

The Importance of Pragmatic Competence in the EFL Curriculum: Application and Implications*

Mohamed Amine Choraih

Ministry of Education, Morocco/ Cadi Ayyad University, Marrakech, Morocco

Ayoub Loutfi

Faculty of Letters, Mohammed V University-Rabat, Morocco

Abdullah Mansoor

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, USA

Abstract

The field of language teaching and curriculum development has been characterized by its constant development, with a concomitant impact on the quality of education and training. The drive is mostly due to the rapidly changing world characterized by globalization and the result of openings on other fields of research. One area that has informed this field is the teaching of L2 pragmatic competence, with the commonly expressed generalization being that there is a gap between what research in pragmatics has found and how language is generally taught today (Ishihara & Cohen, 2010). On this view, this paper purports to investigate the role of pragmatic competence in the teaching of English. We provide evidence that language proficiency should not only be equated with grammatical well-formedness, but also with how to use it appropriately and efficiently in the target language. This being the case, however, we will show that the implementation of this view is far from being easy, especially in a trend that has for long been characterized by a focus on the grammatical competence, both in terms of training and curriculum design. This is paired with a similar difficulty in terms of how to translate the pragmatically-based approach into L2 classroom practices and how to identify modes of assessment. Addressing these issues, we believe, will shed light on some of the challenges and implications on the teaching of English along with the applicability of the suggested approach to the current ELT reform in the Arab world in general and in Morocco in particular.

Keywords: Curriculum Development, Foreign Language Teaching, Intercultural Competence, Interlanguage Pragmatics, Pragmatic Competence.

1. Introduction

The dialectical relationship between language and culture has for long been a topic of interest since antiquity (see Kramsch (1998) and Sharifian (2015) for a collection of papers in this regard). With the burgeoning of the science of foreign language teaching in more recent years, this issue has been of paramount importance in Second Language Acquisition (SLA). With intercultural communicationⁱ being at the forefront of learning a second language (Byram *et al.* 2002), there has been a growing recognition of the fact that grammatical knowledge alone is not sufficient. This is largely motivated by the theoretically and empirically informed case studies that demonstrate the effects of culture and native language on the development of learners' L2 suggesting that for non-native speakers/ L2 learners to achieve a fully-fledged competence in the target language, a consideration of the sociocultural and pragmatic aspects of the target language is a requirement (Kasper and Blum-Kulka, 1993; Kasper, 1992; Ishihara and Cohen, 2010, amongst others).

In fact, it has become widely accepted that language is more than a cognitive individualistic process (Firth and Wagner, 1997). Instead, it is seen as a social construct as well, learned and acquired through social interaction. Findings in the area of Interlanguage Pragmatics (ILP) have shown that grammatical well-formedness alone does not suffice to warrant successful communication. In this regard, Hymes (1971:278) argues that "there are rules of use without which the rules of grammar would be useless". This entails that language also includes the knowledge of the sociocultural rules of appropriate language use. Translating these findings into Teaching English as Foreign Language (TEFL) suggests the fact that the incorporation of the socio-cultural rules of the target language has become a pressing need (see the discussion in Lange and Paige, 2003). However, the actual manifestation of this is far from being easy, especially in a teaching paradigm in which language proficiency has for long been equated with the ability to produce and understand well-formed sentences in the target language.

This issue has resulted in a schism within the SLA paradigm. As demonstrated Arabski and Wojtaszek (2011), a deep disciplinary divide between research in the SLA and Foreign Language Learning (FLL) has developed within the Chomskyan revolution in the 1960s. Basically, the field has been dominated by two practitioners. The first group of scholars focuses on the internal aspects that underline speakers' competence. This branch investigates the psycholinguistic aspects of the process of L2 acquisition, in which the study of linguistics had little to do with language teaching, the focus being primarily on the formal linguistic properties of the learner's interlanguage. This line of research had become less tenable with the increasing attention to the role of sociocultural and sociolinguistic factors that affect and shape the process of L2 development. The latter assumptions constitute the gist of the second approach to SLA. Within this perspective, this paper is a contribution to the ongoing debate of whether or not pragmatic competence should be incorporated into the L2 classroom and syllabus design. In pursuance of this aim, this paper has a two-fold goal. First, it attempts to emphasize the importance of incorporating the teaching of pragmatic competence in the L2 classroom. The main motivation, we argue, emanates from the cross-cultural variation that different languages deploy to convey the same speech actⁱⁱ. More frequently than not, this results in communication breakdown. We support our claim by taking the speech act of requests as a way of illustrating the speech act research paradigm grounded with the field of Interlanguage Pragmatics (ILP). The two languages used to illustrate this fact are English and Moroccan Arabic (MA), showing that

