analysis of learners' pragmatic comprehension in ongoing interaction.

In all of the studies cited above, English figures as L2. The only study on force attribution by learners of a different target language is a small investigation by Koike (1989), who examined how beginning classroom learners of Spanish with

English as L1 understood a Spanish request, apology, and command. Learners correctly identified the illocutions in 95% of the cases or better. In seeking cues to decide on force, learners were shown to rely most frequently on formulaic illocutionary force indicators such as "por favor" and "lo siento," and on words with key propositional meanings.

A related line of inquiry has examined how learners assess the politeness value of different speech act realization strategies. While most of the research on force attribution has studied on-line utterance comprehension, politeness perceptions have been investigated through off-line metapragmatic judgment tasks such as card sorting (Carrell & Konneker, 1981; Tanaka & Kawade, 1982), paired comparison (Walters, 1979), multiple choice (Tanaka & Kawade, 1982), and rating scales (Fraser, Rintell, & Walters, 1980; Rintell, 1981; Olshtain & Blum-Kulka, 1985; Kitao, 1990). Results confirm learners' ability to distinguish different degrees of politeness in conventions of means and forms, although their perceptions do not always agree with those of native speakers. Japanese learners of English largely agreed with American native speakers in their relative politeness judgments of syntactic modes (imperative, declarative, interrogative), the politeness marker "please," and of deferential address terms, but they differed in the politeness values attributed to request modification by tense and modals. Whereas American informants perceived positively worded requests as more polite than negatively worded ones, this assessment was not shared by the Japanese raters. Negative politeness strategies (Brown & Levinson, 1987) were rated as more polite by Americans and Japanese in the United States than by Japanese in Japan (Kitao, 1990).

Learners' differential politeness perceptions have been attributed to a variety of factors. Learners were found to differ in the extent to which they base their politeness perceptions in L2 on those in L1. Spanish learners of English did not transfer their L1 perceptions of formally equivalent requestive strategies to L2, rating their Spanish requests as more deferential than their English counterparts (Fraser et al., 1980). Learners of Hebrew, who appeared to base their politeness perceptions of L2 requests and apologies initially on L1, increased their tolerance for directness and positive politeness (Brown & Levinson, 1987) with length of residence in the target community (Olshtain & Blum-Kulka, 1985). Length of residence rather than L2 proficiency accounted for differential politeness perceptions in learners and L2 native speakers. The receiver's age and sex influenced politeness assessment in Spanish learners' perception of English requests, whereas no such effects were noticeable in suggestions (Rintell, 1981). Comparing the perceptions of politeness in request strategies by Japanese EFL and ESL learners, Kitao (1990) found that exposure to English accounted for different ratings between those groups.

In addition to learners' assessments of pragmalinguistic information, a few studies have also examined nonnative speakers' sociopragmatic perceptions. Probing into learners' "universal" and culture-specific assumptions about apology frequency and realization, Olshtain (1983) found that for Russian learners of Hebrew, the event rather than culture and language were the decisive variables. English-speaking learners felt less need to apologize in Hebrew than in English, thus suggesting a culture-specific approach. Asked to assess the weight and values of contextual factors in apologizing, German learners of English were found largely to

agree with native speakers of British English, except for degree of imposition involved in the apology, which the German raters found to be consistently higher than the English judges (House, 1988). Ratings of contextual factors in apologies were also provided by Thai learners of English and American native speakers (Bergman & Kasper, Chapter 4). The factor on which these informants differed most was obligation to apologize. Japanese learners of English reported that in American society, refusal was a more socially acceptable act than in Japan, and could therefore appropriately be carried out more directly (Robinson, 1992). There are very few studies that examine learners' sociopragmatic perceptions by direct probing, such as rating tasks (e.g., House, 1988; Bergman & Kasper, Chapter 4; Olshtain & Weinbach, Chapter 5) and self-report in interviews (Cohen & Olshtain 1991; Robinson, 1992). Many more studies infer learners' L2 sociopragmatic knowledge through their production. Thus Beebe and collaborators (e.g., Beebe, Takahashi, & Uliss-Weltz, 1990; Beebe & Takahashi, 1989a, b), focusing on the effect of status on the performance of face-threatening acts by Japanese learners of English, found that the Japanese informants style-shifted more according to interlocutor status than speakers of American English (but see Takahashi & Beebe, Chapter 7, for a counterexample). What research still needs to demonstrate is how learners' sociopragmatic perceptions change over time, and how such change is reflected in their linguistic action patterns.

Production of Linguistic Action

The available evidence suggests that regardless of a particular L1 and L2, and of the type of learning context (naturalistic vs. instructed), learners have access to the same range of realization strategies for linguistic action as native speakers, and demonstrate sensitivity to contextual constraints in their strategy choice (Blum-Kulka, 1982; Kasper, 1989b; Rintell & Mitchell, 1989). The main obstacle to learners' exploiting their "general pragmatic knowledge base" (Blum-Kulka, 1991) appears to be their restricted L2 linguistic knowledge, or difficulty in accessing it smoothly (e.g., Blum-Kulka, 1982; Koike, 1989; Edmondson & House, 1991). But other factors intervene: a lack of L2 pragmalinguistic sophistication, combined with negative transfer of sociopragmatic norms from L1 or nonnative perceptions of L2 sociopragmatic norms, or even purposeful loyalty to L1 cultural patterns, may yield deviations from native use at high proficiency levels as well (Blum-Kulka, 1991). While ILP research has by now covered a wide variety of typologically different L1s, there is still only a handful of languages studied as L2: in addition to different national varieties of English, a few studies have examined Hebrew (Blum-Kulka, 1982, 1991; Olshtain, 1983; Olshtain & Cohen, 1989; Olshtain & Weinbach, Chapter 5), German (Faerch & Kasper, 1989), Norwegian (Svanes, 1989), Spanish (Koike, 1989), and Japanese (Sawyer, 1992) as targets. Until the scope of target languages has been considerably broadened, universality claims need to be voiced with caution.

