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Principles and Practices of the *Standards* in College Foreign Language Education

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Chapter 6

Reconceptualizing the Goals for Foreign Language Learning: The Role of Pragmatics Instruction

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> *You are as many people as the number of languages you speak.*
>
> —Arabic saying

Introduction

In 1996, when the *Standards* were first introduced, they represented an unprecedented collaborative effort on the part of language educators from various language backgrounds. They were groundbreaking not only for the extensive cross-language collaboration that went into them, but also because for the first time a set of well-articulated goals were produced that validated the common-sense notions that language educators had about what was important to include in classroom teaching. Culture was moved to the forefront, not as a diversionary activity from the rigors of teaching linguistic form, but as an object of study in its own right. The *Standards* were an essential move toward the recognition that language learning is more than grammar learning, and they validated a focus on communication. In addition to the academic collaboration that took place, the *Standards* encouraged new thinking about the connections between theory and practice, with major foreign language textbook companies structuring their content to reflect the Five Cs, or goal areas, of foreign language learning. This had a filter-down effect: Given that many instructors plan their syllabi according to the textbook they use, the *Standards* were included in syllabi even by those who may not have understood their importance.

Many language educators hoped this new focus on a more holistic approach to language learning would move the discipline forward in a significant way. Five years later, the events of 9/11 demonstrated the depth of need for competent foreign language speakers in the United States and likewise revealed the dearth of truly competent multicultural individuals in American society. Though it is true that 5 years is a short time in which to hope for discipline-wide change, 11 years after the advent of the *Standards*, in 2007, the Modern Language Association (MLA) released a report on the state of foreign language teaching in higher education in which the lack of competent foreign language speakers was lamented—an indication that the profession still had not reached the goals set out in the *Standards*. The MLA report, *Foreign Languages and Higher Education: New Structures for a Changed World*, cites academic departmental structures and their internal fractures as potential culprits. Included in the report is a set of recommendations designed for application at the university level. However, in this chapter, I argue that neither set of goals—those of the *Standards* or the MLA report—is sufficient to address the needs of college-level instructors to develop truly proficient language professionals. Both documents lack a crucial element, namely learning goals that include transforming the self into another multilingual self. In the following pages I present an analysis of where and how both documents fall short. I also review the literature of an area of investigation—interlanguage pragmatics—that provides a point of departure for instruction that has the potential to lead to this important personal transformation in students.

The *Standards* are a framework for teaching and learning based around five goal areas: Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons, and Communities. Briefly, the *Standards* propose that students be able to speak and understand language, to understand the practices and products of other cultures, to draw connections across disciplines, to make comparisons between the native and second language, and to have opportunities to connect with members of other speech communities. The area of focus in this chapter will be the confluence of Communication and Culture.

In their approaches to culture, both the *Standards* and the MLA report identify what they feel are essential issues in culture learning. The *Standards* advocate learning the "patterns of social interactions" (p. 47) of other cultures, by which they mean "rites of passage, the use of forms of discourse, the social 'pecking order' and the use of space" (p. 50). At first glance, they come close to advocating for individual transformation by stating that students "must be able to participate appropriately in face-to-face interaction with members of other societies" and "must develop… an awareness of how language and culture interact in societies. Students must apply this knowledge as they express and interpret events and ideas in a second language and reflect upon observations from other cultures" (p. 39). Although they do advocate for the development of sociocultural knowledge, unfortunately the primary emphasis in the *Standards* is learning to identify, examine, discuss, and analyze the patterns of practice described above. In addition, even though they state "[s]ome would argue that equivalent knowledge of language and cultural systems can be acquired in other types of courses (e.g., linguistics, anthropology). However, when students study another language and participate in communicative interactions, the actual experiential dimension makes such an understanding more real" (p.57), their indicators of performance include only minimal engagement in interaction or experiential dimension of any kind.

The MLA report also falls short in this area. The report states that it is imperative for language students to be trained to "reflect on the world and themselves through the lens of another language and culture … and grasp themselves as Americans—that is, as members of a society that is foreign to others" (pp. 4–5). The authors call for students to achieve "translingual and transcultural competence" (p. 3). In addition, the report defines what it calls "transcultural understanding" (p. 4) as "the ability to comprehend and analyze the cultural narratives that appear in every kind of expressive form—from essays, fiction, poetry, drama, journalism, humor, advertising, political rhetoric, and legal documents to performance, visual forms, and music" (p. 4). Even more important, the authors lament the fissures that exist in foreign language departments, yet they present an almost exclusively literature-based approach to understanding culture by focusing primarily on understanding narrative texts.