the variation exhibited by the two languages brings about pragmatic transfer. The second goal is to raise some issues and strategies related to the teaching of L2 pragmatics, emphasizing on the role of the teacher in shaping and improving such a competence.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows. The section that follows introduces the field of Interlanguage Pragmatics within SLA. In this section, we compare how native speakers of English and Moroccan EFL learners perform the speech act of requests. In particular, we argue that the two languages use different requestive strategies. This difference, we note, may result in pragmatic failure, a state of affairs which requires pedagogical intervention. Section three proposes some of the strategies that can be used in L2 classroom to enhance and raise students' awareness of pragmatic behavior. This section also raises some of the issues related to how to assess L2 pragmatic competence. Section four looks at the role of the teacher and the knowledge s/he should be equipped with in order to meet this end. Section five shows that the assumptions we suggest here are in harmony with EFL reforms in higher Education. Finally, section six concludes with providing some suggestions for some future research avenues in the area of Interlanguage Pragmatics and Pragmatic Development.

2. Pragmatic Competence and SLA

Crystal (2008: 379) defines pragmatics as “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 of language has on other participants in the act of communication”. Succinctly stated in this definition is the fact that the way we use language is constrained by a number of sociocultural constraints. These constraints affect not only our linguistic choices (the speaker's point of view), but also the way we comprehend language (the hearer's point of view). On this view, ILP is the study of how speakers develop, produce, and comprehend linguistic action in context (Kasper & Blum-Kulka, 1993).

A widely held belief in the area of pragmatics is that pragmatic ability means going beyond the literal meaning of what is said or written in order to get the intended meaning. Central to the study of pragmatics, Leech (1983) subdivided pragmatics into Pragmalinguistics and Sociopragmatics. The latter, on the one hand, means the knowledge of how social rules affect language use. The factors considered here are factors such as appropriateness, politeness, social conventions and taboos. Pragmalinguistics, on the other hand, is “the intersection of pragmatics and linguistic forms” (Brown, 2007: 233). This type of pragmatic knowledge primarily concerned with how to obey the sociopragmatic constraints in our choice of linguistic tools.

On such a view, being pragmatically competent prerequisites the two facets of pragmatics: to understand and produce sociopragmatic meanings with Pragmalinguistic conventions. Lacking one of these results in pragmatic failure (Roever, 2009). As has been pointed out earlier, the field responsible for how L2 speakers develop, comprehend, and produce pragmatic patterns is called ILP, with the generalization being that native speakers and L2 learners differ as to how they use their pragmatic knowledge (Ellis, 1994; Kasper and Rose, 1999, amongst others). This apparent mismatch results in Pragmatic Transfer (Bou-Franch, 1998), as a result of L2 learners falling back on their L1 pragmaticsⁱⁱⁱ to comprehend and produce the pragmatics of L2.

One area in which cross-linguistic variation has been observed is the realization of speech acts. One of the speech acts that have received much attention in ILP is requests (Blum-Kulka,

19987, 1991; Blum-Kulka *et al.* 1989; Abdou, 1999; Achiba, 2003; Latif, 2002; Loutfi, 2016a). Cross-linguistically, three types of requestive strategies have been discussed. In particular, a request can be direct (1-a, 2-a), indirect (1-b, 2-b), or in the form of a hint (1-c, 2-c), illustrated in the examples below:

(1) English

- a. Open the door.
- b. Can you open the door?
- c. It is hot in here.

(2) Moroccan Arabic^{iv}

- a. həl l-bab ʕafak.
- b. (wəf) mumkin t- həl l-bab?
- c. kayn S-Sahd bəzzaf hna.

‘Open the door please’

‘Can you open the door?’

‘It’s hot in here’

Similar though the requestive strategies may seem, the two languages use different requestive strategies in different social contexts. As discussed in Latif (2001) and Loutfi (2016), EFL Moroccan learners use more direct strategies and modification categories than native speakers, in that the bulk of EFL Moroccan students’ requests^v is characterized by the use of the verb ‘*byit*’ ‘I want’ along with the use of downgraders, like ‘*ʕafak*’ ‘please’ in order to alleviate the impositive force of a request. Crucially, in the absence of the appropriate context and the relevant modifiers such as ‘*ʕafak*’, direct requests can be interpreted as an order.