Learners' distribution patterns of strategies and forms have been shown to vary from those of native speakers. Some studies report that learners prefer more direct modes of conveying pragmatic intent than native speakers; others suggest the oppo-

site. Preference for higher directness in IL than in both or either L1 or L2 has been documented in learners' requests (Tanaka 1988; Koike, 1989; Fukushima, 1990), making and rejecting of suggestions (Bardovi-Harlig & Hartford, 1990), refusals (Robinson, 1992), and a variety of conflictive acts (Kasper, 1981). By contrast, nonnative speakers of Hebrew preferred less direct requests (Blum-Kulka, 1982, 1991) and complaints (Olshtain & Weinbach, Chapter 5) than native speakers. Explanations of these findings have been sought in the scope of learners' linguistic IL knowledge, transfer from L1, and perceptions of what is sociopragmatically appropriate in the target community. Some studies noted differences in politeness approach between native speakers and nonnative speakers. Venezuelan Spanish-speaking learners of English systematically used positive politeness strategies when apologizing to a host for not having attended her party, whereas American English native speakers preferred a negative politeness approach (Garcia, 1989). Conversely, in pre-trial interviews, Athabaskan defendants employed negative politeness strategies, whereas white defendants as well as the interviewers deployed more positive politeness (Scollon & Scollon, 1983). In order to repair uncomfortable moments in academic advising sessions at an American university, students who were native speakers of English predominantly relied on positive politeness strategies, while Taiwanese students adopted a negative politeness approach (Fiksdal 1990). Less reliance by nonnative speakers on positive politeness has also been observed in the performance of corrections by Japanese speakers of English (Takahashi & Beebe, Chapter 7). American informants in status-higher positions tended to preface a correction by a positive remark, whereas Japanese nonnative speakers used this solidarity strategy very infrequently.

Nonnative speakers' strategy choice is sometimes less responsive to contextual factors than native speakers'. Japanese learners of English used the same (direct, barely mitigated) requestive strategies in conversation with status-unequal and socially distant interlocutors as with status-equal and familiar coparticipants, whereas American English controls varied their request behavior in the two conditions (Tanaka, 1988). Japanese learners of English also underdifferentiated their realizations of offers and requests in three conditions of social distance (Fukushima, 1990). In expressing gratitude, native speakers of American English varied the length of their speech activity according to degree of indebtedness; no such effect was found for nonnative speakers of different linguistic backgrounds (Eisenstein & Bodman 1986, Chapter 3; Bodman & Eisenstein, 1988).

The quality and range of linguistic forms by which linguistic action can be implemented and modified has consistently been shown to differ between native speakers and nonnative speakers, the nonnative speakers' repertoire typically being more restricted and less complex than native speakers' (Scarcella, 1979; Kasper, 1981; Blum-Kulka, 1982, 1991; Schmidt, 1983; House & Kasper, 1987; Trosborg, 1987; Faerch & Kasper, 1989; Eisenstein & Bodman, Chapter 3). While some of these findings may simply reflect the state of learners' lexical and syntactic knowledge, the issue becomes a clearly pragmalinguistic one when learners demonstrably "know" a particular lexical item or syntactic structure yet use it in a way that does not convey the intended illocutionary force or politeness value. In the interlanguage

of nonnative speakers of Hebrew, requests are lended an unintended whining emphasis by the use of "bevakasha" (please) in sentence-initial (rather than intra- or postsentential) position, and such pragmalinguistic deviations are singled out by native judges as "nonnative" (Blum-Kulka, 1991). One area where insufficient control of pragmalinguistic knowledge is particularly obvious is that of pragmatic routines. Coulmas's (1981) contention that routine formulas are a serious stumbling block for nonnative speakers has been supported by nearly every ILP study (e.g., Scarcella, 1979; House, 1988; Eisenstein & Bodman, 1986; Kasper, 1989a; Wildner-Bassett, 1984; Fukushima, 1990), yet there has been little systematic investigation of this phenomenon. There is evidence of learners supplying near-literal translations of L1 routines: for example, the German, "entschuldigen Sie bitte" (English, "excuse me, please") instead of "I'm sorry" (House, 1988); of using a translation equivalent for an L1 routine where none is used in L2, such as prefacing a high-imposition request with "I'm sorry" (from Japanese "sumimasen" or "gomennasai" [Fukushima, 1990]); and of failing to use any kind of routine where one would be required, such as failing to offer an expression of gratitude (Kasper, 1981). Bodman and Eisenstein (1988) observed that in the attempt to express gratitude in English, learners would use literal translations of L1 proverbial expressions in written production questionnaires but not in role-plays, which displayed considerable disfluencies but no overt use of L1 proverbs (also Eisenstein & Bodman, Chapter 3).

