Pragmatic Aspects of L2 Communication

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From Awareness through Description to Assessment

Edited by

Sara Gesuato,
Giuliana Salvato
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INTRODUCTION[1]

SARA GESUATO, ERIK CASTELLO
AND GIULIANA SALVATO

1.1 Pragmatic skills and L2 language proficiency

Pragmatics investigates the ability to express and recognise communicative intentions, the ability to convey and interpret meanings in addition to, or beyond, what is literally stated, and the ability to vary one's interactional behaviour according to context (e.g. Bachman, 1990). Pragmatics analyses how people use verbal and nonverbal communicative resources (e.g. lexis, meanings, structures, prosody, gestures and facial expressions) to interact with one another; it examines how the use of these correlate with contextual, especially social, variables; and it explores how these affect the participants involved. More generally, pragmatics investigates communication: how it takes place across contexts, why it has the characteristics that it has, why it may succeed or misfire, what social effects it brings about, and what its cultural import may be for members of given communities of practice (Crystal, 1997).

Pragmatic skills can thus be defined as the ability to use language in real life. Such skills involve, first of all, awareness of the social-contextual constraints on communication relevant to members of a linguo-cultural group. These are the rules of "how-to-say-what-to-whom-when" (Bardovi-Harlig, 2013, 68), which make up sociopragmatics. Pragmatic skills also comprise knowledge of the linguistic resources that enable people to communicate, that is, the lexical, morphological, syntactic phraseologies, semantic and nonverbal conventions that hold in a given community. Familiarity and confidence with these resources form pragmalinguistics (Leech, 1983; Thomas, 1983). The sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic aspects of communication are of course intertwined, and together they contribute to determining variable degrees of communicative adequacy.

[1] The first author wrote Section 1.1, whereas Section 1.2 was written by the three authors together.

That pragmatic skills are crucial to communication has been repeatedly pointed out (e.g., Bachman, 1990; Canale and Swain, 1980; Hymes, 1972). This becomes apparent when rules of interactional conduct are violated and/or when communicative intentions are not encoded in conventional ways – communicative events may be perceived as defective in their acceptability and/or effectiveness. This in turn may give rise to communication breakdowns, in the form of miscommunication (i.e. misinterpretation of – or disagreement over – content, communicative intent and/or intended effect)[2] and social friction (i.e. negative judgements, impressions or reactions; e.g. Thomas, 1983). If an addressee is, or feels, antagonised by the sender's less-than-ideal, or at least unexpected, communicative choices (e.g. Wolfe et al., 2016), the negative consequences experienced may go beyond bad feelings, affecting the sender (i.e. the party "guilty of misdemeanour") in tangible ways (e.g. loss of business; see Sirikhan and Prapphal, 2011, 74).

Unfortunately, it is precisely in properly handling pragmatic aspects of communication that language learners encounter difficulties. Indeed, learners' pragmatic competence often lags behind grammatical competence (Olshtain and Blum-Kulka, 1985). This also applies to learners at an advanced proficiency level (Blum-Kulka et al., 1989, 10), who may find it challenging to deal with the pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic dimensions of communication (Sirikhan and Prapphal, 2011, 91), or be slow to develop their pragmatic skills (Taguchi, 2011b)[3]. The main reason for this is that students "have not mastered the unwritten specific rules of these communicative events" (Al-Ali, 2006, 119), that is, they are not familiar with the socio-cultural norms that speakers of the target language "instinctively" abide by, or they are not sensitive enough to the value that native speakers attach to these norms.

Pragmatic skills do not develop spontaneously in the L2 (Schmidt, 1993; Hacking, 2008; Taguchi, 2011b; Thomas, 1983, 109) and mere exposure to the target language – what Hacking (2008, 117) calls "unstructured input" – is not enough. Therefore, a need is felt for instruction in pragmatics (e.g. Bardovi-Harlig, 2001). Research has shown that pragmatic instruction is beneficial for L2 learners' productive and receptive skills (e.g. House, 1996;

[2] Different groups of people may motivate the production of given utterances with different reasons, and thus give different evaluations of the people who produce them (e.g. Schauer, 2017, 222).