As opposed to native speakers of English^{vi}, EFL Moroccan learners’ requests have been shown to be characterized by the so-called *Speech Act Set* (Olshtain and Cohen, 1983). These are instances where distinct speech acts are combined, one expressing the core meaning and the other functioning as a modifier. As demonstrated in the example in (3-a) below, this utterance consists of two distinct speech acts that of requesting and criticizing.

(3)

- a. [wəf mumkin təysl l-mmaʕən d-l-barəħ] rah [dima ka-t-xəlli-hum m-musxin]
Requesting *Criticizing*
 ‘Can you wash the dishes of yesterday? You always leave them dirty.’
- b. [həyyəd T-Tumubiltək mən hna] wəlla [nqəyyəd lik b-bruSi]
Ordering *Threatning*
 ‘Move your car or I will give you a ticket’
- c. [ʔustad, wəf mumkin t-ʔaʕzəl lina l-mtiħan] rah [ʕənd-na had simana ʕamra mtiħanat]
Requesting *Complaining*
 ‘Professor, can you postpone the exam. We have a lot of exams this week.’

These differences between EFL Moroccan learners and native speakers of English were argued to be the result of L1 pragmatic transfer^{vii}. One problem that such differences arise is the so-called pragmatic failure, which in turn may result in communication breakdown. Part of the reason is that these errors may not be tolerated by native speakers, as they may lack ‘sociolinguistic relativity’ (Wolfson, 1983: 62, cited in Lin, 2008: 43). Likewise, learners may not be aware of the negative perceptions that native speakers may have of them as a result of

pragmatic errors (Gass and Selinker, 1994: 289). Undeniably, this issue may not only thwart the learning process, but also negatively affects interpersonal relations. Therefore, what is needed here is raising students' pragmatic awareness through pedagogical intervention and instruction, a point further discussed in the section that follows.

3. Teaching and Assessing Pragmatic Competence

Compared to the teaching of grammatical and lexical knowledge, the area of pragmatics still lags far behind. For one thing, the efficiency and proficiency of language use can only be achieved when the interlocutors are speaking in a socio-culturally-informed context/setting, where considerations of a number of social factors are at play. This includes the situation *per se*, alongside the speaker-hearer's relationship to the interlocutor. The classroom for the most part does not allow such requirements. To establish these variables in the classroom as well as the modes of assessment is far from being easy. To the extent that these requirements are established in the classroom, the obvious question is whether or not pragmatic competence can or needs to be taught. For another, shall we consider pragmatic ability on a par with grammatical knowledge requiring pedagogic intervention or is it simply subordinate to the knowledge of grammar? By the latter, we mean that the function of pragmatic competence is ornamental. As has been shown earlier, there are cases where grammatical knowledge proves useless, in that it can result in awkwardness, embarrassment, rudeness, failure of the speaker's message to get through, all of which result in communication breakdown. This is paired with the fact that however advanced, pragmatic competence is still lacking in L2 learners whose grammatical knowledge is deemed proficient (see Latif, 2001; Loutfi, 2016a; Kasper, 1997 for a discussion).

Another issue is whether the teaching of pragmatics should be explicit or implicit. Using explicit instruction means the use of meta-pragmatic explanation, that is the explicit teaching of rules of use, drawing the students' attention by giving them examples of the target feature (Roever, 2009: 566). A number of studies have investigated the teachability of pragmatics. For instance, Rose and Ng (2001) have argued in favor of explicit instructions. Their explicit instruction group performed native-like compliment responses. In a similar vein, Koike and Pearson (2005) found that the group that received explicit instructions outperformed the implicit instruction group in the production of the speech act of suggestions in Spanish. For the speech act of requests, Takahashi (2001) taught bi-clausal requests to two groups. Similarly, the group that received explicit instruction produced more native-like requestive strategies than the implicitly taught group.