At the nonroutinized end of speech act production, learners have been found to engage in more speech activity than native speakers. The "waffle phenomenon" (Edmondson & House, 1991) has been noted in requests (Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1986; House & Kasper, 1987; Faerch & Kasper, 1989; Weizman, Chapter 6), apologies (House, 1988, Bergman & Kasper, Chapter 4), and complaints (Olshtain & Weinbach, Chapter 5), as well as in referential communication (Bongaerts, Kellerman, & Bentlage, 1987; Tarone & Yule, 1987; Yule & Tarone, 1990). According to Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1986), waffling is proficiency-dependent, being strongest at an intermediate stage when learners possess the linguistic means to say as much as they wish, yet at the same time feel more of a need to be explicit about their communicative goals and the reasoning behind them than more acculturated nonnative speakers do. Edmondson and House (1991) point out, however, that the waffling effect in speech act realization is observable only in learners' written responses to production questionnaires, not in role-plays. This observation corroborates Bodman and Eisenstein's findings about the differential use of proverbial material in written and oral-interactive production, and the much shorter contributions made in role-plays by nonnative speakers in comparison with native speakers (Eisenstein & Bodmann, Chapter 3). In Edmondson and House's analysis (see Bergman & Kasper, Chapter 4, for more discussion), learners' extensive use of supportive strategies in the absence of formulaic routines suggests that non-routinized material functions to compensate for the lack of automatized discourse routines. It will be worthwhile for IL pragmaticists to examine whether this hypothesis bears out across languages and tasks, and whether it interacts with factors such as proficiency and length of residence.

Development of Pragmatic Competence

The bulk of ILP research focuses on nonnative speakers' use of pragmatic knowledge in comprehension and production, rather than on development. This focus is also adopted by the data-based studies in this book. Of the available developmental investigations, some cross-sectional studies did not find proficiency effects in learners' strategy selection (Takahashi & Beebe, 1987; Trosborg, 1987; Svanes, 1991) whereas others did (Takahashi & DuFon, 1989; Maeshiba, Yoshinaga, Kasper & Ross, in press). However, developmental effects were observable in learners' repertoires of pragmatic routines and modality markers (Scarcella, 1979; Trosborg, 1987). Possibly, the inconsistent results reflect instrument effects and the difficulty of determining precisely learners' proficiency levels across studies. The few longitudinal studies to date indicate distinct developmental patterns in learners' request realization (Schmidt, 1983; Ellis, 1992) and use of a sentence-final particle in Japanese (Sawyer, 1992). They strongly suggest the need for more longitudinal studies in naturalistic settings, observing learners from the very beginning of their language acquisition process. Equally important as a reliable and valid empirical data base is a theoretical framework to account for pragmatic learning. In this book two such frameworks, grounded in different models of cognitive processing, are proposed by Bialystok (Chapter 1) and Schmidt (Chapter 2; see also Kasper & Schmidt, 1992).

Pragmatic Transfer

Influence from learners' native language and culture on their IL pragmatic knowledge and performance has been amply documented. Because of its potential risk to communicative success, the focus has been on negative transfer; that is, the influence of L1 pragmatic competence on IL pragmatic knowledge that differs from the L2 target. Positive transfer, that is, pragmatic behaviors or other knowledge displays consistent across L1, IL, and L2, have received less attention. We think this is so because positive transfer usually results in communicative success and therefore is less exciting to study. Furthermore, it is methodologically difficult to disentangle positive transfer from universal pragmatic knowledge and generalization on the basis of available IL pragmatic knowledge.

Negative transfer has been attested to at the sociopragmatic level, influencing learners' perception of status relationships (Beebe, Takahashi, & Uliss-Weltz, 1990; Takahashi & Beebe, Chapter 7), of the appropriateness of carrying out refusals (Robinson, 1992), of the need to apologize (Olshtain, 1983) and to express gratitude (Eisenstein & Bodman, Chapter 3); their lack of accommodation to target norms for complimenting, responding to compliments, and negotiating invitations (Wolfson, 1989); their choice of politeness style (Garcia, 1989; Olshtain & Cohen, 1989; Blum-Kulka, 1982) and of particular strategic options (House, 1988; Beebe, Takahashi, & Uliss-Weltz, 1990). Evidence for pragmalinguistic transfer at the level of form-force mapping has been less documented in the literature than anecdotal accounts would suggest (Blum-Kulka, 1982; Faerch & Kasper, 1989 in requesting; House, 1988; Olshtain & Cohen, 1989 in apologizing; Bodman & Eisenstein, 1988,

in thanking); possibly learners' proficiency levels in most ILP studies were too high for negative form-force transfer to occur. Most of the reported pragmalinguistic transfer affects the strategic options and forms that modify the politeness value of a linguistic act. Learners' choices of semantic formulas and linguistic tokens for apologizing were influenced by L1 patterns (Olshtain & Cohen, 1989; Trosborg, 1987; House, 1988; Bergman & Kasper, Chapter 4; Maeshiba, Yoshinaga, Kasper & Ross, in press). L1 lexical and syntactic material used to mitigate requestive force was transferred to learners' IL request performance (Blum-Kulka, 1982; Blum-Kulka & Levenston, 1987; Faerch & Kasper, 1989). Questioning patterns employed in Japanese to express disagreement were used as disagreement strategies in Japanese learners' English (Beebe & Takahashi, 1989b).

