

Second Language Learning and Teaching

Tomasz Róg

Task-based Language Teaching and Beyond: L2 Pragmatics Instruction for Young Learners

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Preface

The present volume explores whether task-based language teaching (TBLT) can be employed with young learners to develop their second language (L2) pragmatic competence. Relatedly, it touches upon two major topics: TBLT and L2 pragmatics instruction, as well as the topic of young language learners. TBLT is an approach to teaching a second language, whereas pragmatics is a subsystem of language concerned with the meaning of words in a given social situation. As will be argued below, the two areas of inquiry have many points of convergence but have rarely been explored in tandem and, to the author's best knowledge, never so in the context of teaching young learners.

The past three decades have witnessed an enormous increase in interest in TBLT shared by researchers and practitioners alike (Bryfonski et al., 2024; Shehadeh, 2019, 2024), resulting in numerous publications and conferences devoted to the topic, the formation of the International Association for Task-Based Language Teaching (IATBLT), and the creation of a journal called "Task. A journal on task-based language teaching and learning" (John Benjamins Publishing). Among the different instructional models for teaching second or foreign languages, TBLT is an educational approach that is in keeping with second language acquisition (SLA) research and theory (East, 2021; Ellis et al., 2020; Erlam & Tolosa, 2022; Gurzynski-Weiss et al., 2024; Long, 2015; Róg, 2021a, b; Van den Branden, 2022). It is an approach to language pedagogy that grew out of Communicative Language Teaching (Ellis, 2003) and uses a task as both a learning resource and an organisational lesson unit. It views language as a tool for communication and takes an analytical approach to syllabus design; that is, the course content centres on tasks to be performed rather than language structures to be taught. As a result, the syllabus does not enumerate the vocabulary items, grammatical structures, or phonological features that learners are expected to acquire. However, it involves authentic, communicative tasks that learners should be able to perform in real life. By way of illustration, a TBLT lesson may target understanding the weather forecast, filling out a job application, or ordering a takeaway over the phone instead of learning how to use the present perfect tense.

TBLT is based on the philosophy of experiential learning, according to which a second language is learnt best when learners use it to produce or comprehend meanings and not when it becomes an object of study. While TBLT primarily emphasises communicative ability, its objectives extend beyond simply enabling learners to convey messages effectively since it aims to foster language use that is not only communicatively effective but also fluent, accurate, and complex. Importantly to the present book, recent studies (e.g., Barón, 2023; González-Lloret & Ortega, 2018; Kim, 2023; Nguyen & Basturkmen, 2023; Róg, 2020a, 2021a, b, c, 2024a, b; Róg & Krawiec, 2024; Róg & Urbaniak, 2024; Taguchi & Kim, 2018) highlight the importance of teaching language that is contextually appropriate. This means that tasks within TBLT should also equip learners with pragmatic competence, including an understanding of sociopragmatic norms of the second language, thus preparing them to navigate diverse communicative contexts successfully (see also González-Lloret, 2020).

Tasks are believed to support L2 acquisition through a synergy of focus on meaning and focus on form as learners concentrate on performing real-life tasks and engaging in natural communication (Ellis, 2003; Ellis et al., 2020; Long, 2015). Since tasks are expected to represent learners' actual needs, Long (2015) postulated a fine-grained needs analysis as a starting point of any TBLT-based course, although other TBLT promoters (e.g., Ellis et al., 2020) did not put much weight on it. Still, the primary focus of any TBLT course is to prepare learners to perform communicative tasks outside classrooms and not to learn or use language just for its sake. Because of this, TBLT courses are socially situated and require learners to use language in different social contexts. Even though pragmatic ability is necessary to complete tasks, researchers still need to thoroughly investigate the links between the two areas.