[3] Interestingly, while some studies suggest there may be no correlation between language proficiency and pragmatic competence (e.g. Farashaiyan and Hua, 2012), others provide evidence in support of such a correlation (Xu et al., 2009; Taguchi, 2011a).

Eslami and Eslami-Rasekh, 2008; Koike and Pearson, 2005). However, some caveats need to be kept in mind: different teaching strategies may be required depending on what aspects of pragmatics are taught (Sykes, 2010, 255); the effects of pragmatic instruction may vary depending on which specific areas of learner competence are targeted (Koike and Pearson, 2020, 495); and long-term effects are more uncertain than short-term ones (e.g. Koike and Pearson, 2005).

The relevance of pragmatics to L2 pedagogy has consequently sparked scholars' interest in the assessment of pragmatic aspects of learners' interlanguage (Timpe Laughlin et al., 2015), intended as the use and development of "linguistic action patterns" (Kasper and Blum-Kulka, 1993, 3) in the target language. The recent research into the assessment of pragmatic skills has led to the design, field-testing and administration of various types of tests (for a review, see Roever, 2011, 465-470). Insights have been gained relevant both to language teaching/learning in general (e.g. Koike and Pearson, 2005; Roever, 2005, 2006, 2007) and to Language for Specific Purposes educational contexts, in particular, such as in business education (e.g. Hairston, 1981; Hendriks, 2010; Sirikhan and Prapphal, 2011; Wolfe et al., 2016).

However, this research domain has not reached its full maturity (Sydorenko et al., 2014, 20). For one thing, more analyses need to be carried out of pragmatic skills in extended discourse and of the effects of discourse on the addressee (Roever, 2011, 470). Also, more assessment procedures and instruments for classroom use need to be designed and field-tested (Ishihara, 2009). Finally, the studies so far reported are not easily comparable, because they differ in several respects: for instance, (the labelling of) the assessment criteria adopted; the assessment procedures implemented (e.g. qualitative, quantitative); the phenomena chosen as the focus of assessment (e.g. speech acts, inferential skills); the data collection procedures implemented (e.g. elicited vs spontaneously produced discourse); and finally, the rationale for assessing pragmatic skills assessment (e.g. research-oriented vs classroom-oriented). This last point deserves some comments.

Research-oriented assessment of language in use aims to account for how the interactions among the various linguistic resources used by communication participants affect context, or are affected by it, to variable degrees of adequacy. Classroom-oriented assessment of language in use has to go one step further, as it can have important implications for the stakeholders involved. In an educational context, assessment is a consequential act with a gate-keeping function. For this reason, it is necessary to design assessment procedures that are valid (accurate), useful for the present (informative) and future (instructive) pedagogical practice, and acceptable

(fair, motivated) and potentially rewarding (motivating and stimulating) for their learners.

Assessment research can be relevant to pedagogy and feed into it (e.g. Chen and Liu, 2016; Ishihara, 2010). Ultimately, it should help learners prioritise their learning (cf. Sydorenko et al., 2014, 21, 36). This may require bringing a simulation of real-world assessment into the classroom context (e.g. Wolfe et al., 2016, 412), so that learners become aware that inappropriate behaviour is costly (Sirikhan and Prapphal, 2011, 91). Such an approach may comprise exploring how well learners' goals and intentions are correctly interpreted by their interlocutors (Spencer-Oatey, 2007; e.g. Ishihara, 2010). In an assessment situation, this might involve the rater explaining what impressions s/he forms of the learners and their texts, and also how s/he would react to the texts (e.g. Hermanno, 2009). Ideally, this kind of assessment should avoid prescriptivism, which dictates how to behave (Sykes, 2010, 258), and instead aim to refine learners' metapragmatic awareness so that they knowingly express themselves in the way they really want to (Thomas, 1983, 91).

The present publication contributes to illustrating how pragmatic proficiency and its assessment are crucial to the development of communicative, interactional and more generally social competence.

1.2 Overview of the volume

The studies included in this volume address pragmatic aspects of L2 communication, taking into account the complementary perspectives of researchers, language practitioners and learners. These were carried out with qualitative and quantitative methods in different linguo-cultural contexts spanning from Norway through Croatia and Italy to Canada and Colombia. This volume offers innovative, non-traditional approaches to pragmatics teaching and assessment, while maintaining an expanded perspective on pragmatics knowledge from a verbal and nonverbal point of view.