Although the literature abounds in evidence for pragmatic transfer, little has yet been done to investigate more closely the conditions under which pragmatic transfer is or is not operative. Whereas there is some indication from performance data (Kasper, 1981; House & Kasper, 1987; Faerch & Kasper, 1989) and retrospective reports (Olshtain, 1983; Cohen & Olshtain, 1991; Robinson 1992) that learners invoke criteria such as assessment of linguistic and cultural distance, and of the specificity or sameness of pragmalinguistic or sociopragmatic patterns in L1/L2, there is only one study to date that systematically examines pragmatic transferability. Takahashi (1992) found that the transferability of conventionally indirect requests from Japanese to English was highly context-dependent, and varied with learners' proficiency and familiarity with the situation.

At a conceptual level, it is important to note that "negative" pragmatic transfer does not necessarily reflect lack of competence in the pragmatics of the target community. When nonnative speakers communicate in a style different from native ways of speaking, it is a matter of attribution if this style is seen as lacking in some way, or just different, and if its maintenance over time is considered negatively, as fossilization, or positively, as a marker of cultural identity. The degree of socio-cultural accommodation to the L2 culture may be as well a matter of choice as of ability. A foreign accent, for example, can well shield a nonnative speaker, identifying her as nonnative, and thereby flexing the norms by which she is judged and lending her a certain latitude in choosing her ways of speaking. The desirable goal for the high-proficiency second language speaker, be it in contexts of immigration or in the use of L2 in cross-cultural communication, may well be that of disidentification, rather than absolute convergence. There is thus much room for future research, which will be necessary in order to advance beyond merely ascertaining pragmatic transfer to understanding its differential modes of operation and symbolic functions.

Communicative Effect

Grammatical or phonological IL deviations from target language norms have the "advantage" of being easily recognizable by native speakers. A "nonnative" identification also serves to protect such speakers from the risk of the peculiarities of their speech being attributed to flaws in their personality, or ethnocultural origins. Higher levels of L2 proficiency allow for ease of communication, but still leave open the

possibility of pragmatic failure at the pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic level (Thomas, 1983). Differing from grammatical errors, pragmatic failure is neither easily recognizable by interlocutors without training in pragmatics, nor explained away by recognizing the speaker as nonnative. Blum-Kulka and Olshtain (1986) explain pragmatic failure as linked to cultural variability in the implementation of Grice's (1975) conversational model: certain types of pragmatic deviations from target norms, such as the learner's tendency to *verbosity* (discussed above) are seen as violations of a cultural norm for the balance required between the maxims of clarity and quantity. Others (e.g., Riley, 1989) are concerned with defining the scope of communicative behavior amenable to pragmatic failure, insisting that both verbal and nonverbal phenomena be included. Interactional sociolinguistics has provided rich evidence for miscommunication resulting from interlocutors' differences in the use of contextualization conventions (Gumperz, 1982) and different conversational styles (Tannen, 1981; 1985). While disturbing in everyday communication, incompatible styles, resulting in mutual misreadings of the other person's intention and attitude, can have serious consequences in gate-keeping encounters, leading to unfavorable outcomes for the client (Erickson & Shultz, 1982; Scollon & Scollon, 1983).

There have been three major approaches to the study of pragmatic failure.

1. Miscommunication research as referred to above provides micro-sociolinguistic analyses of naturalistic encounters, minutely identifying problematic features at the levels of prosody, pragmatics, syntax, lexis, discourse organization, conversational management, and nonverbal behavior. Qualitative analysis of performance data is sometimes combined with quantitative measures of particular features and with retrospective interviews of the participants. Micro-sociolinguistic analysis ascertains conversational style differences and identifies instances where such differences become problematic, but does not usually inquire into the origin of different conversational styles.
2. A second approach is *contrastive pragmatics*, involving the cross-cultural and cross-linguistic comparison of speech act realization patterns through identifying similarities and differences between the pairs or groups of languages studied. Such research is purely descriptive, having no predictive power for the study of IL pragmatics and actual communicative practices in cross-cultural encounters but serving an important hypothesis-generating and explanatory role in studies of interlanguage pragmatic performance and knowledge.
3. In order to study the relationship between learners' prior knowledge and pragmatic performance, a third line of investigation needs to be called upon: ILP. In its canonical form, ILP research, following received methodology in interlanguage studies (Selinker, 1972) by comparing learners' IL production and comprehension with parallel L1 and L2 data, provides the methodological tool to determine where and how learners' pragmatic performance differs from L2, and to establish where IL specific behaviors appear to be influenced by learners' L1 knowledge. (As argued above, determining with any certainty whether or not transfer has actually been operative requires additional measures, such as retrospective reports and transferability studies.) Furthermore, ILP can establish which IL-specific pragmatic behaviors reside in sources other than transfer (e.g., see Kasper, 1981; Blum-Kulka, 1982; Schmidt, 1983; Olshtain & Cohen, 1989).