Together with a growing number of publications on TBLT, a surge of interest in teaching pragmatics in a second language can also be observed in the current literature (e.g., Bardovi-Harlig, 1999, 2000, 2010, 2013, 2017; Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984; Cohen, 2008; Félix-Brasdefer & Shively, 2022; Ishihara & Cohen, 2022; Nguyen, 2023; Taguchi & Kim, 2018; Trosborg, 1995; Ren, 2022; Roever, 2022). Pragmatics is an area of linguistics concerned with understanding how to apply the knowledge of social norms to the use of language (Cutting & Fordyce, 2021; Fasold, 1990). It is about knowing which language structures fit with a given social situation and how language affects the emotions and attitudes of interlocutors (Félix-Brasdefer & Shively, 2022). People talk differently to their families, their close friends, acquaintances, or their bosses, which is also influenced by the different settings of each communicative situation. For instance, some contexts allow for being direct, while others require politeness. Talking to someone in a way that is not culturally adequate may be inappropriate and may lead to hostility, even though the speaker did not intend to be rude or abrupt.

The scope of research on pragmatics has embraced, among others, the teaching of L2 pragmatics. L2 pragmatics appears to be one of the most difficult and the last language systems to be acquired (Bardovi-Harlig & Vellenga, 2012), and learners need support in acquiring it in instructional contexts (Loewen, 2020). The difficulty may lie in the fact that while vocabulary, grammar, and phonology are potentially

teachable in the classrooms, pragmatics relies heavily on social contexts. Therefore, teachers may struggle with creating authentic situations to teach pragmatics and may lack the requisite pragmatic competencies themselves. Despite the extraordinary efforts of communicative language teaching in the direction of fostering learners' ability to use the language, much frustration comes from the fact that the "fluency over accuracy" paradigm has failed to address the problem that language is more often than not designed for use with other people (Roever, 2022, p. 2).

Like TBLT, pragmatics is concerned with the social use of language. Since TBLT requires not only the use of language but also the use of language in a given context, it may fit well with the teaching of pragmatics. However, to the author's best knowledge, research into the compatibility of TBLT and pragmatics has so far been scant. This fact and the author's two decades of experience as an L2 English teacher and L2 teacher-trainer is where this book took its impetus from. The research reported in the empirical part of this book delves into the use of task-based and task-supported methodology in teaching L2 pragmatic competence narrowed down to five speech acts (greetings, requests, apologies, suggestions and responses to suggestions, and expressions of gratitude). The study involved 48 learners aged between eight and nine who were second graders recruited from Polish primary schools. The participants took part in a language course in a private language school, where 18 sessions were devoted to teaching the target speech acts. The participants were randomly assigned to either experimental groups (a TBLT or a PPP group) or a control group. The study aimed to compare the outcomes of different types of instruction in terms of the comprehension and production of the target speech acts.

The goal of this book is to discuss a relevant topic of teaching L2 pragmatics with the use of tasks and to address a number of research gaps. First, there is a notable absence of sections on L2 pragmatics instruction in widely used teacher-training textbooks (Harmer, 2015; Scrivener, 2011; Ur, 2024). As a result, pre-service teachers do not learn how to teach pragmatics. This problem stems mostly from the fact that research results concerning L2 pragmatics instruction trickle very slowly to teacher-training coursebooks (Róg, 2020b). Numerous studies have shown that L2 pragmatic content is also almost non-existent in L2 learners' textbooks (e.g., Bardovi-Harlig et al., 1991; Barron, 2016; Glaser, 2020; Jakupčević & Čavar Portolan, 2021; Limberg, 2015; Schauer, 2019, 2020; Schauer & Adolphs, 2006), which is an issue related to inadequate teacher training in the matter.

Second, there is a paucity of research into ways of developing L2 pragmatic competence, particularly with regard to young learners. This presents a challenge since early exposure to pragmatic content may lay strong foundations for future language development (McConachy & Liddicoat, 2022; Schauer, 2022a; Klovning, 2024). Barón, Celaya and Watkins (2023, p. 14) observe that most (of the few) existing studies have thus far focused on teenagers and adults, and little is known about L2 pragmatics instruction in early second language acquisition, in particular in primary education. Theoretical and empirical investigations into teaching young learners L2 pragmatics are therefore necessary.