Neither set of recommendations puts sufficient emphasis on teaching students to interact with other cultures; both advocate learning about them and learning to understand them. This objective is simply not sufficient to produce competent multilinguals. In fact, it raises the argument that the *Standards* purport to address—can knowledge of another language and culture be learned without knowing the language? What, then, can bridge the gap? The transformation that results in a multilingual self necessitates a model that includes linguistic and cultural knowledge as well as interaction with the embedded elements of culture, namely the pragmatic elements. According to Chen (1996), "pragmatics takes the viewpoint of language users, especially of the choices they make, the sociocultural constraints they encounter in using the language, and the effects their language has on the interlocutor" (p. 3). The important feature here is the shift from viewing the student as a student *of* culture to a participant *in* intercultural interactions. Pragmatics instruction can provide a way to meet and exceed the goals of both the *Standards* and the MLA report. Much work has been done in the area of pragmatics over the last 20 years, and though the insights into how culture is enacted in language have been incorporated into models of communicative competence at the theoretical level (Bachman, 1990; Canale & Swain, 1980), the teaching of such elements has not made its way into mainstream pedagogy.

Although many foreign language texts include samples of pragmatically appropriate speech,[1] explicit discussions of pragmatics have not yet made their way into the most commonly used foreign language textbooks. Much emphasis in the pragmatics literature points to the need for the inclusion of pragmatic factors in language curricula, and many studies show that pragmatic features are teachable even at the beginning levels. Pragmatics study provides a path to the deconstruction of the original self by presenting to learners the idea that they operate within a culturally bound pragmatic system and by showing how their own system differs from the system in the target language.[2] In addition, pragmatics study presents a concept familiar to students—the idea that speakers use politeness strategies to frame discourse—along with the unfamiliar idea that the way to be polite in speech differs across cultures. What constitutes politeness can be seen as the basic building block of interaction for all interpersonal discourse, both oral and written. For example, in some cultures it is polite to use less direct speech when requesting, such as in American English, where modals are used to soften requests: "Would you mind handing me the salt?" The opposite is true in Russian, where the bare imperative is the polite form in a request: "*Daite mne, pozhaluista, sol'i*" (*Hand me, please, the salt*). Though both sentence structures communicate the same information, the use of a complicated American structure in Russian comes across as weak and overdone, whereas the use of a bare imperative such as "hand me" comes across as rude in the United States. When politeness is assumed to function identically across cultures, severe breakdowns in communication can occur. These breakdowns are more serious than grammatical lapses, because they often suggest a personality problem instead of a linguistic one (Takahashi & Beebe, 1987).

When politeness preferences are found to be distinct across cultures (and they almost always are), the sense of politeness as an anchor of communication gives way and the self as it has been understood is challenged. Instruction in pragmatics that illuminates cross-cultural politeness conventions can provide students with the tools they need to adapt their language—and themselves—to the second language culture. Pragmatics instruction can provide students with varying sets of workable frames for intercultural interaction and help them make informed choices about the self that they show in interaction. The result is not an assimilated self, but rather an amplified self with multiple functional schemata for communication. It is in this way that truly meaningful entrance into and interaction with the target culture can take place. The *Standards* and the MLA report both come up short because they either underemphasize or ignore this important aspect of language learning.

Analysis of the *Standards* and the MLA report

The National *Standards* for Foreign Language Learning

What the *Standards* did was revolutionary in the field of foreign language instruction. The authors set out to develop goals for foreign language education for the kindergarten through 12th (K-12) grade learning sequence. In addition, an articulation plan for how the *Standards* integrate with university-level instruction was added and, although not in the language-generic *Standards*, grade 16 progress indicators are included in many of the language-specific *Standards*. Along the way, they flesh out why language learning is important, what assumptions go into the idea of what makes for a fluent speaker of a second language, as well as provide foreign language instructors and program administrators a set of reasonable and attainable goals for their students. Each set of goals includes a list of indicators that the goal has been met. These indicators are broken down at three points along the K-12 learning sequence: 4th grade, 8th grade, and 12th grade. In the following paragraphs I will address specific points in the *Standards*, discussing what they propose, what they do, and where they fall short. I will focus exclusively on the language-generic *Standards* in this chapter.

As the *Standards* document itself declares, “the development of standards has galvanized the field of foreign language education” (p. 15). They set out a very clear goal that “ALL students will develop and maintain proficiency in English and at least one other language, modern or classical. Children who come to school from non-English-speaking backgrounds should also have opportunities to develop further proficiencies in their first language” (p. 7, emphasis in the original). Their theoretical position on what constitutes language learning is clearly based on models of communicative competence, although they do not state this explicitly. Such a position takes into account more than linguistic form and includes cultural knowledge, interdisciplinary study, comparisons with their own and the second language as well as engagement with the second language speech community. The goal is to raise language expectations in the United States to be equivalent to those in other countries (p. 14). In elaborating this point, they propose that language learning begin at the kindergarten or 1st-grade level and continue through the 12th-grade level. Along the way, they suggest multiple entry points into the curriculum that allow students to continue with one language while beginning another. These points correspond with the 5th- and 9th-grade levels, with the expectation that the 4th- and 8th-grade indicators are met for the first foreign language before a student studies a second foreign language.

