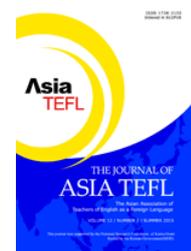




The Journal of Asia TEFL

<http://journal.asiatefl.org/>

e-ISSN 2466-1511 © 2004 AsiaTEFL.org. All rights reserved.



Book Review

Second Language Pragmatics, by Naoko Taguchi and Carsten Roever, Oxford/New York, Oxford University Press, 2017, viii+328 pp., £40.00, ISBN 9780194200585

Second Language Pragmatics is a newly published book by two leading scholars in this field. As the name suggests, second language (L2) pragmatics is an interdisciplinary field of pragmatics and L2 research, which mainly focuses on the investigation of speech acts, and to a lesser extent, conversational structure and conversational implicature (Ren, 2015). In recent years, L2 pragmatics has developed rapidly and expanded its research focuses and scopes. Thus, this book is a welcome one that provides an up-to-date comprehensive overview of the field, points out problems in the current state, and offers suggestions to take research further.

The book consists of 10 chapters. In addition to the introduction (Chapter 1) and conclusion (Chapter 10), it covers eight themes through chapters 2 to 9: disciplinary domain and history of L2 pragmatics, theoretical models, research methods, developmental trajectories in pragmatic learning, individual characteristics in pragmatics learning and development, contexts for pragmatic development, L2 pragmatics instruction and assessment, and L2 pragmatics and globalization.

In the introductory chapter, the concept of L2 pragmatics is elucidated based on the definitions of pragmatics and three sub-fields under it: cross-cultural pragmatics, intercultural pragmatics, and interlanguage pragmatics. Research in L2 pragmatics in the last three decades is briefly reviewed, followed by the purpose and structure of the book. Chapter 2 is dedicated to the discussion of major contributing disciplines, including second language acquisition, general pragmatics, speech acts and implicature, anthropology (particularly politeness research in context), and conversation analysis. The elaboration of theoretical models of pragmatic learning and development constitutes the focus of Chapter 3. Seven theoretical perspectives are elaborated on to explain mechanisms which drive pragmatic learning and development, including the two-dimensional model, the noticing hypothesis, skill acquisition theories, collaborative dialogue and language-related episodes, sociocultural theory, language socialization, and conversation analysis. Thus, the chapter examines more theoretical models applied in L2 pragmatics than the perspectives discussed in Kasper (2001), demonstrating the development of this field with respect to theoretical approaches.

Chapter 4 focuses on research methods currently being employed in L2 pragmatics. The methods are analyzed according to three different kinds of resulting data: receptive, non-interactive production, and interactive production. Each type of data and some typical research instruments are discussed in detail. Procedures of data analysis are also expanded on, with verbal protocols being addressed at the end of the chapter. In Chapter 5, which explores developmental trajectories in L2 pragmatics learning, longitudinal studies in this field are reviewed, with a focus on speech act, extended discourse, implicature comprehension, recognition, and production of routine formulae.

L2 pragmatics learning and development are heavily influenced by learner-internal and external factors that are investigated in the following two chapters. Chapter 6 discusses learner-internal factors and highlights the role of individual characteristics in pragmatic learning. The variables are analyzed through the cognitive-componential approach and the dynamic, interactive approach. In the former approach,

proficiency, cognitive variables, motivation, and personality are discussed, while in the latter approach, individual characteristics are examined from the perspective of complex systems. Exploring learner-external factors, Chapter 7 investigates four learning contexts for pragmatic development: study abroad, formal classrooms, technology-enhanced environment, and workplace and immigrant contexts. Each context has its own affordances and exerts different effects on pragmatic development.

Chapter 8 concentrates on L2 pragmatics pedagogy and assessment. The studies reviewed demonstrate that learners' L2 pragmatics competence can be improved through instruction intervention. Thus, as stated by the authors, it is not meaningful to discuss whether pragmatics should be taught. Instead, the issues that really matter in L2 pragmatics teaching are how to teach, what to teach, and when to teach. In the assessment section, the conceptualization of pragmatic competence is discussed, in relation to communicative competence. It then expounds pragmatics assessment across three generations: the first generation focusing on speech acts and functions, the second on a broader construct, and the third on extended discourse.