Another area of research in the teaching of pragmatics has been primarily concerned with developing teaching materials. For the most part, materials to teach pragmatics are and should be developed based on findings from pragmatics and ILP. These materials would represent an accurate reflection of naturally-occurring discourse. For instance, Huth and Taleghani-Nikazm (2006) used as classroom activities examples of opening sequences of phone conversation from American and German. Paired with meta-pragmatic explanation, their activities helped raised students' awareness of the cross-cultural differences. In much the same way, Crandall and Basturkmen (2004, cited in Roever, 2009) used role-play strategies for teaching requests in a status-unequal setting (international students to professors). Additionally, they adopted an approach where students produce and at the same compare their speech acts with authentic native speakers' data. Meier (1997), on the other hand, relied on the students' critical incidents,

incidents in which communication fails, to teaching pragmatics. Roever (2009) proposes a task-based syllabus, wherein students target tasks that are considered appropriate in real-world setting. This syllabus, Roever argues, would ensure that pragmatic competence goes hand in hand with learners' general L2 competence.

Assessing pragmatic competence may be also viewed as the most challenging area in teaching pragmatics. The basic reason for this state of affairs resides in whether we should assess pragmatic competence categorically, on a par with grammaticality in which a given structure is either well-formed or ill-formed, or in a gradient way, wherein the acceptability of a sentence ranges from the most appropriate to the least appropriate. Since pragmatics bifurcates into two main components, namely Sociopragmatics and Pragmalinguistics, another question is whether the two should be taught simultaneously or they require distinct pedagogical instructions. Equally importantly is the task of developing their corresponding modes of assessment^{viii}.

Another issue is the reference point against which a given answer will be evaluated. In other words, as EFL language instructors, the problem is whether we are going to evaluate students' production and comprehension with reference to American English or British English. One challenge is that English has become the main European lingua franca. It is used by both native and non-native speakers to communicate in a variety of social and cultural settings. The intercultural setting encompasses not only native speakers of English, but also nationwide speakers. The dilemma herein lies in the exact culture that we should teach in the English language classroom. This means a dissociation of the language from its culture (see Nizegorodcew (2011) and references cited therein).

This being the case, however, various methods of assessing pragmatics have been proposed. One such a method is the Discourse Completion Test (DCT). This method has been frequently used as a data-gathering device in cross-cultural and interlanguage pragmatics. It provides the learners with a set of situations with differing contextual and social variables. Examples of these constraints are as follows:

(4)

- d. The relative social status of the speaker and hearer.
- e. The level of social distance and psychological distance.
- f. The intensity or severity of the act.

To illustrate with a pertinent example, consider the following situation:

You are invited to attend a wedding party. So you want Ayoub, a friend of yours, to lend you his new suit, what would you say?

The social constraints observed in this situation include power, which can be described here as equal, social distance which is of acquaintance, imposition, that is low, and the request goal, a favor. In point of fact, there are number of problems that such a test may suffer from. One shortcoming is that the DCT cannot be said to elicit naturally-occurring and interactional data. There is no denying the fact that context is a dynamic construct that changes constantly and instantaneously. Moreover, a DCT provides the learners with a limited space for answers, contrary to real-life discourse. This can be coupled with the possibility that a learner may misunderstand the situation. Last but not least, given its written nature, a DCT overlooks the non-verbal side of communication that may play a major role (for more shortcomings, see

Yamashita, 2008). The other alternative evaluation measures that have been proposed are as varied as multiple-choice tests, role-plays, and picture and video prompts.

4. The Role of the Teacher

The role of the teacher is of paramount importance even before teaching L2 pragmatics. Moreover, pragmatically-relevant input in the classroom is limited. Therefore, teachers are often the only models of appropriate (pragmatic) behavior. There are a number of facts that play a crucial role in making the teaching process successful. Such factors are the teachers' backgrounds, knowledge, experiences, and beliefs and teaching training programme s/he has taken.

For the present purposes, it is essential to identify exactly the areas teachers of pragmatics need to know to help learners understand other's intentions and express themselves as intended in the given sociocultural context (Ishihara and Cohen, 2010:23). In other words, what is more important than helping learners express themselves in the best possible way is to recognize what the teacher is supposed to know before teaching L2 pragmatics. The following table indicates what the teacher is supposed to know in order to teach L2 Pragmatics (from Ishihara, 2010: 23-24):

(5)

Table1: The components required for the teaching of L2 pragmatics:

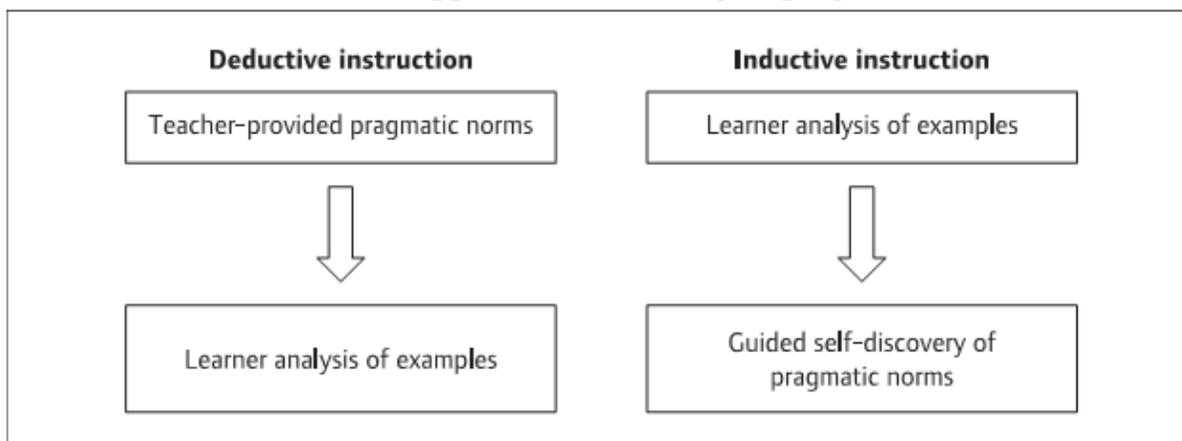
Selected components of teacher knowledge for teaching L2 in general	Components of teacher knowledge specifically required for teaching of L2 pragmatics
<i>Subject-matter knowledge</i>	Knowledge of pragmatic variation. Knowledge of a range of pragmatic norms in the target language. Knowledge of meta-pragmatic information (e.g., how to discuss pragmatics).
<i>Pedagogical-content knowledge</i>	Knowledge of how to teach L2 pragmatics. Knowledge of how to assess L2 pragmatic ability.
<i>Knowledge of the learners and local, curricular, and educational contexts</i>	Knowledge of learners' identities, cultures, proficiency, and other characteristics. Knowledge of the pragmatics-focused curriculum. Knowledge of the role of L2 pragmatics in the educational contexts.

The table above identifies the types of knowledge that teachers are required to have in order to teach L2 pragmatics. Each type of knowledge is of great importance in this regard. These types of knowledge are classified in terms of subject matter, pedagogical content and learners and local curricular and educational contexts. It is maintained in this concern that the ways teachers perceive their knowledge affect the way they use it for teaching, evaluation, and curriculum development. It is therefore worthwhile to mention that teachers should not only have knowledge, but also be cognizant of the impact of their beliefs on the ways they teach language in general and L2 pragmatics in particular. In other words, teachers should have knowledge of L2 pragmatics as well as awareness of the impact of their beliefs on the teaching and evaluation of L2 pragmatics, not to mention its inclusion in curriculum development.

No less important than having knowledge of L2 pragmatics and being aware of the impact of one’s beliefs on teaching and evaluating in L2 pragmatics is the teaching of L2 pragmatics *per se*. Indeed, The EFL teacher can use a number of frameworks to teach L2 pragmatics. The frameworks in question include, according to Ishihara (2010:101), *the Noticing Hypothesis, the Output Hypothesis, the Interaction Hypothesis, and the Sociocultural Theory*. Teachers can as well use instructional tasks inductively or deductively as is shown in the following figure (from Ishihara (2010:117):

(6)

Table 2: Deductive and inductive approaches to teaching L2 pragmatics:



Teachers are also required to participate in curriculum development. In fact, Brown (2007:225) asserts that “the most apparent practical classroom application of functional description of languages was found in the development of functional syllabuses, more popularly notional-functional syllabuses.” Brown (2007) uses the term notional-functional syllabus to refer to the integration of contextualized language functions in curriculum development.

5. EFL Reforms in Higher Education

The assumptions suggested herein are in fact in consonant with the reform in the field of education in general that started in 1999 with the drafting of Education and Training National Charter in Morocco. As a matter of fact, higher education, according to the charter “aims at fulfilling the following functions:

- Initial and continuous training
- Preparing the youth to integrate in the active life
- Technological and scientific research
- Spreading of knowledge

(Education and Training National Charter, 1999:28)

The functions mentioned above are meant to meet the needs of higher education and prepare young people for easy integration in society and more importantly in the job market. English is also concerned in this respect, as it is subsumed under the umbrella of foreign languages when it comes to language mastery. A foreign language, including English, is, indeed, meant to be learnt via focusing on the functional use of language as well as preparing to communicate using it and develop certain linguistic competencies (Education and Training National Charter, 1999:37).