The *Standards* address pragmatic competence both in their general statements on communicative competence and under their goal headings for Communication and Culture. They state that "[a]cquiring communicative competence… involves the acquisition of increasingly complex concepts centering around the relationship between culture and communication" (p. 26), and later, "[t]he language system is also much more than words and rules; it includes the sociolinguistic elements of gestures and other forms of nonverbal communication, of status and discourse style, and 'learning what to say to whom and when.' These elements form the bridge between language and culture and must be present if students are ever to learn to interact appropriately in the target language" (p. 33), and finally,

> [i]n essence, a communicatively competent individual combines knowledge of the language system with knowledge of cultural conventions, norms of politeness, discourse conventions, and the like, in order to transmit and receive meaningful messages successfully. In order to develop such competence, students must learn how interpersonal interactions are conducted in the cultures in which the language is spoken, how individuals use language effectively to achieve different purposes, how discourse conventions work, how oral and written texts are structured, and how the language system operates. They must weave this knowledge *together* in the process of transmitting and receiving meaningful messages . . . they must learn how to [transmit meanings effectively] by using a different language system and by following what may be very different rules of interpersonal interaction." (p. 40, emphasis in the original)

It is evident that the *Standards* argue for pragmatic competence in theory; however, their inclusion of pragmatics does not ensure that students will develop this competence. The *Standards* are successful in establishing a foreign language learning agenda for the 21st century and in creating a set of goals against which instructors can model their programs. They also provide a list of measureable indicators for determining whether the requisite learning has taken place. Where do they then fall short?

In their framework the authors of the *Standards* envision an academic environment in which students leaving high schools are thoroughly prepared in a foreign language and are ready to engage in content study in that language. The problem lies in the fact that there is a mismatch between the goals and the indicators. First of all, the authors do not describe how they arrived at the indicators. Although the indicators for achievement are not presented as a prescriptive and exhaustive list, nonetheless they reflect the relative weight placed on the various features of the curriculum. Of the 144 indicators listed with the Five Cs, only 4 of those relate to interactional abilities in pragmatics, with only one of the four aimed at the 12th-grade level. The most common approach to cultural difference found in the indicators is a focus on analyzing, knowing, and comparing—all skills that can be developed apart from interactional ability in the language.

The Modern Language Association 2007 Report

Whereas the *Standards* were aimed at student the K-12 level, with some articulation through the K-16 sequence, the MLA report addresses the dearth of competent foreign language speakers coming out of our college and university systems. The report begins with an examination of the state of the field following the post 9/11 tragedy and posits that one of the reasons the United States has had difficulty suppressing terrorism is our general lack of understanding of other languages and cultures. The imperative in both the *Standards* and the MLA report is the same; however, the events of 9/11 change the rosy idealism of the *Standards* to a stark national imperative in the MLA report. The report states that the "MLA is prepared to lead the way in the reorganization of language and cultural education around these objectives" (p. 2). To that end, it proposes language as a link between individuals and as a way for us to see ourselves more objectively. The stated goal is that American programs should prepare students who possess "translingual and transcultural competence" (p. 3) and who are able to "operate between languages" (p. 4).

The authors of the report describe how this competence can be taught, citing the use of literature, film, and other media as well as by directly teaching differences in meaning, mentality, and worldview. However, they stop short at advocating for proficiency in the language, which they define as the ability to "converse with educated native speakers on a level that allows both linguistic and metalinguistic exchanges" (p. 4) and knowledge of cultural subsystems, such as the mass media and social/historical narratives, among others (p. 5). Unlike in the *Standards*, where they address the criticism that these features could be learned in disciplines like history and anthropology, the MLA report does not respond to this potential argument, nor do they address pragmatic knowledge/ability in any way. The authors advocate for the personalization of language and culture (such as the recommendation that students learn to view themselves as possessors of a culture) but they do not advocate for personal transformation via the language studied.

What, then, are the conclusions of the MLA report? The report places blame for the lack of competent speakers firmly on the structuring of academic departments, stating that the divisions among the faculty who teach the language at the beginning levels (typically graduate student teaching assistants or instructors) and the faculty who teach content courses (typically the tenure-track cadre) are to blame. The fissures that exist along faculty and curricular lines (language versus literature) need to be repaired and, the authors warn, literature specialists need to be willing to share their decision-making power. In their model, linguists need to be included as well, since their research "enrich[es]" (p. 6) the overall curriculum.

Although a call for interdepartmental harmony is certainly commendable, the MLA report misses the mark in several ways. First of all, in presenting their ideas for how to implement change, the authors focus almost exclusively on literary goals in language study (e.g., understand the mass media, literary and social works) and not on interaction in the language, apart from citing the need for "enough linguistic proficiency in the language to converse with educated native speakers" (p. 4). Their approach implies an emphasis on linguistic and cultural competence, but not communicative competence. Moreover, their notion of cultural competence is based on literary texts as well; they state that students should "understand how a particular background reality is reestablished on a daily basis through cultural subsystems" (p. 4) such as media and political systems. In the following sections I describe pragmatics study and some of its theoretical underpinnings, and argue that inclusion of pragmatics instruction can help us bridge the gap between producing linguistically capable students and truly multicultural ones.