With "'This Other Stuff': What do Croatian EFL Teacher Trainees Know about L2 Pragmatics?", Danijela Šegedin Borovina and Mirjana Semren open the volume by venturing into the under-researched area of foreign language teachers' background in pragmatics. The authors explored Croatian EFL teacher trainees' experience of pragmatics instruction, perception of pragmatics, and knowledge of L2 pragmatics. By means of a video-and-questionnaire error-recognition task administered to 32 participants, and semi-structured interviews carried out with nine of them, they investigated whether EFL student teachers were able to identify pragmatic and

grammatical violations in pre-recorded scenarios, and to explain the reasons for pragmatic violations. The teacher trainees were less successful in recognizing pragmatic infelicities than ungrammatical items, revealed limited knowledge of L2 pragmatics and L2 pragmatics teaching, and could not offer suggestions on how to teach L2 pragmatics in a foreign language classroom. All of this could be attributed to the emphasis on grammatical accuracy experienced throughout their English language learning. At the same time, the trainee teachers appeared to have developed a certain degree of pragmatic awareness, but mainly through their workplace experiences, and finally, they considered pragmatic competence more important than grammar, probably because sensitized to this matter by their cultural experiences and the focus of the interview. The conclusion drawn is that, to be prepared to teach L2 pragmatics, EFL trainee teachers need pragmatics-oriented courses covering key theoretical concepts and promoting the development of practical skills oriented towards L2 pragmatics teaching.

The chapter by Sara Gesuato and Erik Castello, "Pragmatics at University Level? A Survey of Italian EFL Students' Perceived Instructional Experience and Learning Goals", reports on the administration of an online survey to 109 undergraduate EFL students at the University of Padua, Italy, which explored students' awareness of received instruction in pragmatics and their learning goals in English for General Purposes courses. The focus of the questionnaire was on nine initiating speech acts and ten responding ones likely to be taught in EFL language classes, plus nine teaching methods/materials that language teachers are likely to employ when teaching about language use. The majority of the survey respondents expressed awareness of having received instruction in pragmatics, but more frequently about initiating speech acts than responding ones. They also stated that they wished they could receive more instruction about such face-threatening speech acts as complaints, rejecting/refusing and apologies, while expressing less interest in face-sustaining ones like greetings, responses to greetings and responses to offers. The students also reported that the most extensively used teaching method was feedback on correctness, and that what they particularly desired in teaching was a focus on the effects of their discourse; on the other hand, they indicated only mild appreciation for role-plays as a teaching strategy. Interviews conducted with five survey respondents revealed similar preferences. The authors argue that these findings lend support to the view that pragmatics should play a more prominent role in the design of English for General Purposes teaching syllabi.

Giuliana Salvato's chapter, "Assessing Verbal and Nonverbal Immediacy in University Classes in Canada and in Italy", presents data collected at a

Canadian and at an Italian university where 200 students of English linguistics were asked to respond to a series of statements describing their professors' verbal and nonverbal behaviours. The statements originate in the tradition of research that investigates immediacy within educational settings. As a concept borrowed from social psychology and later adopted by communication studies, immediacy refers to the verbal and nonverbal behaviours that can help interlocutors decrease physical and psychological distance between them during interaction. Within educational settings, immediacy is expected to decrease distance between teachers and students, and, consequently, to increase students' motivation and commitment to learning. Salvato's work confirms previous findings, particularly the fact that immediacy is a culturally sensitive concept. The author used a scale developed in Sino-speaking cultures to report statistically significant differences between Canada and Italy, and to compare her data with the results obtained at the University of Hong Kong on the same scale (López-Ozieblo, 2015). Across the three cultures, Salvato found that sometimes Canada and Italy shared similar traits; at other times, Italy stood closer to Hong Kong in the delineation of a more distant instructor compared to Canada. One aspect that stood out across the three contexts was nonverbal behaviour such as walking around the classroom. This was an important trait contributing to making Canadian students perceive their professors as immediate, whereas it was not so to the same extent in Italy and even less so in Hong Kong. This study demonstrates that assessing the verbal and nonverbal aspects that contribute to immediacy between students and instructors helps identify the traits of an effective, credible, and appreciated instructor. When carried out across different educational settings and with speakers of a variety of backgrounds, this type of work advances research in cross-cultural and intercultural pragmatics.