Third, from a practical, classroom-oriented point of view, there is a need for pedagogical proposals and interventions regarding L2 pragmatic instruction targeted

at young learners (Schauer 2022a, b). Only a handful of methods and materials that target children as L2 pragmatics learners have been proposed in recent scholarship (e.g., Alemi & Haeri, 2020; Nguyen & Le, 2019; Savić & Myrset, 2022), and there is no consensus on how to prepare young learners best to communicate effectively and appropriately in a second language.

Fourth, although research into the use of TBLT with young learners is quite limited, its results are promising (e.g., Azkarai & Oliver, 2019; Gurzynski-Weiss et al., 2024; Oliver & Sato, 2022; Shintani, 2014, 2015; Thorburn, 2022). On the whole, L2 learners of all ages following TBLT make substantial progress in developing grammar, vocabulary, and language skills (Boers & Faez, 2023; Bryfonski & McKay, 2019; Lambert, Aubrey & Bui, 2023; Xuan, Cheung & Liu 2022). Thus, further in-depth analyses of task-based programmes are needed (Róg, 2021a; Róg & Laskowski, 2023), especially in the context of teaching children.

Fifth, there is a continuing need for studies comparing the effectiveness of TBLT versus other instructional methods and approaches (Ellis et al., 2020; Harris & Leeming, 2022, 2024; Xuan et al., 2022, 2024). This gap will also be addressed in the empirical part of the book, where TBLT is compared with the traditional presentation-practice-production (PPP) lesson format. While most available studies (e.g., Arslanyilmaz, 2013; Beretta & Davies, 1985; De Ridder et al., 2007; Ganjouee et al., 2018; Gonzalez-Lloret, & Nielson, 2015; Harris & Leeming, 2022; Kim et al., 2023; Park, 2010; Pomarolli et al., 2023; Shintani, 2015, 2016) generally point to similar effects of TBLT and PPP, or—often—to the advantage of the former, these studies have mostly concerned teaching grammar and vocabulary and some of their results have been questioned (Róg & Laskowski, 2023).

Against this backdrop, the current volume investigates the effects of TBLT vs. a PPP (presentation-practice-production) framework on developing young learners' L2 pragmatic competence. To the best of the author's knowledge, no earlier study has considered such a relationship. Yet, TBLT and L2 pragmatics share common concerns with situated interactions, real-world communicative needs, and communication goals (Roever, 2022; Taguchi & Kim, 2018). Both are related to the social use of language. And both have become objects of increased research attention in the past few years (see, e.g., volumes on L2 pragmatics by Barón, Celaya & Watkins, 2023; Ellis et al., 2024; Martínez-Flor et al., 2023; Ren, 2022; Roever, 2022; Taguchi, 2019; and on TBLT (e.g., Ahmadian & Long, 2022; East, 2021; Ellis et al., 2020; Lambert et al., 2023; Li, 2024; Van den Branden, 2022).

The present book is composed of seven chapters. Chapter 1 explores the multifaceted concept of L2 pragmatics. The first section introduces the concepts of pragmatics, highlighting its significance in effective communication and its role in understanding the application of social norms in language use. Subsequent sections delve into the distinctions between pragmatics and pragmatic competence, illustrating how they influence language interpretation and usage in social contexts. The latter part of the chapter shifts focus to L2 pragmatics, outlining its definition, the development of L2 pragmatic competence, and its integration within L2 communicative

competence. This discussion extends into practical concerns regarding L2 pragmatic instruction, encompassing empirical research findings, challenges in teaching materials development, and the assessment of pragmatics.

Chapter 2 aims to provide a thorough overview of TBLT by exploring its theoretical foundations, practical implementation frameworks, and related empirical research. It begins by addressing key theoretical issues associated with TBLT, particularly the cognitive-interactionist and sociocultural perspectives on second language acquisition. The initial sections delve into various models and hypotheses related to these theoretical viewpoints. Following this, the chapter examines the practical aspects of TBLT, detailing different approaches to implementing tasks in L2 classrooms. Lastly, the chapter reviews empirical studies on the effectiveness of tasks and TBLT.