The National Charter puts emphasis on the functional use of foreign languages as well as their mastery. This is why it is worthwhile to consider the importance of L2 pragmatics in learning a foreign language and mastering it. All things considered, one can note, therefore, that the presence of L2 pragmatics is considered as an integral part of L2 mastery.

6. Conclusion

This paper has been primarily concerned with highlighting the importance of teaching L2 pragmatic competence in the L2 classroom. It has been shown that language proficiency should be correlated with not only grammatical knowledge, the mastering of syntax, morphology, phonology and semantics, but also with the pragmatic aspects of the target language, the lack of which may result in communication breakdown. This enforces the inclusion of sociocultural awareness raising into both the classroom and the teacher training programmes. In this regard, we have argued that this form-context relationship can be mediated through, among other things, pedagogical intervention. A number of teaching methods and modes of assessment have been proposed, pinning down the strengths and weaknesses of each. Finally, we have emphasized the role of the teacher in shaping and improving this ability.

The teaching of L2 pragmatics being a relatively new area of research, more research in this area is still needed. While speech acts are considered to be the most rigorously studied area in pragmatics, in the Moroccan context, to the best of our knowledge, only two speech acts have been studied, Abdou (1999), Latif (2001) and Loutfi (2016) for requests and Benbarka (2002) for apologies. As stated in the table in (6) above, to teach L2 pragmatics knowledge of pragmatic variation norms in the target language is a requirement. To the best of our knowledge, pragmatics in general remains the area that is the least studied or investigated, if at all. More research is highly needed in this area for more insights in order to further inform research and theory in the area of ILP. This would help for developing new teaching techniques and material design, based primarily on data from natural interaction.

About the Authors:

Ayoub Loutfi is a 3rd year doctoral student at Mohammed V University and he is currently a Fulbright Visiting scholar at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. His research interests are: Theoretical Linguistics and Cross-Cultural Communication in SLA.

Mohamed Amine Choraih is an MA student of Linguistics at Cadi Ayyad University. He currently works as an ESL High School Teacher. He is also a member of the MATE and MORCE-net.

Abdullah Mansoor is a 2nd year PHD student at University of Illinois – Urbana-Champaign in Global Studies in Education. His research examines questions around education and the use of private torturing in the public sector in the Arab world.

7. References

- Abdou, M. (1999). *Proficiency Level in English and Previous Linguistic Background as Constraints on Pragmatic Competence in EFL in Morocco: The Case of Request*. Unpublished DESA Dissertation, Faculty of Education. Mohamed V, Souissi, Rabat.
- Achiba, M. (2003). *Learning to Request in a Second Language: A Study of Child Interlanguage Pragmatics*. Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters, LTD.
- Achiba, M. (2003). *Learning to Request in Second Language: A study of Child Interlanguage Pragmatics*. Printed and bound in Great Britain by the Cromwell Press Ltd.
- Arabski, J. & Wojtaszek, A. (2011). Introduction. In J. Arabski & A. Wojtaszek (eds.), *Aspects of Culture in Second Language Acquisition and Foreign Language Learning*, (pp. 1-4). Berlin/Heidelberg: Springer.
- Azhar, A. (2008). Interculturality: A New Role for Foreign Language Teachers. In M. Hassim, A. Chaibi, M. Hammani, M. Najbi (eds.), *Assessing Quality in Language Education: Focus on Teacher Competencies, Educational Materials and Learner Performances*. (pp. 66-77). Selected Proceedings of the 28th MATE Annual Conference, El Jadida.
- Bachman, L. F. (1990). *Fundamental Considerations in Language Testing*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Barron, A. (2003). *Acquisition in Interlanguage Pragmatics: Learning how to Do things with Words in a Study Abroad Context*. Amsterdam: Benjamins.
- Benbarka, L. (2002). *Pragmatic Transfer in EFL Moroccan Learners' Apologies*. Unpublished DESA Dissertation, Faculty of Education. Mohamed V, Souissi, Rabat.
- Blum-Kulka, S. (1987). Indirectness and Politeness in Requests: Same or Different? *Journal of Pragmatics* 11, 131–46.
- Blum-Kulka, S. (1989). Playing it Safe: The Role of Conventionality in Indirectness. In S. Blum-Kulka, J. House and G. Kasper (eds), *Cross-cultural Pragmatics: Requests and Apologies*, (37–70). Norwood, NJ: Ablex.
- Blum-Kulka, S. (1991). Interlanguage Pragmatics: The Case of Requests. In Philipson, R., Kellerman, E., Selinker, L., Sharwood-smith, M., and Swain, M. (eds.). *Foreign/Second Language Pedagogy Research* (pp.255-272). Multilingual Matters.
- Blum-Kulka, S. & Olshtain, E. (1984). Requests and Apologies: A Cross-Cultural Study of Speech Act Realization Patterns (CCSARP). *Applied Linguistics* 5, 196–213.
- Blum-Kulka, S., House, J. and Kasper, G. (1989a). *Cross-cultural Pragmatics: Requests and Apologies*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