Pragmatics

An oft-cited definition of pragmatics is that of Crystal (1985): "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 language in social interaction and the effects their use has on other participants in the act of communication" (p. 240). In other words, communication involves interaction between interlocutors, and we cannot divorce interlocutors from their cultural backgrounds; both must be attended to in interaction. Kasper (1997) fleshes this idea out further by stating that "communicative action includes not only speech acts—such as requesting, greeting, and so on—but also participation in conversation, engaging in different types of discourse, and sustaining interaction in complex speech events" (para. 1). Any discussion of pragmatics takes engagement in conversation with another person as its point of departure. Learning about language and culture is different from experiencing the way the two come together in interaction. Successful communication is achieved only when each participant feels that the other is participating appropriately in the conversation.[3] When referring to appropriateness in language in pragmatics, it is understood that certain ways of speaking are, conversely, inappropriate. Appropriateness in speech refers to utterances that are delivered politely and without offense. Much of pragmatics theory draws on work in linguistic politeness. In the following paragraphs I discuss the concept of politeness as it relates to cross-cultural encounters, focusing primarily on the idea of universal politeness as postulated by Brown and Levinson (1987) as well as their theory of face and the controversy surrounding it.

"Face" in Brown and Levinson's work is defined as an "individual's self-esteem" (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 2) and is further divided into positive face and negative face. Positive face is defined as "the expression of solidarity" whereas negative politeness face is viewed as "the expression of restraint" (p. 2). Individuals are thought to have both kinds of face, and the preference for one over the other has been linked to cultural values; this linkage has caused the majority of the controversy surrounding the concept of face. For example, Bergelson (2003) has noted that Russians prefer positive face and that their desire for solidarity leads to greater directness of speech. In an interaction with an American interlocutor for whom negative politeness—or freedom from imposition—is valued, this kind of directness can be off-putting. Brown and Levinson suggest that certain types of speech threaten face, whereas others do not. A person's positive face is threatened when he or she faces disapproval or when treated with indifference. Conversely, a person's negative face is threatened when burdened by impositions, such as being asked to do something, or accept something, against one's wishes (Brown & Levinson, 1987, pp. 65–66). Brown and Levinson's view is that "[p]oliteness operates only when face interests are at risk, and actors are therefore required to make strategic choices about how to handle imminent face-threat" (Kasper, 2005, p. 60).

But is face, as Brown and Levinson conceptualize it, universal? A significant number of studies have been done since the original conceptualization of politeness in which face has been viewed through various cultural lenses. Much of the criticism leveled at this theory has come from those who feel that the concern for face that it espouses is based on Western models of human interaction (Fukada & Asato, 2004) which may not be adequate for explaining interaction in non-Western societies. Western societies here are contrasted with non-Western societies in that the former are viewed as individualistic whereas the many of the latter are considered to be communal in nature (Agyekum, 2004). Specifically, communal non-Western societies are likely to be more hierarchical which results in a different view of imposition, among other things. In addition, the idea that only some speech acts are face-threatening acts (FTAs) according to Brown and Levinson has been challenged by Scollon and Scollon (2001), who claim that the push-and-pull nature of face (which involves the simultaneous maintenance of the face of the speaker and that of the listener) results in the assertion that "*there is no faceless communication*" (p. 48, emphasis in the original). On one hand, criticism has been particularly heavy in research on Japanese, with critics of Brown and Levinson stating that their theory of face does not account for aspects of Japanese honorific usage and hierarchical culture (Ide, 1989), or that it does not allow sufficient room for cultural variability (Matsumoto, 2003). On the other hand, other examinations of Brown and Levinson's theory applied to the Japanese cultural context have found support for their theory, claiming that its universality can, in fact, account for the various levels of politeness in Japanese (Fukada & Asato, 2004; Pizziconi, 2003). The concept of face is, then, a framework for the examination of politeness preferences in interaction. Misunderstandings can arise when opposing frameworks clash in interaction.

The work by Brown and Levinson coincided with an upsurge in the related field of pragmatics. With the advent of a systematic theory of face,[4] pragmatics studies and politeness studies began to converge, at least in part. Pragmatics can be viewed as what people do in interaction as well the consequences of their choices in interaction, whereas linguistic politeness can be seen as one of the motivating factors regarding what undergirds specific choices and is useful in explaining why certain interactional consequences arise. In pragmatics, studies typically investigate one of 4 related areas: speech acts (studies are descriptive/comparative or acquisitional), other pragmatic features (formal versus informal forms of address, etc.), metapragmatics, and the issue of whether pragmatics routines are teachable.

I will briefly touch on speech act and feature studies before turning my attention to the issues of metapragmatics and teachability, both of which are linked to the transformational power of pragmatics.