Diana Peppoloni's chapter, "Gestures in Language Teaching and Learning: How German Learners of Italian Recognise Emblems", is focused on culturally defined gestures, technically known as emblems. With the aim of finding pedagogical practices that enhance learners' communicative competence, the author offers a qualitative analysis of Italian learners' gestural competence along with their evaluation of their teachers' gesture usage. The reason is that, while combining with speech, emblems and other gestures may not be understood in their meaning and function, if interlocutors do not share the same cultural background. In order to explore her research questions, Peppoloni distributed a survey to 40 adult German learners of Italian at a B1 proficiency level in Italy and in Germany. Participants were asked to define 20 Italian emblematic gestures that had been selected on the basis of their frequency in manuals of Italian language

and in videos included in the CLODIS corpus (University of Siena). Participants were also asked whether they used those gestures, how frequently, and whether their teachers used the same gestures during class and discussed their relevance in Italian communication. Peppoloni found that context and teachers' linguistic and cultural background do influence learner comprehension and production of emblems. As the author explains, an advantage in gesture comprehension and production depends on whether the target language is spoken outside the classroom, and whether the teacher is a native speaker of Italian. This study highlights the value of investigating L2 gestures to elucidate the factors that contribute to their understanding as well as their acquisition. Moreover, this study suggests that, when language pedagogy addresses target nonverbal aspects of communication, it promotes intercultural competence and understanding.

In their cross-linguistic and cross-cultural study, entitled "Declining an Invitation: The Pragmatics of Italian and Colombian Spanish", Diego Cortés Velásquez and Elena Nuzzo compared the locutionary acts of declining undesired invitations made by inviters characterized by different degrees of social distance from their interlocutors. The authors also analyzed the perlocutionary acts of invitations which had been formally accepted. They administered a multiple-choice Discourse Completion Task questionnaire to 63 Colombians and 63 Italians so as to identify their pragmalinguistic preferences and sociopragmatic expectations. The findings revealed partial differences between the two groups: in the performance of the speech act, the Colombians showed a preference for the use of mitigated refusals, and the Italians for the strategy of demurral, that is, for postponing a response with an indefinite reply. Additionally, the Colombians were more likely than the Italians to expect invitees not to show up at the events these had been invited to, whereas the Italians expected invitees to produce cancellations, either with advance notice or at the last minute, more often than the Colombians. The study suggests that Colombians, like other South-Americans, are more oriented toward the positive-politeness end of the positive-negative politeness continuum than Italians. The authors concluded by discussing pedagogical implications based on these findings.

Fiona Dalziel's chapter, "'Try to Say Things Straight, without Being Offensive, Obviously': Investigating the Pragmatics of Online Peer Review", explores the pragmatic strategies employed by foreign language learners in writing reviews of their peers' written production. The study is based on a corpus of 170 online peer review messages written by students attending an English for Academic Purposes module at the University of Padua, Italy, between 2015 and 2017. The corpus also contains some of the students' replies to a task on good peer reviewing. A quantitative and qualitative

content analysis was carried out. The results showed that the vast majority of the comments included a combination of both compliments and criticisms, co-deployed to mitigate the possible attack they could cause to the positive face of the peers receiving a review. They also revealed that the learners used a variety of negative politeness strategies to limit their imposition on their interlocutors when providing recommendations on how to improve their writing (e.g. parenthetical verbs with first person pronouns, modal verbs and the verb *suggest*) and also to reduce the intensity of their critical remarks and place themselves at a distance from their addressee (e.g. avoidance of the second-person pronoun). Overall, the findings suggest that peer writing activities can foster learner reflection and critical thinking not only on argumentative writing per se, but also on the handling of interpersonal relationships.