- Bou-Franch, P. (1998). On Pragmatic Transfer. *SELL: Studies in English Language and Linguistics*, 0, 5-20.
- Brown, H. D. (2007). *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching* (5th edition.). White Plains, NY: Longman.
- Byram, M., Gribkova, B., & Starkey, H. (2002). *Developing the Intercultural Dimension in Language Teaching: A Practical Introduction for Teachers*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.
- Cenoz, J., Hufeisen, B. & Jessner, U. (2001). *Cross-linguistic Influence in Third Language Acquisition: Psycholinguistic Perspectives*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.
- Crystal, D. (2008). *A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics* (6th edition). Oxford: Blackwell.
- Ellis, R. (1997). *Second Language Acquisition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Firth, A., & Wagner, J. (1997). On Discourse, Communication, and (Some) Fundamental Concepts in SLA Research. *Modern Language Journal*, 81, 286-300.
- Gass, S. M. & Selinker, L. (1994). *Second Language Acquisition: An introductory Course* (2nd edition). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Ghawi, M., & Johnson, D. (1993). Pragmatic Transfer in Arabic Learners of English. *Working Papers of the Interdisciplinary Ph.D. Program in Second Language Acquisition and Teaching*, 1, (1), 39-55, University of Arizona.
- Huth, T. & Taleghani-Nikazm, C. (2006). How can Insights from Conversation Analysis be directly Applied to Teaching L2 Pragmatics? *Language Teaching Research* 10, 1, 53–79.
- Hymes, D. H. (1972). On Communicative Competence. In J. B. Pride & J. Holmes (eds.), *Sociolinguistics* (pp. 269–293). Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Ishihara, N. (2010). Teachers' Pragmatics: Knowledge, Beliefs, and Practice. In N. Ishihara & A.D. Cohen (Eds.), *Teaching and Learning Pragmatics: Where Culture and Language Meet*, (pp. 21–36). Harlow: Pearson Education.
- Ishihara, N. & Cohen, A.D. (2010). *Teaching and Learning Pragmatics: Where Culture and Language Meet*. Harlow: Pearson Education.
- Kasper, G. (1997). *Can Pragmatic Competence be Taught?* (NFLRC Net Work No. 6.) Honolulu: University of Hawaii at Manoa, Second Language Teaching & Curriculum Center.
- Kasper, G. & Dahl, M. (1991). Research Methods in Interlanguage Pragmatics. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* 13, 215-47.
- Kasper, G. & Schmidt, R. (1996). Developmental Issues in Interlanguage Pragmatics. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* 18, 149–69.
- Kasper, G. & Schmidt, R. (1996). Developmental Issues in Interlanguage Pragmatics. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* 18, 149–69.
- Kasper, G., & Blum-Kulka, S. (1993). Interlanguage Pragmatics: An Introduction. In G. Kasper & S. Blum-Kulka (eds.), *Interlanguage Pragmatics*, (3 –18). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Koike, D. A. & Pearson, L. (2005). The Effect of Instruction and Feedback in the Development of Pragmatic Competence. *System* 33, 3, 481–501.
- Kramsch, C. (1998). *Language and Culture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lange, D.L & Paige, R.M. (2003). *Culture as the Core: Perspectives on Culture in Second Language Learning*. Greenwich, CT: Information Age Publishing.