However, just as contrastive pragmatic study is unable to identify pragmatic transfer, learner-focused ILP, unless supplemented by other measures, such as ratings of learners' performance by native speakers (Fraser et al., 1980; Eisenstein & Bodman, 1986, Chapter 3), cannot make claims about communicative effect. "Negative" pragmatic transfer may or may not result in pragmatic failure. Erickson and Shultz (1982) demonstrate that successful co-membership can neutralize communicative style differences. Tannen (1985) cites examples of "negative" transfer that lead to positive attributions (reminiscent of "charming" foreign accents), and styles that, though different, are complementary rather than conflicting, thus leading to successful outcomes. Clyne (1979) concludes that communication conflict arises not so much from local differences in linguistic action patterns but from features that impinge on interlocutors' perceptions of power, trust and solidarity. While there is a legitimate ecological interest in the identification of miscommunication and its causal relationship to L1 communicative practices, nonnative communicative styles, whether transfer-induced or not, do not necessarily result in pragmatic failure. The time-honored contrastive equation "difference = negative transfer = error" has proved to be just as little true for pragmatics as for other domains of nonnative language learning and use, though it has an indisputable heuristic value.

To summarize, the strength of interactional sociolinguistics is identifying pragmatic failure; of contrastive pragmatics, identifying cross-cultural and cross-linguistic pragmatic differences and similarities; and of ILP, identifying learner-specific pragmatic behaviors and their relationship to learners' L1 and L2. A full-fledged research program that sheds light on the relationship between cross-cultural differences, IL-specific pragmatic features, including transfer, and communicative effects will usefully combine methods from all three areas of investigation.

Reflecting the various approaches employed in studying interlanguage pragmatics, this book is organized into three parts: (I) Cognitive approaches to interlanguage pragmatic development, (II) Speech act realization, and (III) Discourse perspectives. For an overview of the chapters, the reader is referred to the introduction to each part.

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I

COGNITIVE APPROACHES TO INTERLANGUAGE PRAGMATIC DEVELOPMENT

Although there is a comprehensive literature on children's development of pragmatic competence, little work has been done on the acquisition of pragmatic ability by adult second language learners. Schmidt (Chapter 1) and Bialystok (Chapter 2) discuss two central issues in adult pragmatic learning, each proposing a different theoretical framework to address the problem. Schmidt explores the role of conscious awareness in the acquisition of pragmatic competence. Based on a critical examination of recent work in experimental psychology and support from diary reports, Schmidt concludes that the necessary condition for pragmatic learning to take place is attention to the pragmalinguistic or sociopragmatic information to be acquired. While implicit and incidental learning seems possible, noticing and generalizing about relevant features in the input is highly facilitative. Schmidt's analysis has important implications for research methodology in pragmatics and language teaching. Theory and cited illustrations encourage the use of self-report as a method of data collection in interlanguage pragmatics. For second language instruction, Schmidt's analysis indicates activities that alert the learner to pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic features as well as a consciousness-raising approach to the teaching of L2 pragmatics.

Bialystok examines the learning task in the pragmatic domain of adult second language learners as opposed to child first language acquirers. Applying her two-dimensional model of language learning and use to pragmatics, she concludes that the learning problem for children acquiring their first language and adults learning a second language is quite different. Children primarily need to develop an analyzed knowledge of form-function mappings. For them, acquiring pragmalinguistic resources and their contextual distribution patterns takes precedence over the need to develop the control strategies required for efficient use of pragmatic knowledge. With adults, the order of learning tasks is reversed. While they also have to acquire new pragmalinguistic knowledge, their primary problem appears to be one of control, increasing their ability to process pragmatic information smoothly in contexts and making socially and contextually appropriate selections of linguistic forms.

Schmidt's and Bialystok's proposals offer different but compatible approaches to pragmatic interlanguage development: Schmidt is concerned with the conditions for initial intake; Bialystok addresses the cognitive dimensions on which pragmatic interlanguage competence evolves. Both approaches, we hope, will inspire data-based studies of adult pragmatic learning.

1

Consciousness, Learning and Interlanguage Pragmatics

RICHARD SCHMIDT

During the past decade, the study of interlanguage pragmatics has produced important empirical findings, primarily through the identification and comparison of speech act realization patterns in various languages based on data from both native and nonnative speakers. In addition to this focus on product, some attention has been paid to the processes of comprehension and production in second language pragmatics (Faerch & Kasper, 1984, 1989; Kasper, 1984). In contrast to these concerns, there has been little discussion of how pragmatic abilities are acquired in a second language.

This chapter is concerned with the ways in which consciousness may be involved in learning the principles of discourse and pragmatics in a second language.¹ The role of conscious and nonconscious processes in the acquisition of morphosyntax has been hotly debated within the field of second language acquisition (Krashen, 1981, 1983; Munsell & Carr, 1981; Rutherford & Sharwood Smith, 1985; Seliger, 1983; Sharwood Smith, 1981), but these debates have ignored pragmatic and discursive abilities. My discussion will of necessity be speculative, drawing on current theories of the role of consciousness in human learning in general, drawn primarily from cognitive science and experimental psychology, with some suggestions for the extension of general principles to the learning of pragmatics. This is an issue with important pedagogical implications. In second language teaching, as Richards (1990) points out, there are currently two major approaches to the teaching of conversation in second language programs. The first is an indirect approach, in which conversational competence is seen as the product of engaging learners in conversational interaction; the underlying assumption is that the ability to carry on conversation (which includes pragmatic ability and other factors as well) is something that is acquired simply in the course of doing it. In practice, this leads to the use of group work activities or other tasks that require interaction. The second, a more direct approach, focuses explicitly on the strategies involved in conversation and emphasizes consciousness-raising concerning these strategies.