In Chapter 3, readers will find a comprehensive overview of empirical research on using tasks in teaching L2 pragmatics, especially for young learners. It begins by presenting two primary theoretical frameworks: Skehan's (1998) Limited Attentional Capacity (LAC) approach and Robinson's (2001, 2003, 2011) Cognition Hypothesis (CH), which serve to organise the discussion around the notions of task complexity, difficulty, and conditions in L2 instruction in order to help readers view pragmatics instruction from different perspectives. The chapter also examines the effects of TBLT on young L2 learners, noting ethical, theoretical, and methodological complexities. It reviews the effects of tasks on interaction, comparative studies with children participants, effects of task repetition and studies on the practical implementation of TBLT with young learners. The chapter then addresses the current state of L2 pragmatic instruction for young learners, highlighting the need for essential pragmatic skills for everyday interactions and emergencies.

The empirical part of the book opens with Chapter 4, which provides an overview of the research methodology adopted in the present study. The chapter starts by outlining the aims of the study and the associated research questions. It then describes the context and the participants of the study, including their demographic data, L2 proficiency, previous experience with L2 instruction, sociocultural background, and the process of recruiting them and assigning them to either the experimental or control group. Following this, the chapter discusses the target speech acts. Each speech act is described in detail, including taxonomies, and the rationale for selecting each for the study is provided. The chapter then covers the data elicitation instruments, explaining the rationale for each instrument, its design, and the implementation procedure. Additionally, it outlines the procedures for data processing and analysis. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the methodological and ethical considerations relevant to the study.

Chapter 5 provides a discussion of the results obtained from the study, encompassing both quantitative and qualitative analyses. The results are derived from four data elicitation instruments used to collect data at three different time points: the pre-test, post-test, and delayed post-test. To ensure clarity, the results and analyses for each instrument are discussed separately. The chapter summarises the main findings after the presentation of both productive and receptive data elicitation instruments.

Chapter 6 focuses on discussing the findings of the current research, attempting to answer the research question by providing explanations and linking the findings with other empirical and theoretical research whenever possible. This is followed by an exploration of the pedagogical implications of the study. As the research detailed in this book progressed, several limitations emerged, which is to be expected given the study's innovative nature. These limitations are also discussed in Chapter 6. Conclusions of the theoretical and empirical findings are provided in Chapter 7.

The intended audience for this book includes researchers, language teachers, trainee teachers, and teacher trainers with an interest in TBLT and L2 pragmatics. The author hopes to inspire readers to delve deeper into the potential of using tasks, not only to foster L2 pragmatic competence. In the following pages, readers are invited to reflect on the acquisition of languages both inside and outside the classroom and consider innovative approaches to teaching young learners.

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Abbreviations

EFL	English as a Foreign Language
L2	Second Language
PPP	Presentation-Practice-Production
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
TBLT	Task-Based Language Teaching
TSLT	Task-Supported Language Teaching

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Chapter 1

Pragmatics in Second Language Acquisition: Overview of Selected Issues



1.1 Introduction

People communicate to exchange information. This exchange extends beyond the mere comprehension of the structures of language; it also includes the ability to convey one's ideas, emotions, and intentions clearly to others. Effective communication is achieved when there is a mutual understanding between the speaker and the listener and when both are able to arrive at the same interpretation of a message (Ren, 2022; Roever, 2022). In the study of language, the skill of comprehending and producing meaning in various social situations is referred to as pragmatic competence (Campbell & Wales, 1970; O'Keeffe et al., 2020), a practical application of the norms of pragmatics.

Pragmatics is an area of linguistics concerned with understanding how to apply the knowledge of social norms to the use of language (Cutting & Fordyce, 2021; Fasold, 1990). It is about knowing which language structures fit with a given social situation and what effect language has on the emotions and attitudes of interlocutors (Félix-Brasdefer & Shively, 2022). The past four decades have witnessed a growing research interest in teaching pragmatics in a second or foreign language (henceforth L2 pragmatics). Alongside teaching other language subsystems (i.e., vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation), pragmatics has become an important research area for second language pedagogy (Barón et al., 2023; Culpeper et al., 2018; Cutting & Fordyce, 2021; Nguyen & Le, 2019; O'Keeffe et al., 2020; Roever, 2022; Taguchi, 2015; Taguchi & Roever, 2017). In a nutshell, L2 pragmatics studies the ability to communicate appropriately (i.e., with care given to the context and power relations with the interlocutor) in a foreign language.