Silje Normand's chapter, "'I like Understood it When we Did it': Eliciting Young L2 Learners' Metapragmatic Awareness of Apologies through *Drama Tableaux*", focuses on *drama tableaux* as an instrument for eliciting pragmatic and metapragmatic data in language pedagogy. The author explored pragmatic features and metapragmatic awareness of apologies produced by 58 young Norwegian EFL learners, aged 8, 10, and 12. In drama tableaux, the body is used to create a three-dimensional image of a frozen moment in time that can be brought to life through the processes known as dynamization (adding movement or speech) and thought-tracking (voicing the tableaux participants' thoughts or feelings). While apologies have been elicited using drama strategies such as closed and open role-plays, Normand argues that drama tableaux have not previously been employed to elicit apologies or as an instrument for pragmatics instruction and classroom-based assessment, especially when working with young L2 learners. By including a range of data elicitation tasks, Normand's study proved that drama tableaux are an effective and engaging means of eliciting data from young learners with varied preferences, competencies and L2 language proficiencies. The value of the drama tableaux resided in the opportunity to combine the verbalisation of English apology strategies and the metapragmatic discussions on linguistic and contextual factors, with participants' nonverbal responses, such as physical representations and choice of emoticon colours. Such nonverbal behaviours allowed learners to embody and reflect on the paralinguistic features of apologies in English L2 and enabled collaborative responses.

Anna De Marco and Emanuela Paone's chapter, "Pitch Range Variations in L2 Italian Learners' and Native Speakers' Apologies", concludes the volume with the examination of pitch variations in expressions of apologies made by native and non-native speakers of Italian. Their corpus consisted

of 20 dialogues elicited from 10 native speakers of Italian and another 20 dialogues elicited from 10 Spanish learners of Italian by means of four role-plays. The role-plays scenarios were set in various contexts and involved pairs of interlocutors with varying degree of social distance between them. The authors carried out an acoustic analysis of fundamental frequency and pitch range variations of the statements expressing explicit apologies uttered during the role-plays. The results suggest that the native speakers of Italian varied their pitch according to the scenario and the social distance, using higher pitch in interactions with intimate people. By contrast, the apologies produced by the non-native speakers did not show any variation in pitch height or range across the interactions they engaged in. Also, their pitch range was not as wide as that of the native speakers. The authors argue that Spanish speakers of Italian may need to improve their ability to modulate the intensity of their prosody according to social and contextual variables.

We trust that these chapters shed light into how the results of pragmatic investigations can be fruitfully applied to language teaching at primary and tertiary educational level. We expect that the findings reported here will be of interest to both younger and experienced scholars who want to engage in further explorations of such topics.

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CHAPTER ONE

"THIS OTHER STUFF": WHAT DO CROATIAN EFL TEACHER TRAINEES KNOW ABOUT L2 PRAGMATICS?

DANIJELA ŠEGEDIN BOROVINA
AND MIRJANA SEMREN

Abstract

It is often assumed that foreign language (FL) teacher trainees will pick up the pragmatic features of a foreign language they are going to teach along the training process. However, various studies have shown that FL teachers and teacher trainees feel insecure about their language proficiency and that their pragmatic knowledge may be weaker than their grammatical competence (Eslami-Rasekh and Eslami-Rasekh, 2008; Glaser, 2018; Glaser, 2020). The main aim of this small-scale study was to describe how English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teacher trainees perceive pragmatics and pragmatic knowledge in an L2 and to establish the degree to which they are aware of pragmatic features of the language they are going to be teaching in the future. The participants were 32 graduate students in the field of EFL Teaching at a Croatian university. Data were collected using a video-and-questionnaire error-recognition task, modelled on Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei (1998), and semi-structured interviews, modelled on Savić (2016), both of which focus on politeness. The examples from the error-recognition task and the answers given by the students during the task were used at the beginning of each interview to encourage and support the discussion of L2 pragmatics and L2 pragmatics teaching. The results show that student teachers developed a certain degree of pragmatic awareness mainly through their experiences outside the university rather than during their teacher training. Their knowledge of L2 pragmatics and L2 pragmatics teaching remained, however, very limited.