Speech Act Studies

Speech act studies[5] (cf. for a sample of languages and approaches: Bacon, 1992; Barron, 2003; Billmyer, 1990; Bordería García, 2006; Boxer, 1996; Cohen & Olshtain, 1993; García, 1989; Hernández-Flores, 1999; Hinkel, 1997; Ide, 1998; Koike, 1989; Márquez Reiter, 2000; Mills, 1994; Owen, 2001; Rose, 2000; Shardakova, 2005) are by far the most common type of study in pragmatics research. These studies involve the investigation of a particular speech act (e.g., greetings, apologies, advice, leave-takings) in one or more cultures and use natural or elicited data to make determinations about preferences within a speech community.[6] Data reveal patterns that can be compared cross-culturally. In acquisitional studies learners may be asked to provide their second language responses to a prompt to determine whether their response is pragmatically native, pragmatically a transfer from the first language (L1), or somewhere in between. Results of these studies reveal the clash of approaches across languages and elucidate areas of potential difficulty for students.

Formality in Language

Another pragmatic variable of interest (and one that can cause trouble for study abroad students in particular) is the area of formal versus informal address. Many languages differ in their address term systems. For example, in Vietnamese, there are over 20 different kinship terms (Chiung, 1990), which is typical of the complexity of Asian languages. In most European languages, there is a pair of pronouns corresponding to the English *you*. French is often used as an example of this phenomenon because the pronoun *tu* (T) is used to address a single familiar person or friend, whereas *vous* (V) is used to address a group or a single person of greater age or higher status (Heilenman, Kaplan, & Tournier, 2006). In many western European countries, such as Spain, this distinction is losing prominence, but in Eastern European cultures, such as Russia, the feature still tends to hold great sociocultural importance.

Speakers who come from a language background that makes a T/V distinction have what Braun (1988) calls “address competence,” (p. 31), which she defines as including “a repertory of forms of address for active use and a set of application rules, [and] also some knowledge of address variation within the community” (p. 31). Speakers, in addition to differing in their individual use, may also avoid the use of a direct pronoun, preferring instead to use passive or impersonal expressions, nominal reference, and the like (p. 55).

T/V use is always constrained by the politeness norms of the culture group in question. In her ethnographic monograph, Fitch (1999) examines the sociocultural importance of personal address as a function of the “communal understandings of the aspects of personhood" important in a given society. She states that the pronouns are used to refine relationships within a social structure by identifying where a relationship falls along the following continuums: "close/distant, personal/professional, peers/rank-differentiated" (pp. 34–35). Furthermore, violations of expected usage can have important social repercussions. In her description of the address forms used in Colombia, Fitch cites three variables that affect address pronoun choice: gender, regional variation, and social class. Violations of address form usage allow conclusions to be drawn about the speaker, including a perceived deficiency of manhood, a "too-friendly" behavior, trying to identify with a social class of which they are not a member, or trying to curry favor (pp. 47–48).

Norris (2001) studied the sociocultural competence of learners of German by examining their ability to appropriately use the T/V pronouns *du* and *Sie* on the German Speaking Test. The German Speaking Test is a SOPI[7]-type test in which the "influence of contextual variables may be controlled" (p. 251). A microanalysis was conducted on 44 German Speaking Test tapes that involved a coding and quantification of address terms, taking into account contextual variables present in the task. He found that learners used the formal pronoun, *Sie* with more accuracy than its T counterpart, a finding he states may be attributed to its use as a "default" (p. 279) pronoun. In terms of the proficiency of the learners tested, there was a strict divide between learners below and above intermediate high on the ACTFL scale; the number of usages of an address pronoun per task more than doubled at that level. Corresponding data from beginners and advanced learners led to the conclusion that the lower the proficiency rating, the lower the level of sociopragmatic accuracy (p. 268). Finally, Norris notes that in other respects proficiency examinees did not necessarily show a corresponding knowledge of or control over address term behavior (p. 282). The data from this study showed how complex a sociopragmatic phenomenon the T/V feature is. His study points to a strong effect of proficiency on learner outcome on the task; however, Dykstra (2006) found no effect of proficiency on understanding of T/V.

Whereas the Norris study was a cross-sectional study of address term acquisition, Belz and Kinginger (2002) examined the development over time of proficiency with T/V by studying the acquisition of T/V in both French and German by learners participating in e-mail and online chat correspondence with native speakers of the respective languages over a time span of 60 days. Microgenetic analysis of the data, which was defined by the authors as "the observation of skill acquisition during a learning event" (Belz & Kinginger, 2003, p. 594), showed that the first learner showed increased consistency over the time of the experiment in her use of the French pronouns, as did the second learner (who studied German). The first learner received explicit feedback from her native speaker interlocutor, but showed no immediate uptake; the second learner experienced a "critical incident" (p. 205) regarding his pronoun use, which led to what the authors termed "social consequences" (p. 205). Overall the authors found that T/V is so inherently complex that learners do not acquire it per se, but rather that their awareness and sensitivity to the feature can be heightened. The importance of this feature of language cannot be understated because an error in usage can cause the speaker to be perceived as socially unacceptable—a consequence that can lead to breakdowns in the relationship that can be difficult, if not impossible, to repair.