The present chapter aims to provide an overview of selected conceptual issues related to the overarching theme of L2 pragmatics. To begin with, the concept of pragmatics is explained through an overview of its most widely accepted definitions in the field of linguistics. Next, pragmatic competence understood as the ability to use the knowledge of pragmatics in communication, is discussed, followed by a

brief review of the main research areas of pragmatics. Of note, since a fine-grained analysis of the discipline of pragmatics is beyond the scope of this book, only the main issues are discussed to provide readers with a general background that will allow them to situate the discussion in the field of linguistics. The second part of the present chapter is devoted to the notion of L2 pragmatics. It starts by presenting the definition of L2 pragmatics and L2 pragmatic competence and then describes how L2 pragmatic competence can be considered a part of L2 communicative competence. The remainder of the chapter is concerned with practical concerns related to the feasibility of L2 pragmatic instruction. The empirical investigations into teaching L2 pragmatics are discussed together with the resulting conclusions, problems with developing teaching materials, and the challenges of the assessment of L2 pragmatic competence.

1.2 The Concepts of Pragmatics and Pragmatic Competence

Pragmatics is a linguistic subdiscipline that examines how language forms are used and interpreted in specific contexts, and experts in this field analyse the creation and comprehension of meaning among individuals in various social situations, aiming to understand how communication is used to fulfil particular goals (Taguchi & Kádár, 2024). For instance, “Do you want to leave the window open?” could be a straightforward, genuine question or a subtle hint that the window should be closed, perhaps because it is too cold, noisy, or for privacy reasons. The actual meaning conveyed by the speaker and how it is understood by the listener hinge on their mutual contextual knowledge. Thus, pragmatics also delves into how context influences the interpretation of meaning and potential differences in perception between the speaker and the listener regarding what was communicated. The following sections discuss the concept of pragmatics, its research areas, and the ability to use the norms of pragmatics in communication, that is, pragmatic competence.

1.2.1 Origins and Definitions of Pragmatics

Pragmatics is a relatively new subdiscipline of linguistics rooted in philosophy (O’Keeffe et al., 2020, p. 1). Early foundational work in the field can be traced back to philosophers who aimed to comprehend how communicators establish meanings in diverse contexts and periods. The concept of pragmatics in linguistics was initially discussed by Peirce (1905, p. 163, in Schauer, 2019, p. 10), who drew inspiration from

philosophers such as Kant. Peirce described his theory of pragmatics, notably emphasising “the most striking feature of [it is] its recognition of an inseparable connection between rational cognition and rational purpose”. It was observed that meanings are established not only through linguistic forms but also by specific contexts. Therefore, knowing a language is not just about competence but, more importantly, about performance (see Chomsky, 1965). The first scholarly works on pragmatics, which offered in-depth analyses of its relationship with language, emerged around the mid-twentieth century, with key references often made to seminal publications such as those by Morris (1938) and Austin (1962). For instance, Morris (1938, p. 1) defined pragmatics as “the study of the relation of signs to interpreters”. The idea that language is not only a “code” but also serves other functions has been further developed by Searle (1969, 1976).

Understanding “what people mean rather than what they say” (Chapman, 2011, p. 1) is crucial for using a language that is, receiving and producing messages. Yule’s (1996, p. 3) working definition of pragmatics includes the study of both “the speaker’s meaning” and “contextual meaning”. In other words, pragmatics studies what a speaker really means in a particular context. For instance, when a speaker says, “It’s really cold in here” in a room with an open window, they may mean, “Can you close the window?”. Therefore, the study of pragmatics reveals “how more gets communicated than is said” (Barón et al., 2023, p. 2) and that it is not enough to rely on the literal meaning of a given utterance, but it is also necessary to understand its underlying, implied meaning. Additionally, as Yule (1996, p. 3) observes, there is also the question of “the relative distance” between speakers. Depending on the relationship between speakers at the time they are communicating, the language used may differ. For example, a more informal language is usually chosen when communicating with friends, whereas work-related communication often necessitates the use of a more formal language.