Is Pragmatic Knowledge Conscious or Unconscious?

Wolfson has argued that native speaker knowledge of what she calls rules of speaking (which include both pragmatic and discoursal rules) is mostly unconscious:

Rules of speaking and, more generally, norms of interaction are . . . largely unconscious. What this means is that native speakers, although perfectly competent in the uses and interpretation of the patterns of speech behavior which prevail in their own communities are, with the exception of a few explicitly taught formulas, not even aware of the patterned nature of their speech behavior. [Native speakers] . . . are not able . . . to describe their own rules of speaking. (Wolfson, 1989, 37)

Wolfson cites several types of evidence in support of her claim that speakers do not have reliable information concerning the ways in which they use language: people who are bilingual or bidialectal may switch from one language or variety to another without being aware of it and cannot accurately report their use of these languages or varieties (Blom & Gumperz, 1972); native speakers often report that they typically use or do not use specific forms, but their descriptions do not match reality (Wolfson, D'Amico-Reisner, & Huber, 1983); even highly trained linguists who rely on intuition to describe such phenomena as the differences between men's and women's speech (e.g., Lakoff, 1973) may find their intuitions proven incorrect; textbook writers, who almost always rely on intuition rather than empirical data, provide information regarding language use that is frequently wrong (Cathcart, 1989; Holmes, 1988; Williams, 1988).

There are several reasons why we should expect native speakers' intuitions about these matters to be fallible. First, there is the obvious problem of the intrusion of prescriptive norms, stereotypes, and folk-linguistic beliefs; when asked what they do, informants are likely to report what they think they should do. Second, this kind of introspection violates basic principles distinguishing between potentially accurate and inaccurate verbal reports (Ericsson & Simon, 1984; Nisbett & Wilson, 1977), because such intuitions are general rather than specific, retrospective rather than concurrent, and sometimes call for information that could not be reported even if the other conditions were met. Ericsson and Simon (1984) propose that the only information that is potentially available for accurate self-report is information that is attended to in short-term memory in the performance of a task. In other words, in order to give an accurate report of your own performance, you must have been paying attention and aware of what you were doing at the time. Speech act realizations and other aspects of rules of speaking are often produced by fluent speakers with little conscious reflection or deliberation during their performance, and are therefore not accurately reportable. If accurate self-reports are limited to reporting information that has been stored as a result of one's own conscious thought processes; intuitions about the linguistic behavior of groups are particularly suspect (Cameron, 1985).

The evidence cited by Wolfson (1989) shows that native speakers do not necessarily have access to their own rules of speaking, but it fails to show that speakers never have any access to such rules. Blum-Kulka (Chapter 10) and Olshtain and

Blum-Kulka (1989) have argued that Hebrew-English bilinguals in Israel exhibit heightened metapragmatic awareness and are aware of their code-switching behavior. Odlin suggests that linguistic forms that are important for communicative competence are, in general, highly salient and accessible to awareness, which may be why the metalanguage observed in anthropological linguistics tends to describe linguistic functions more accurately than linguistic form (Odlin, 1986). The fact that communicative behavior is sometimes accurately reportable is also compatible with the principle that accurate self-report depends on information that is attended to during performance. Pragmatic and discoursal knowledge is not always used automatically and unreflectively. Conversations vary a great deal in terms of spontaneity and planning (Ochs, 1979). Some people preplan telephone conversations, and writing involves a great deal of conscious deliberation and choices in discourse organization. There are many occasions on which particular care is given to producing appropriately polite language. Students may worry about how to address professors, and many aspects of the use of personal address are not unreflecting responses to a determining context but represent strategic and sometimes manipulative choices (Kendall, 1981).

Pragmatic knowledge therefore seems to be partly conscious and partly accessible to consciousness, although it cannot be the case that all pragmatic knowledge is accessible to consciousness. Just as linguists seek to discover general principles of language that are reflected in the effortless control of grammar by native speakers but of which they have no conscious awareness, research in pragmatics seeks to identify patterns and general principles that native speakers are equally unable to articulate based on introspection. However, even if a great deal of pragmatic knowledge is held implicitly and cannot be articulated, this does not tell us how such knowledge was established. Skillful performance that currently relies on automatic processing and makes little demand on either attention or consciousness may have originated from conscious declarative knowledge (Lewis & Anderson, 1985). General principles, patterns, and rules of pragmatics may be beyond the reach of introspection, but this does not inform us of the possible role that awareness of crucial features of language rules, however incomplete and transitory, may play in the establishment of such knowledge (Munsell & Carr, 1981).