1. Introduction

Pragmatic competence has long been recognized as a core component of L2 learners' communicative ability (Bachman and Palmer, 1996; Council of Europe, 2001)[1]. Numerous studies in the field of interlanguage pragmatics (ILP) have been conducted to describe the development of L2 pragmatic competence from both a cross-sectional and a longitudinal perspective (Achiba, 2003; Barron, 2000; Barron, 2003; Blum-Kulka, House and Kasper, 1989; Ellis, 1992; Félix-Brasdefer, 2005; Félix-Brasdefer, 2007; Fukushima, 2003; Rose, 2000; Rose, 2009; Trosborg, 1995 and many more). The participants in these studies are most frequently adult learners of foreign languages and only occasionally children. The focus is on the acquisition and production of speech acts, often requests. Traditionally, the focus of ILP research studies has been the comparison of L2 learners' speech act production to baseline data, that is, to native speaker language production. This field has thus provided a "kaleidoscopic image" (Savić, 2016, 207) of L2 pragmatic development in a variety of L2 environments (ranging from foreign language classrooms to study abroad contexts and online environments). Little attention has been given to the "channels" through which L2 pragmatics information reach L2 learners in foreign language classrooms, such as foreign language teachers and textbooks (Schauer, 2019). We might add that —in the context of EFL— teachers play a pivotal role in the development of their students' pragmatic competence, seeing that pragmatic rules of language have been described as the "secret rules" of language (Bardovi-Harlig, 2001) and therefore almost out of reach for EFL students.

This situation has, however, somewhat changed in the past decades. Namely, the knowledge of L2 pragmatics has been recognized as an essential part of foreign language teachers' knowledge base (Cohen, 2016, 2018; Ishihara and Cohen, 2010; Taguchi, 2011). Language teachers are nowadays seen as a "bridge" between L2 pragmatic practices and the ways to teach these practices within the FL classroom (Cohen, 2016; Ishihara and Cohen, 2010; Savić, 2016). In the FL context, it is very common to find that, besides teaching an FL, teachers are also advanced foreign language learners themselves (Glaser, 2018). In both of these roles, FL teachers need solid theoretical and practical knowledge of L2 pragmatics. It is often assumed that FL teacher trainees will pick up the pragmatic features of a foreign language they are going to teach along the process of training

[1] See Bagarić and Mihaljević Djigunović (2007) for a comprehensive overview of different models of communicative competence.

(Karatepe, 2001). On the other hand, research (Eslami-Rasekh and Eslami-Rasekh, 2008; Glaser, 2020) has shown that FL teachers and teacher trainees may feel insecure about their language proficiency and that they may feel that their pragmatic knowledge is weaker than their grammatical competence. Cohen (2018, 98) investigated how native and nonnative teachers handle pragmatics in a language classroom. The results showed that nonnative teachers feel less knowledgeable about the teaching of L2 pragmatics and "trended towards feeling less comfortable at it as well".

Research has also shown that the treatment of pragmatics in FL teacher education is based on theory only, or is non-existent (Chiba, 2015; Karatepe, 2001; Vásquez and Sharpless, 2009). A nationwide survey conducted by Vasquez and Sharpless in 2009 in the US, which examined the role of pragmatics in 94 master's TESOL programs, showed that most programs covered pragmatics in sociolinguistics, introduction to linguistics, or discourse analysis courses. Only 20% of the programs had a dedicated pragmatics course. However, the majority of those dedicated courses were elective rather than obligatory. In addition, more than half of the pragmatics courses were theoretically oriented (mostly linguistic politeness and speech acts), and little attention was paid to pragmatics in L2 teaching and learning. A comment made by a faculty member who participated in the study stood out: he/she claimed that their course provided students with theory regarding pragmatics and that students would figure out the application once they started teaching. Although we have not closely studied teacher education programs at Croatian teacher education faculties, based on our own teacher education and in our current role as foreign language teacher educators, we assume that the above-described scenario reflects the situation in the Croatian context as well.