According to Crystal (1997, p. 301), pragmatics is “the study of language from the point of view of users, especially of the choices they make, the constraints they encounter in using the language in social interaction, and the effects their use of language has on other participants in the act of communication”. This definition, like Yule’s (1996), points to the study of the ways in which language users convey and interpret meaning not just through the words they choose but also based on the social, cultural, and situational contexts in which those words are used. Essentially, pragmatics helps to explain why a given expression can have different meanings or interpretations in different scenarios, even if the same words are used. Malýuga and Orlova’s (2018, p. 18) understanding of pragmatics, which is the “relationship between the utterances, the participants of the communication and the context,” mirrors the above considerations and similarly focuses not only on the study of an actual utterance but also on the speakers and listeners, as well as their general and specific knowledge.

Importantly to the discussion, Crystal (1997, p. 301) also mentions the constraints met by speakers. These refer to situations where a person might not possess a fully developed set of linguistic tools to accomplish a communicative goal. In such situations, the ability to use pragmatic norms may be hindered by gaps in one’s overall

communicative competence. An example is when someone wants to politely request something, like asking someone to pass the sugar. They might lack the necessary lexico-grammar tools to say, “Would you mind passing me the sugar, please?” and instead use a more direct approach, like “Give me the sugar”. Schauer (2019, p. 9) observes that making linguistic choices in a given context is closely related to one’s knowledge of grammar and vocabulary.

To provide one more perspective on the concept of pragmatics, Taguchi (2019, p. 1) observes that “pragmatics studies the connection between a linguistic form and a context, where that form is used, and how this connection is perceived and realised in a social interaction”. Pragmatics examines, therefore, the relationship between a linguistic form and the context in which that form exists. It explores how this connection is perceived and realised in human communication. The decision to use a given linguistic form depends on several choices: on the one hand, there is the setting, the attitudes of the speakers, their relationships, their roles, and the topics they touch upon. On the other hand, language use is also influenced by speakers’ agency and consequentiality (Taguchi, 2019, p. 1). Depending on the type of image they want to project, speakers may choose to speak in a particular way (Duff, 2012; LoCastro, 2003, as cited in Taguchi, 2019). What follows from the above is that speakers should be aware of the consequences of their verbal behaviour and how their verbal behaviour affects the perceptions and reactions of others. What is important is not only what is said but also which linguistic strategies are more appropriate in a given situation.

Historically, investigations into pragmatics adopted either of the two approaches: micropragmatic or macropragmatic (Mey, 2001). As the names suggest, the former takes a detailed, bottom-up approach to researching the field, while the latter takes a macro, top-down view of language and context. The micropragmatic approach places pragmatics among other components traditionally investigated by linguistics, that is, morphology, syntax, semantics, and phonology. As it is bottom-up, it looks at speech acts, implicature, deixis, and presupposition and is concerned with how meanings are expressed through these tools. In contrast, macropragmatics takes a broader understanding of pragmatics and a more comprehensive understanding of human communication. This top-down approach is concerned with social and cultural contexts that influence the speakers’ particular linguistic choices. These two approaches are not exclusive, and scholarship often embraces their richness by analysing how the micropragmatic items are manifested in a broader perspective of social variables and conditions (see O’Keeffe et al., 2020).

The above brief characterisation of pragmatics allows us to conclude that this field of study is concerned not solely with the person who creates a message but also with the impact that the message has on the listener. This means that researchers are concerned with the choices made by language users as well as how these choices are interpreted by others. Therefore, the field of pragmatics examines both the actual content produced by a speaker and how it fits into the specific context of a social interaction. Additionally, it considers the perspective of the listener/recipient, focusing on their understanding and interpretation of the communicated message.