Consciousness and Principles of Language Learning

Our ordinary language use of words like *conscious*, *consciousness* and *consciously* is ambiguous. This is one reason why theorists in psychology and applied linguistics have preferred to use related technical terms such as *explicit* versus *implicit* knowledge (Bialystok, 1979, 1981; Krashen, 1981; Odlin, 1986; Sharwood Smith, 1981), *controlled* versus *automatic* processing (Bialystok, Chapter 2; Bialystok & Bouchard-Ryan, 1985; Carroll, 1981; McLaughlin, Rossman & McLeod, 1983; Posner & Klein, 1973; Shiffrin & Schneider, 1977); *declarative* versus *procedural* knowledge (Anderson, 1982; Ellis, 1989b; Faerch & Kasper, 1984; O'Malley, Chamot & Walker, 1987), *serial* versus *parallel* processing (McClelland, Rumelhart, & the PDP Research Group, 1986), and so on. Unfortunately, the use of

technical terms does not by itself eliminate the ambiguities. Odlin (1986) has discussed the various ways in which the contrast between explicit and implicit knowledge has been understood, and Norman and Shallice (1986) have identified ambiguities inherent in the concept of automatic processing, some of which are exact parallels to the ambiguities of consciousness. Since a great deal of debate about conscious and unconscious processes has been fueled by conceptual and definitional disagreements (Bowers, 1984; White, 1980), it is preferable to grapple with these issues directly, rather than masking them with alternative terms.

It seems to me that when we speak of having been *conscious* of something, we most often mean that we were aware of it, that we subjectively experienced it as part of the "stream" of consciousness (Battista, 1978; James, 1890; Natsoulis, 1987). However, when we speak of having done something *consciously*, we may mean either that we did it with awareness of what we were doing or that we did it deliberately. This is one of the main ambiguities involved in most discussions of consciousness: consciousness as awareness versus consciousness as intent (Ceci & Howe, 1982). When we speak of consciousness as awareness, there is also a question of the degree or level of our awareness. We may mean that we simply noticed the occurrence of something or that we had a more abstract understanding of it (Bowers, 1984). Therefore, when we speak of language learning as being conscious or unconscious, we might be thinking of several distinct aspects of the problem of consciousness in learning, including at least the following: whether a learner is trying to learn something; whether the learner is aware that he or she is learning; whether the target language forms that are learned are consciously noticed or picked up through some kind of subliminal perception; whether learners acquire general rules or principles on the basis of conscious understanding and insight or more intuitively; or whether learners are able to give an accurate account of the rules and principles that seem to underlie the construction of utterances.

There is experimentally based literature from psychology that bears on all of these issues, along with a small amount of evidence from second language acquisition studies. It is useful to summarize the relevant research in terms of three principal distinctions.

Conscious Perception versus Subliminal Influences in Learning

My personal choice of a label for the key concept here is *noticing*, although there are a variety of technical terms for this, including *focal awareness* (Atkinson & Shiffrin, 1968), *episodic awareness* (Allport, 1979), *conscious perception* (Dixon, 1971) and *apperceived input* (Gass, 1988). Each of these constructs presupposes the allocation of attentional resources to some stimulus and identifies the level at which perceived events are subjectively experienced and are reportable by the person who experiences them.²

Events may remain unnoticed for several reasons—because attention is directed elsewhere, because the information is too complex to be processed, or because it is presented too quickly or too softly to be consciously seen or heard. While it is virtually impossible when observing naturalistic language learning to know exactly

what the learner has or has not noticed, the existence of unnoticed information can be established under experimental conditions by the failure of subjects to report their awareness of a stimulus if asked immediately following its presentation. This criterion of subjective awareness can be contrasted with an objective measure of perception, which various experimenters have argued is best established by a subject's ability to discriminate among two or more alternative stimuli in a forced choice task (Cheesman & Merikle, 1986; Eriksen, 1960; Moore, 1988).

Although many theorists believe that unconscious learning (in some sense) predominates in second language learning, it is very unlikely that what language learners consciously perceive or notice in input is unimportant for learning. A more difficult question is whether it is *necessary* to notice what is said in a language in order for that information to be stored in memory and to play a role in language learning, or whether it is also possible for some learning to be based on unnoticed information, information that is perceived at some level and perhaps processed subliminally without being consciously registered.

There is a widespread belief (at least in North America) that the existence of subliminal learning of some kind has been established for decades. In the 1950s, Packard objected to the covert manipulation of consumers through the use of subliminal messages in advertising (Packard 1957), a theme expanded upon by Key (1973). Beginning in the 1980s, subliminal audiocassettes were aggressively marketed that promised everything from cures for obesity and drug addiction to enhanced visual acuity, improvement in examination performance, and more effective language learning. However, there seems to be virtually no scientific support for claims of behavior modification through subliminal messages. Moore has reviewed the research on subliminal techniques in advertising, concluding that the advertising stories everyone has heard about (such as the stimulation of movie theater patrons to buy popcorn or softdrinks through subliminal messages) are apocryphal. Such techniques probably never were used, and even if they were, "there is no evidence that subliminal messages can influence motivation or complex behavior" (Moore, 1988, 293). Merikle has examined commercially distributed "subliminal" audiotapes and subjected them to both psychophysical experimentation and spectrographic analysis, reporting that the cassettes analyzed contained no embedded subliminal messages whatsoever that could conceivably influence behavior (Merikle, 1988, 355).