Metapragmatics

Though the use of language requires knowledge and the ability to deploy a vast arsenal of linguistic forms, the term *appropriate use* includes an understanding of the impact of one's words and utterances beyond their literal comprehension within a given cultural context. Metapragmatics is the understanding a learner has about pragmatics; this area of study deals with the explicit knowledge a learner has of the pragmatic weight of language and the learner's ability to articulate what is acceptable and unacceptable in the target culture. Chen (1996) describes metapragmatics (from the standpoint of L2 metapragmatics) as "one level *above* pragmatics, [it] examines the implicit operational rules and the sociocultural patterns embedded in language use" (p. 5, emphasis in the original). Until learners understand on a metacognitive level the sociocultural function of their speech in interaction, they will not be able to enter fully into the target culture.

According to Mey (1993), metapragmatics represents another level of knowledge that is separate from pragmatics; pragmatics may represent the what, whereas metapragmatics can provide us with the motivation for why pragmatic principles operate the way that they do (p. 270). Metapragmatics is similar to metacognition, which has been defined as referring "to any knowledge or cognitive process that monitors or controls cognition" (Fernández-Duque, Baird, & Posner, 2000, p. 288). I would argue that this definition can be adapted to metapragmatics to describe any knowledge or cognitive process that monitors or controls pragmatic behavior or perception. In this way, metapragmatic knowledge serves to clarify the perception of pragmatic inference in the input as well as to guide learners in their use of pragmatic features of language. Wenden (1998) argues that metacognitive knowledge is statable or available to the learner in an explicit form that he or she can explain or describe.

Metapragmatics and metacognition part ways when we take into account the language learner as a language user—an important consideration in second language acquisition (Firth & Wagner, 1997). Although the field of metacognition is primarily concerned with cognitive processes and their application to tasks, metapragmatics is not a theoretical construct disconnected from the language user. In fact, metapragmatics takes into account both language users and the societal constraints facing them. Mey (1993) points out that "[t]he fact of the matter is that the whole of pragmatics … is tightly bound up with what people do in their daily lives, and what they use language for. Nothing in our existence can be explained in isolation; neither can our language" (p. 271). In studying metapragmatics, teachers must take both levels of constraint into account—the metapragmatic knowledge possessed by the language learner and the societal preferences for how specific pragmatic routines are enacted; the tension between the two makes up part of the difficulty experienced in interacting in another language. In this way, learners can begin to achieve understanding of themselves as cultural actors working within culture-specific sets of politeness parameters.

How learners acquire this pragmatic competence is an area of debate. Textbooks typically include some guidelines for speech in interaction, but textbook presentations alone do not ensure acquisition. The literature suggests that teaching pragmatics routines may aid in understanding; however, few studies explore the degree to which students acquire appropriate metapragmatic knowledge in the classroom. To date, research on pragmatic perception has been scant; only a handful of studies that focus on listening for pragmatic information are available. In the following paragraphs I review four studies and discuss the important points of each.

First, in Cook's (2001) study, "Why can't learners of JFL (Japanese as a Foreign Language) distinguish polite from impolite speech?" JFL learners listened to three taped interviews in which three nonnative speakers of Japanese role-played a job interview. For the role plays, each applicant provided a Japanese speech sample for the prospective employer. Each applicant's sample was carefully constructed by the researchers to provide a continuum of appropriateness. The least desirable applicant spoke Japanese well, but displayed American interview strategies—strategies that are wholly inappropriate in the Japanese interview context (e.g., confidently stating one's abilities and how they can contribute to successful performance at the job in question). The students were asked to pick the best applicant according to the appropriateness of their speech. The second language learners consistently favored the worst applicant (the pragmatically American applicant), failing to recognize the serious inappropriateness of her speech style.

Second, Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei (1998) examined the grammatical and pragmatic awareness of English as a second language (ESL) and English as a foreign language (EFL) learners. One hundred seventy-three ESL learners and 370 EFL learners completed a language awareness listening task in which 20 video conversation scenes were shown. The final utterance of each conversation contained either (a) a pragmatic error, (b) a grammatical error, or (c) no error. Learners were asked to identify if an error occurred and to rate its severity along a scale of "not bad at all" to "very bad" (p. 260). Results indicated that the ESL learners identified more pragmatic errors than the EFL learners and rated them more severely. Conversely, the EFL learners recognized more grammatical errors and rated them more severely. Their results indicate a strong effect of the learning environment on pragmatic awareness.

In 2001 Niezgoda and Röver replicated Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei's study. They tested 48 ESL learners and 124 EFL learners with the same instrument, with somewhat different results. As in Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei's (1998) study, the ESL learners demonstrated a higher level of pragmatic awareness than the EFL group; however, the EFL learners in Niezgoda and Röver's study performed almost as well as the ESL learners in Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei's study, also outperforming their EFL population. Niezgoda and Röver attribute this finding to a combination of learner characteristics and learning environment; the EFL learners in their study were a select group from a highly specialized English language school. The authors suggest that a combination of capability and the desire to enter a career for which English would be a job requirement may have influenced the results of these learners. Also of interest is the high pragmatic awareness displayed by Niezgoda and Röver's low-proficiency EFL learners; possible explanations for this include that low-proficiency learners were free to choose English in the Czech Republic (high proficiency learners were required to take Russian) and thus had greater exposure to the language than might be expected of a low-proficiency learner. Also, these findings suggest that pragmatic awareness can be developed in an EFL setting.