Globalization and multiculturalism bring about challenges to traditional L2 pragmatics research and the construct of pragmatic competence. Chapter 9 illustrates three areas, i.e., pragmatics in English as a lingua franca (ELF), intercultural competence, and heritage learner pragmatics. In the context of globalization, the conceptualization of pragmatic competence has to be remodeled. This is significant for ongoing and future L2 pragmatics research. The book concludes in Chapter 10 by recapitulating the key content of the preceding chapters and elaborating on new topics and challenges in L2 pragmatics research in the new decade. Furthermore, some of the research gaps are identified and a few thematic areas are proposed for future investigations. The final pages present references and a glossary index of authors cited and key terminologies.

The book has many strengths. Firstly, it provides a state-of-the-art review of main issues in L2 pragmatics over the last three decades and represents an outstanding and timely contribution to this field. It succinctly describes the current state of L2 pragmatics, in which the latest research areas and new perspectives on important topics are reviewed, including learners' individual variation in pragmatic development, study abroad contexts, pragmatics in ELF communication, and heritage learners. It also presents new theoretical models guiding L2 pragmatic research and discusses in turn possible contributions of the field to these models. Secondly, the book is well organized, with clear presentations and categorizations of existing empirical studies. Each main chapter includes a summary and provides directions for future research. The topics investigated in the chapters are also well-connected. Thirdly, the book is well written and reader-friendly, making it accessible for undergraduate students, novice researchers, and academics who do not have a background in L2 pragmatics. Therefore, the book can be used as an introductory course book for undergraduate and graduate students in pragmatics and second language acquisition, and as a brilliant start for researchers who want to acquaint themselves with an overview of L2 pragmatics. It can also serve as a reference book for academics who already have some background in the field of L2 pragmatics.

If we have to point out limitations of the book, we hope to see the following in future revised versions. Firstly, it would help the reader understand the construct of pragmatic competence if the authors could provide a detailed classification distinguishing it from concepts of communicative competence and interactional competence. Secondly, the authors may want to expand more on pragmatics teaching and assessing, possibly including more recent studies and presenting the two fields in separate chapters. The current book seems to be skewed on pragmatics learning. Thirdly, it appears that pragmatics research in ELF communication and other globalization contexts have focused more on accommodation strategies, rather than pragmatic performance in a traditional sense in L2 pragmatics. It is worth investigating whether these strategies belong to pragmatic competence or strategic competence (Bachman & Palmer, 2010). In addition, as Ren (2016) argues, the pragmatic strategies observed in ELF communication may exist more generally in using other languages as lingua franca communication and intercultural communication. It is therefore insightful to investigate beyond ELF communication and examine pragmatic practices in other lingua franca communication, thus providing more illuminating findings to

explore the issue of universality and/or uniqueness of strategies in multilingual speakers' pragmatic practices.

To sum up, the book is informative and thought-provoking for students and researchers who wish to further explore options of pragmatics research, regardless of whether they would like to focus on learning, teaching, or assessing. We would highly recommend this book to students, teachers, and researchers who are interested in L2 pragmatics research, and also broadly in pragmatics, second language acquisition, language testing, and assessment.

References

- Bachman, L.F., & Palmer, A. (2010). *Language assessment in practice*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Kasper, G. (2001). Four perspectives on L2 pragmatic development. *Applied Linguistics*, 22(4), 502-530.
- Kasper, G., & Rose, K. R. (2002). *Pragmatic development in a second language*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell.
- Ren, W. (2015). *L2 pragmatic development in study abroad contexts*. Bern, Switzerland: Peter Lang.
- Ren, W. (2016). Pragmatic strategies to solve and preempt understanding problems in Chinese professionals' emails when using English as lingua franca communication. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 1-14.

Yongxiang Yang

Ocean University of China, Qingdao, China
E-mail: yongxiang1016@126.com

Wei Ren

National Key Research Centre for Linguistics and Applied Linguistics
Guangdong University of Foreign Studies, Guangzhou, China
E-mail: weiren@gdufs.edu.cn