There is a well-attested phenomenon of subliminal *perception*. Stimuli that are presented too rapidly for conscious detection or in competition with tasks that are assumed to consume all attentional resources may activate existing memory structures and associations (Dixon, 1971, 1981; Marcel, 1983). Eich (1984) has reported experiments in which pairs of words were both presented to the unattended channel in a shadowing task, one of which was ambiguous (e.g., *fair* or *fare*), while the other word biased its less common interpretation (e.g., *taxi*). Recognition of both members of such pairs was poor but in a spelling test subjects were biased in the direction of the disambiguated meaning. These and other similar demonstrations show that words that are not consciously perceived or noticed can be processed to the level of word meaning. However, all demonstrations of subliminal perception so far have involved subtle effects resulting from the unconscious detection and pro-

cessing of very familiar stimuli. Such effects do not imply the creation of new memory structures, the establishment of new associations, or the learning of new concepts (Ericsson & Simon, 1984; Underwood, 1976, 1982), and certainly nothing remotely analogous to learning a second language.

At the present time, the available evidence is compatible with the strong assertion that there is no such thing as subliminal language learning or any other kind of subliminal learning. Second language forms that are not noticed do not affect learning. This allows the concept of *intake* in second language learning to be defined in terms of what the learner attends to and notices (Schmidt, 1990).

Explicit versus Implicit Learning

The contrast between subliminal learning and implicit learning, or learning without understanding, has to do with the level of awareness involved. I use *noticing* to mean registering the simple occurrence of some event, whereas *understanding* implies recognition of a general principle, rule, or pattern. For example, a second language learner might simply notice that a native speaker used a particular form of address on a particular occasion, or at a deeper level the learner might understand the significance of such a form, realizing that the form used was appropriate because of status differences between speaker and hearer. Noticing is crucially related to the question of what linguistic material is stored in memory (Atkinson & Shiffrin 1968; Kihlstrom, 1984); understanding relates to questions concerning how that material is organized into a linguistic system.

Implicit learning refers to nonconscious generalization from examples. The general phenomenon of implicit learning has been well established in the psychological literature and is viewed as a natural product of attending to structured input (Hartman, Knopman, & Nissen, 1989; Reber, 1989). There is a gathering consensus within psychology that the mechanisms of implicit learning probably involve the strengthening and weakening of connections between nodes in complex networks as the result of experience, rather than through the unconscious induction of rules abstracted from data. An example of this recent shift in perspective can be seen in the work of Reber, who has carried out numerous experiments involving exposing subjects to strings of letters generated by an artificial grammar. After training, subjects were able to make accurate judgments about the well-formedness of novel strings, without being able to articulate the rules of well-formedness (Reber, 1976; Reber, Allen & Regan, 1985; Reber, Kassin, Lewis & Cantor, 1980). Until recently, Reber (1976) argued that knowledge resulting from implicit learning was encoded in the form of unconscious abstract representations. In a more recent publication, Abrams and Reber (1988) have suggested that implicit learning as demonstrated in these experiments probably rests upon some kind of covariation counter, a system that logs both event frequencies and event co-occurrences. One model that simulates the mechanisms currently believed to underlie implicit learning is Parallel Distributed Processing (PDP). PDP has been used to model the acquisition of the German definite article (MacWhinney et al., 1989), the past tense in English (Rumelhart & McClelland, 1986), the development of visual word recognition skills (Seidenberg & McClelland, 1989), and the acquisition of gender in French (Sokolik & Smith, 1989).

Explicit learning, that is, conscious problem solving, relies on different mechanisms, including attempts to form mental representations, searching memory for related knowledge and forming and testing hypotheses (Mathews, Buss, Stanley, Blanchard-Field, Cho & Druhan, 1989; Johnson-Laird, 1983). Both implicit learning and explicit learning have particular strengths. Implicit learning appears to be superior for the learning of fuzzy patterns based on perceptual similarities and the detection of nonsalient covariance between variables, while explicit learning is superior when a domain contains rules that are based on logical relationships rather than perceptual similarities (Mathews et al., 1989).

Intentional versus Incidental Learning

Whereas the concepts of subliminal and implicit learning are both related to the consciousness as awareness, incidental learning refers to consciousness as intent. If, as I have claimed, it is necessary to notice the occurrence of linguistic forms in order for them to serve as intake for learning, is it also necessary to deliberately pay attention to such features in order to notice them? More generally, is it necessary to want to learn in order to learn?

This is not so difficult a question as the others I have raised. In many cases, it does not matter if a language learner intends to pay attention or not. A language learner's limited processing abilities may make it impossible to notice something regardless of an intent to do so. There are other cases in which some task to be performed forces the learner's attention to be focused on some pieces of information rather than others, and in such cases, what is stored in memory is the information that must be attended to in order to complete the task (Ericsson & Simon, 1984); the learner's intention to learn is irrelevant (Anderson, 1985). On the other hand, there are many situations in which a language learner is free to opt in and out of learning contexts and to pay attention or not, depending on one's personal hierarchy of deep goals and momentary dispositions (Baars, 1988; Kahneman, 1973; Kihlstrom, 1984); in such cases paying attention is crucial.

Extensions to the Learning of Pragmatics and Discoursal Rules

I have argued that linguistic forms can serve as intake for language learning only if they are noticed by learners; that paying attention to such forms is certainly helpful, but not necessary if other factors in the learning context focus attention on them so that they are noticed; and that general principles of the organization of language may be discovered through the use of either explicit or implicit learning mechanisms. I have also suggested that even in cases where what native speakers "know" about the pragmatic principles of their language is inaccessible to consciousness, such knowledge may nevertheless be based on insights and understanding at the time of learning. What evidence is there that these claims are relevant for the learning of pragmatics?