1.2.2 *Pragmatic Competence*

In light of the above, the discussion of pragmatics leads to consider the pragmatics-related capabilities of speakers and listeners. The ability to appropriately produce and understand messages with reference to the social context in which they are made is called pragmatic competence (Campbell & Wales, 1970; O’Keeffe et al., 2020). It is an important linguistic ability to produce and receive utterances based on the norms, conventions, and expectations of a particular culture or community (Roever, 2022). Being pragmatically competent encompasses, therefore, not so much the ability to construct grammatically correct sentences but the mastery of using language aptly based on the social context of a given interaction (Campbell & Wales, 1970, p. 247). It involves understanding the nuances of what should and should not be said to particular individuals in specific situations and the ability to understand the underlying message, tone, and attitude others project in their communications. Failing to do so might result in misunderstandings and, in severe instances, harm interpersonal relationships. Ishihara and Cohen (2022, p. 2) explain that “within a culture or community, there is socially acquired and jointly constructed knowledge of more or less acceptable behaviour (pragmatic norms) that is negotiated in the local interaction as it unfolds. Rather than being absolutely “right” or “wrong,” pragmatic norms are about a range of tendencies or social practices in which certain behaviours are viewed as more or less preferred, suitable, or desirable within the given context”. Further, pragmatic norms vary not only within languages and cultures but also within a given language or culture. In summary, pragmatic competence is crucial for effective communication as it involves understanding and adhering to the social norms and expectations of a given context, thereby preventing misunderstandings and fostering positive interpersonal relationships.

For research purposes, pragmatic competence has traditionally been divided into sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic competence (Leech, 1983). Sociopragmatic competence is an individual’s awareness of the social rules that govern the use of language, for example, how to talk to people of different social statuses, ages, and genders or how (much) to impose on the speaker. It is the awareness of how social relationships affect the way individuals communicate. Additionally, pragmalinguistic competence embraces the knowledge of linguistic tools that are necessary for successful communication. If one understands the constraints of sociopragmatics, then pragmalinguistic competence allows for choosing the right words to use. It is not simply knowing the language but also knowing which language items to use in a given situation.

There is also a long-standing debate on the roles of explicit and implicit pragmatic knowledge. It can be difficult to discern whether a language user relies on their explicit (i.e., conscious) or implicit (i.e., rapid and outside of awareness) pragmatic knowledge in interaction, and related research is scant (Roever & Ellis, 2022). On the whole, while sociopragmatic knowledge is mainly implicit for L1 users who were brought up in the target language community, pragmalinguistic knowledge can be both partly explicit (the speaker is aware of the language they should use) and

implicit (the speaker uses the language without much awareness of why they choose specific linguistic items). In fact, as Pearson (2006) points out, unlike other language systems, pragmatics is often explicitly presented in L1 contexts, where children are made aware of what is appropriate to say and what may be perceived as rude in a given context.

1.2.3 *Research Areas of Pragmatics*

Research into pragmatics gained momentum in the second half of the twentieth century and at present pragmatics is a thriving research area that continues to expand its scope. Its influence can be observed not only in other subfields of linguistics (e.g., sociolinguistics, language processing, or—importantly to this volume—second language acquisition) but also in other disciplines of science (e.g., forensics, law, or even religious studies). Cutting and Fordyce (2021, pp. 2–3) explain that context plays a significant role in understanding how text becomes meaningful and unified. This context includes general (“world”) knowledge, social norms, the psychology of the speaker, the time, and the place where the words are spoken or written. The meaning of a message is often created through the interaction between the sender and the recipient, relying on shared assumptions and the ability to understand the intended or implied information. Finally, the speaker’s short and long-term goals are analysed to understand the function of the message, whether spoken or written.

The whole concept of meaning is, therefore, understood in pragmatics in two ways: the literal and the intended way. The literal meaning (or the “locution”) is usually easy to understand. It is what the speaker exactly said or wrote. However, to fully comprehend an utterance, the recipient should understand the intended meaning (or the “perlocution”). The idiom “needle in a haystack” can be comprehended literally as a thin, sharp object placed in a stack of dried cut grass or, according to the usual intention, as an object that is difficult to find. Some phrases are, however, more difficult to understand. For example, “The baby is crying” may be a simple observation, an expression of impatience, or an appeal for help. “It’s late” may imply tiredness and a decision to stop working or indicate annoyance. In order to understand the illocutionary force of an utterance (the speaker’s intended meaning), one has to draw on several contextual resources such as the time, the setting, the participants, what the previous conversation had been about, and so on (Kuczyński, 2022; Nguyen & Le, 2019).