Finally, Dykstra (2006) investigated pragmatic awareness in second language listening. In this study, learners of Russian completed two tasks to determine whether they were aware of (a) the sociocultural constraints inherent in the T/V contrast as well as (b) whether they could identify the use of pronouns in live speech as a key marker of a change in interpersonal dynamic between the speakers. To test the first question, a metapragmatic judgment task was administered to 32 learners of Russian at a domestic immersion program. On the task, learners were presented with a series of situations contextualized for their experience at that school and then were posed a question to answer in response to the situation. For each question four answer choices were presented: one that used the appropriate pronoun for the context, one that used the other pronoun, and the response choices "both are fine" and "I don't know." Results indicated that learner understanding of which pronoun was more appropriate was evident; however, there was no difference in performance across student levels, which was surprising because the range of experience with Russian was 4 weeks of study to 13 years. On the second task, which included learners from the domestic immersion program as well as a large Midwestern university, learners were shown a series of video clips from classic Soviet and Russian films and were asked to respond to questions such as, "When the dynamic between the speakers changed, what changed about their language as well?" Results on this task indicated that, in an active listening event, learners were not able to grasp the additional interpersonal information contained in the pronouns. Of note is that, again, there was no statistically significant difference across proficiency levels, nor did those students who spent time abroad in Russia score higher than others to a statistically significant degree. The only factor that provided a statistically significant result was the gender of the participant, with female learners outperforming male learners at both institutions. This unusual finding argues for the inclusion of the variable of gender in analyses of pragmatic results on a consistent basis.

The Teachability of Pragmatics

The review of the literature presented in this chapter indicates that learners can benefit from instruction in pragmatics routines. According to Bardovi-Harlig (1999), studies done in this area "are going to form the most significant body of acquisitional interlanguage pragmatics studies" (p. 702). Several empirical studies focusing on the teachability of pragmatics have found that instruction in pragmatics yields positive results; that is, students benefit from explicit classroom instruction in pragmatics. Kasper (1998) states that "it seems doubtful whether children or adults can acquire pragmatic competence without some direct teaching and assistance in noticing relevant information in the input" (p. 201), citing encouraging results in studies by Bouton (1994), House (1996), and Wildner-Bassett (1984) which bear out this claim. Furthermore, Tateyama et al. (1997) found that even beginning learners benefited from instruction in pragmatic routines.

Bardovi-Harlig (2001) reviewed the literature on the performance of speech acts (e.g., requests, refusals, apologies) to determine whether instruction of pragmatics is warranted. She concludes that (a) no instruction in pragmatics leads to a very different second language (in a pragmatic sense) from that of native speakers, and (b) that the job of instructors should be to help nonnative speakers find a happy medium between second language norms and their own first language comfort zone. Other studies (Billmyer, 1990; Kasper & Rose, 2002; Olshtain & Cohen, 1990) report a similar finding, namely that instruction in pragmatics aids in the development of pragmatic competence. Martínez-Flor (2006) concluded that instruction does make a difference, finding that both implicit and explicit instruction of pragmatic routines aided in the development of learner confidence in judging the appropriateness of native speaker utterances. Pearson (2006) investigated what learners think about being instructed in pragmatics and reported that students found instruction relevant and helpful in understanding Spanish speech act routines. Finally, Félix-Brasdefer (2006) investigated the use of a conversation-analytic framework as a vehicle for the instruction of Spanish pragmatic routines. He sets out a series of detailed recommendations for instruction, which he has also posted on a Web site[8] for interested instructors.

It is clear that research in pragmatics is complex; in addition to learner variables such as the learners' first language and individual desire to emulate (or not to emulate) second language pragmatics routines, other factors such as the style of instruction that learners are accustomed to bear on the effectiveness of instruction. However, it is also clear that knowledge of pragmatics routines and the ability to navigate both first and second language pragmatics are assets in successful communication in a second language. Moreover, the literature points consistently to success with teaching these routines in the classroom.

Discussion

In this chapter I have examined where the *Standards* and the MLA report fall short and have proposed pragmatics instruction as a potential solution to make up for this shortfall. I have defined pragmatics and provided an overview of the literature in the field. In the following section I will discuss how instruction in pragmatics can provide the catalyst for the personal transformation that I argue is lacking in the field.

As I stated previously, monolingual students are often unaware that they are members of a culture group, and that the politeness and pragmatic conventions of their group permeate their discourse in all interactions. The realization that they are cultural actors anchored in a specific politeness paradigm is a crucial first step in the process of personal transformation, because without this step it will be difficult for them to understand that other functional paradigms exist. Both the *Standards* and the MLA report highlight the need for this first step, but both recommend learning about the culture to overcome it; research on interlanguage pragmatics recommends participation in the culture to overcome it. The first step, therefore, is the development of awareness. Pragmatics researchers have been investigating various ways to raise awareness and to design appropriate classroom strategies to develop metapragmatic awareness, or the awareness that pragmatics systems exist and how they function differentially across the L1 and target speech cultures. Though the *Standards* do address this feature (and have six indicators that deal with the development of pragmatic awareness), the MLA report does not address metapragmatic awareness at all.