- Latif, H. (2001). *A Sociopragmatic Study of EFL Moroccan Learners' Requests*. Unpublished DESA dissertation, Faculty of Education. Mohamed V, Souissi, Rabat.
- Leech, G. (1983). *Principles of Pragmatics*. London: Longman.
- Lin, M. (2008). Pragmatic Failure in Intercultural Communication and English Teaching in China. *China Media Research*, 4(3), 43-52.
- Lin, M. (2008). Pragmatic Failure in Intercultural Communication and English Teaching in China. *China Media Research*, 4(3), 43-52.
- Loutfi, A. (2016a). Pragmatic Transfer in Moroccan EFL Learners' Requests. *Asian Journal of Education and e-Learning (AJEEL)* 4, Volume 4, 15-24.
- Meier, A. J. (1997). Teaching the Universals of Politeness. *ELT Journal* 51, 1, 21-8.
- National Commission for Education and Training (1999). *The National Charter for Education and Training*.
- Nizegorodcew, A. (2011). Understanding Culture Through a Lingua Franca. In J. Arabski & A. Wojtaszek (eds.), *Aspects of Culture in Second Language Acquisition and Foreign Language Learning*, (pp. 7-20). Berlin/Heidelberg: Springer.
- Olshtain, E. and A. D. Cohen. (1983). Apology: A speech act set. In N. Wolfson and E. Judd (eds.) *Sociolinguistics and Language Acquisition* (pp. 18-35). Rowley, MA: Newbury House.
- Roever, C. (2009). Teaching and Testing Pragmatics. In M. H. Long & C. J. Doughty (Eds.), *The Handbook of Language Teaching*, (560-577). Oxford: Blackwell.
- Rose, K. R. & Ng, C. (2001). Inductive and Deductive Teaching of Compliments and Compliment Responses. In K. R. Rose & G. Kasper (eds.), *Pragmatics in Language Teaching* (pp. 145-70). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Selinker, L. (1974). Interlanguage. *Error Analysis: Perspectives on Second Language Acquisition*, Richards, J. C. (ed.), (pp. 31-54). London: Longman.
- Takahashi, S. (2001). The Role of Input Enhancement in Developing Pragmatic Competence. In K. R. Rose & G. Kasper (eds.), *Pragmatics in Language Teaching* (pp. 200-22). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Thomas, J. (1983). Cross-Cultural Pragmatic Failure. *Applied Linguistics* 4, 91-109.
- Yamashita, S. (2008) Investigating Interlanguage pragmatic Ability: What are We Testing?. In E. Alcón Soler and A. Martínez-Flor (eds), *Investigating Pragmatics in Foreign Language Learning, Teaching and Testing* (pp. 201-23). Bristol, England: Multilingual Matters.

* This paper was presented at the international conference “*The Status of the English Language in Higher Education in the Arab World: Challenges, Perspectives, and Opportunities*”, organized by the Faculty of Letters, Mohammed V University, Rabat, Arab Society of English Language Studies & Arab World English Journal Agdal, Rabat, on the 26th and 27th of May 2016. I would like to thank the participants at the conference for discussion of various aspects pertaining to the issue explored herein.

ⁱ Before we proceed, a terminological clarification is in order. In the literature on cross-cultural communication, the terms ‘cross-cultural’ and ‘intercultural’ communication are often times used interchangeably. In this paper, however, we do not use the terms as such. Rather, by the former, we refer to a comparison that we seek to establish between two or more languages. The latter, however, is intended to mean instances where two or possibly more speakers from different cultures communicate.

ⁱⁱ This is not to deny the fact that there are cross-cultural similarities as well (see Ringbom, 2007). These aspects represent the so-called positive pragmatic transfer, which we dub here as the free-of-charge pragmatic knowledge.

ⁱⁱⁱ Interestingly, instances of interlanguage transfer have been reported as well (see Cenoz *et al.* 2001). This the influence from an interlanguage back into a previous interlanguage. As should be obvious, this kind of transfer affects only multilingual learners.

^{iv} Data transcription conforms the standard International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA). Emphatic consonants are represented by a corresponding capital letter.

^v To elicit their data, Latif (2001) and Loutfi (2016) adopted a Discourse Completion Test (DCT), which provides a set of situations with varying social and contextual variables, i.e. social status, the level of social distance, and the degree of imposition. See section three for more details.

^{vi} Ghawi and Jonson (1993) found that Arabic learners of English tend to apologize less than native speakers do.

^{vii} Benbarka (2002) found similar results in the production of apologies.

^{viii} We leave the complexities of this issue to future research. The interested reader is referred to Hudson *et al.* (1995), Yamashita (1996), Bouton (1988, 1994, 1999), and Roever (2005, 2006, 2007).