By logical extension, pragmatics is also about knowing how to adjust one’s speech to other people. For instance, in a scenario where a person is lost in a different city and decides to ask passers-by for directions, only these utterances are acceptable.

1. Tell me where the post office is.
2. Can you tell me where the post office is?
3. I don’t know where I am. I wish somebody told me where the post office is.
4. Excuse me, could you tell me the way to the post office?

5. If you don't mind my asking, would you be so kind as to tell me where the post office is located in this city.

All the examples above are grammatically correct, yet most speakers would choose number 4 as the most suitable candidate. All the others do not fit the situation equally well. The first two seem too abrupt and too direct. The third one is so imprecise that it might confuse the listener, and the fifth one is overly and unnaturally polite. The norms of pragmatics regulate how to speak to whom and in what situation.

Research into pragmatics investigates several areas (see Fig. 1.1):

1. Research into speech acts investigates how people choose utterances to perform specific actions such as apologising, making requests, making complaints, or responding to compliments (e.g., Beebe & Cummings, 1995; Blum-Kulka & Olshtain, 1984; Eisenstein Ebsworth, et al., 1995). The speech acts we choose vary depending on factors such as age, sex, setting, cultural background, the social distance between interlocutors, social class, and identity.
2. Research into politeness concentrated on speakers' linguistic choices to display respect and consideration toward each other (e.g., Alemi & Haeri, 2017; Bella, 2011; Brown & Levinson, 1987; Ogiermann, 2009). Cultural norms heavily influence the rules of politeness.
3. Research work on implicature addresses the question of reading between the lines (e.g., Bouton, 1994; Taguchi, 2008, 2009). Speakers often imply one thing by saying something else.
4. Research into routines, that is, set phrases (or formulae) such as "let me think" or "here you are," investigates why speakers often use them to convey a particular meaning in a given situation (e.g., Aijmer, 1996; Burdelski, 2010; Kanagy, 1999; Ohta, 1999).
5. Research into power, distance, and imposition provides insight into how speakers decide (or not) to choose possible linguistic options to communicate with people who have a different power status to them, who are more or less familiar to them, or whom the speakers may not have the right to impose an obligation to carry out a speech act (e.g., Brown & Levinson, 1987; Kim & Taguchi, 2015).
6. Research into interactional competence addresses how speakers know how to initiate and terminate conversations, take turns, and manage topics (e.g., Abe & Roevers, 2019, 2020; Galaczi, 2014; Hanafi, 2015; Yoshitake-Strain, 1997; Young, 2011).

Overall, research into pragmatics provides insights into how context shapes the meaning of utterances, both literal and intended and how speakers adjust their speech according to social norms and situational factors to communicate effectively, making it an essential component of understanding human interaction.

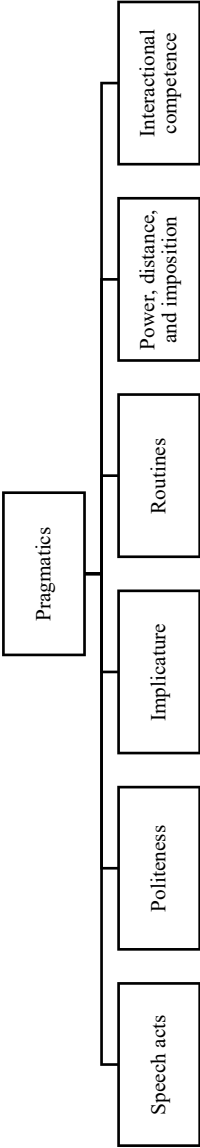


Fig. 1.1 Research areas of pragmatics (based on Ishihara & Cohen, 2022; Nguyen & Le, 2019; Ren, 2022; Roever, 2022)