Raising metapragmatic awareness involves two phases: making students aware they have a system in the first place and often use pragmatic conventions without realizing it, and then presenting them with appropriate frames of interaction within the target culture. In the past, research on pragmatics has taken as its goal the attainment of native speaker ability with pragmatics. Recently, however, there has been a shift in the field that recognizes that (a) not all native speakers behave in the same way, but that certain general patterns within each speech culture group do exist, and (b) proficient bilinguals show somewhat different patterns than monolingual natives, resulting in the idea that a more appropriate standard to set for our students is that of the proficient bilingual. Using this standard, learners are more likely to understand and navigate both native and target-language pragmatic systems in interaction, while also retaining personal choice in interaction—a point of crucial importance to learners, since the development of an alternative way to communicate implies a shift in one's own identity.

The concept of identity can be described in a variety of ways. It can be defined in terms of gender, race, level of education, region of residence, cultural heritage, and so forth. We are just beginning to understand the effect that bilingualism and multilingualism have on the perceived self-image of the learner; a more complex self can emerge and may take the learner by surprise. The stark contrast between the former and new self is often most strongly felt upon return home from a study abroad experience when culture shock about being in one's own culture sets in.[9]

It is important to note that transformation does imply that a shift in identity results in a bi/multilingual person, distinctly different from a monolingual person. Pragmatic learning promotes flexibility for shifting language code as well as cultural code. Moreover, pragmatics instruction does not produce mindless cultural copiers but rather provides students with various workable frames from which they can choose the degree to which they assimilate into the target culture cultural system. In addition, instruction in pragmatics can reduce stereotyping, such as "Russians are rude" and "Japanese are deferential," by exposing learners to the fact that there are different systems within which speakers work but that are polite and appropriate within that culture. In this way the learner can find that all people are cultural actors—influenced, but not controlled by cultural values. Pragmatics instruction can provide students with the opportunity to work in another frame, exposing their cultural discomfort in a safe space where stakes are low so that they can adjust to the new system before, for example, going abroad, to ensure that they experience a smoother, more successful transition into the target culture.

The *Standards* in their current form address pragmatics but do not place enough emphasis on it. Likewise, the MLA report sets admirable goals but identifies only part of the problem: the fissures in academic departments. Ironically, after calling for greater intradepartmental unity, the report spells out a list of recommendations that come from an almost entirely literary perspective.

If pragmatics instruction has the potential to provide students with a vehicle for personal transformation that results in a multilingual self, and if instruction in pragmatics routines has been found to give positive results in this area, then it stands to reason that language program directors must begin to incorporate it into our curricula. The questions that remain are (a) at what level should we begin and (b) how should we do it. Though some researchers (Canale & Swain, 1980) advocate for saving pragmatics instruction for the more advanced levels, much research points to positive results in pragmatics with beginning college learners (Bordería García, 2006; Dykstra, 2006; Huth & Taleghani-Nikazin, 2006; Konovalova, 2007; Pearson, 2006). Studies on the teachability of pragmatics routines suggest that they can be taught explicitly, and more and more resources are being made available to practitioners to help bridge the gap. The idea proposed in this chapter builds on the positive work in the *Standards* and the MLA report by including pragmatics instruction thereby providing students with opportunities to develop the cultural flexibility necessary to be truly multilingual individuals.

Notes

1. See, among others, Spinelli, García, and Flood's (2009) Spanish text *Interacciones*, Gallego and Godev's (2004) Spanish text *Más allá de las palabras*, and Gor Davidson, Gor, and Lekic's (1996) Russian text *Live from Moscow: Stage One*.
2. This is not to suggest that there is a single pragmatic system operating in each foreign language.
3. It is not within the scope of this chapter to include a discussion on other aspects of communicative intent, for example, Grice's Maxims of Communication (1975) or Lakoff's rules of pragmatic competence (1973).
4. The conceptualization of politeness around the imagery of "face" is not Brown and Levinson's invention; many languages have expressions related to politeness phenomena that include reference to a metaphorical "face," such as the English expressions "to save face," "to lose face," and so on.
5. Of interest is a bibliography of studies on speech acts sponsored by the Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition at the University of Minnesota, http://www.carla.umn.edu/speechacts/bibliography/index.html.
6. I am using "speech community" loosely here, not in the specific way that it is used by authors working within the communities of practice framework. Here I simply mean a dialect group of a particular language.
7. Simulated Oral Proficiency Interview, a test developed by the Center for Applied Linguistics. For more information, see http://www.councilnet.org/papers/Winke.doc.

8. http://www.indiana.edu/~discprag
9. It is not within the scope of this chapter to investigate in detail the implications of bilingualism on identity, but see Mantero (2007) and Niño-Murcia and Rothman (2008) for excellent introductions to this topic.

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