The components of teacher knowledge required for teaching L2 pragmatics include an awareness of pragmatic norms, knowledge of pragmatic variation and meta-pragmatic information (subject-matter knowledge), knowledge of how to teach L2 pragmatics and knowledge of how to assess L2 pragmatic ability (pedagogical-content knowledge), as well knowledge of learners and of the educational context (Ishihara and Cohen, 2010). According to Ishihara and Cohen (2010, 24) "teacher education in the area of L2 pragmatics has only started to be researched", and the abovementioned list of components represents "a preliminary effort intended to open up more discussion on this topic". The authors further claim that whatever teachers choose to do in the classroom—whether they choose to teach L2 pragmatics and the methods and contents they choose to teach—is very much dependent on their beliefs. Teacher beliefs are defined as "the unobservable cognitive dimension of teaching—what teachers know, believe and think" (Borg, 2003, 81).

Research has shown that teacher beliefs form very early, are hard to change and have a significant influence on the decisions teachers make in the classroom (Ishihara and Cohen, 2010). Taguchi (2011, 10) adds that "the knowledge and beliefs held by teachers about sociocultural aspects of language and effective techniques for teaching pragmatics have rarely been addressed".

In line with the above considerations, the main goal of this study is to describe how EFL teacher trainees perceive pragmatics and pragmatic knowledge in an L2 and to establish the degree to which the trainees are aware of the pragmatic features of the language they are going to be teaching in the future. In the next section of this chapter, we will discuss the reasons for the perceived gaps in L2 teachers' pragmatic knowledge, along with different definitions of pragmatic awareness, followed by a brief outline of the previous research on FL teacher trainees' pragmatic awareness. In the third section, we will introduce the study itself, the participants and their background, the method and the instruments used. Next, we will present the quantitative and qualitative results and, where possible, compare the results with the results of previous similar studies. We will conclude with a discussion of the pedagogical implications of our work.

2. Literature review

Thomas (1983) emphasized that pragmatic failure "reflects badly" on an L2 speaker "as a person". She further stated that pragmatic failure was "an important source of cross-cultural communication breakdown, but in spite of this, teachers and textbook writers alike have almost completely ignored it" (Thomas, 1983, 97). The neglect of pragmatic contents, according to this author, stems from two reasons: the first is that the grammar descriptions are more "solid" and "precise". The second reason is that pragmatics is "a delicate area" without ready-made solutions or teaching methods, which are so commonplace and widely accepted for grammar. In the conclusion of her article, Thomas (1983, 109-110) makes a strong claim that

> we do grave disservice, even to those who are studying in the country of the target language, if we expect students simply to 'absorb' pragmatic norms without explicit formalization. Nor we can afford to regard the teaching of pragmatic appropriateness as the icing on the ginger-bread—something best left until complete grammatical competence has been attained.

Many articles and books have been published on the topic of instructional pragmatics, most of them advising explicit instruction (e.g. Kasper and Rose, 2002; Rose, 2005) and consciousness-raising activities (Eslami-

Rasekh, 2005; Rose, 1997). However, it is still not quite clear whether and how these theoretical underpinnings and research results have been applied in foreign language classrooms. There is, we believe, quite a misbalance between theory and research findings, on the one hand, and L2 classroom practices, on the other hand, with regard to L2 pragmatics teaching. As mentioned in the introduction, most of the studies have clearly shown that one of the main issues with L2 pragmatics teaching lies in the insufficient pragmatic competence of FL teachers themselves (Chiba, 2015). Sykes (2009; 2013) compiled a list of nine ongoing issues, that is, challenges in L2 pragmatics instruction, placing the lack of instructor knowledge among the top three issues, followed by limited theoretical support for curricular development and the lack of authentic input in teaching materials (see also Bardovi-Harlig, 2017).

Glaser (2018, 125) mentions several reasons for the lack of teacher knowledge: first of all, pragmatics is perceived as an "expendable add-on," as something which learners will learn "later". Second of all, the teachers' own FL education did not include pragmatic aspects of the second language. As language learners, teachers did not "absorb" the pragmatic norms because they were not taught those norms; the circle "closes" when they become teachers who also do not teach the pragmatic norms due to the lack of awareness and insufficiencies in their teacher training (Glaser calls this situation "the perpetuation of lack of pragmatics training".) The lack of L2 pragmatic knowledge and the lack of pragmatic awareness are reflected in teacher beliefs in the sense that the FL teachers usually give priority to other areas of communicative competence, such as linguistic competence. Anecdotal evidence from our own experience shows that in the FL classroom pragmatics is more easily avoidable than grammar.

On a more optimistic note, different studies have shown that pre-service and in-service FL teachers react positively to attempts to enhance their pragmatics-related content knowledge and their skill in teaching L2 pragmatics. Eslami-Rasekh (2011) included instructional pragmatics in her graduate ESL Methodology course. Her students were given explicit instruction on pedagogical and interlanguage pragmatics and an extensive reading list on theory and research in pragmatics. The participants were also asked to teach a number of pragmatically oriented lessons and to reflect on the whole experience. Qualitative analysis showed that this kind of approach resulted in students' increased awareness of the importance of teaching pragmatics in FL classrooms and also increased their ability to include pragmatics in FL teaching. Applying a similar approach, Povolná (2012) investigated the readiness of FL teachers to include the knowledge of theoretical pragmatics into their teaching. Based on the theoretical

knowledge gained in the author's *Pragmatics* course, the participants were asked to suggest pragmatics-related activities that could be conducted in their classrooms (most of the participants were already working as teachers). Based on the activities they suggested (for example, role-playing to teach requests, using smiley faces to teach "this" and "that" for likes and dislikes) and their opinion on the course, Povolná (2012) concluded that her students considered the study of pragmatics important and that they were ready to use the knowledge and skills acquired in the course in their own teaching. Emphasizing the idea that pragmatics should be taught in an FL class and "ideally even from day one in the beginning-level language class", Cohen (2018) offers a comprehensive overview of the topic from a theoretical and practical perspective in his book entitled "Learning Pragmatics from Native and Nonnative Language Teachers". In chapter 4, the author describes an international survey focusing on "similarities and differences between native and nonnative teachers in their handling of TL pragmatics in the language classroom" (Cohen, 2018, 81). The results showed that, on the whole, nonnative teachers felt less knowledgeable about sociopragmatic and pragmalinguistic issues than native teachers. On the other hand, more than half of nonnative teachers reported feeling more knowledgeable about language than sociocultural issues. Native teachers said that they relied on their intuitions about pragmatics, and they also used digital media to teach pragmatics significantly more than nonnative teachers. A high percentage of nonnative teachers reported relying on the pragmatics of their L1 when teaching the target language. In addition, nonnative teachers said they would check with native speakers, the internet or other sources when they did not feel like an authority concerning TL pragmatics. Moving on from the survey results to fundamental issues in teaching pragmatics, the second part of the book discusses the ideas for teaching pragmatics, and the role of technology in teaching and learning pragmatics, thus representing a valuable source of practical ideas for nonnative teachers of an FL.

As mentioned in the introduction, one of the components of teacher knowledge required for teaching L2 pragmatics includes an awareness of pragmatic norms and the knowledge of metapragmatic information. There is, however, a slight confusion when it comes to defining (meta)pragmatic awareness. Pragmatic awareness has been defined as the learners' ability to "notice how the target language realizes pragmatic features", notice "pragmatically infelicitous utterances" and the ability to repair those utterances (Bardovi-Harlig and Griffin, 2005, 402). Pragmatic awareness has also been defined as "the conscious, reflective, explicit knowledge about pragmatics" (Alcón and Safont-Jordà, 2008, 193), which includes the

knowledge of "those rules and conventions underlying appropriate language use in particular communicative situations and on the part of members of specific speech communities". Glaser (2020, 34) conceptualizes awareness as "the knowledge of when it is appropriate to employ certain linguistic means". Based on Bachman's (1996) definition of pragmatic competence and, with a particular emphasis on sociopragmatic ability, Safont-Jordà (2003, 48) defines metapragmatic awareness as "the acknowledgement of those contextual features that determine the extent to which a given linguistic routine may be appropriate for a particular situation". Ifantidou (2014, 49) quite correctly points out that these definitions suggest that pragmatic and metapragmatic awareness are "overlapping categories" because both describe learners' ability "to identify ('notice') and comment on ('reflect', 'acknowledge') how public communication is handled (is it appropriate or not? and why so)". Ifantidou (2014) further states that in interlanguage pragmatics (ILP) studies, both terms are investigated by using the same types of activity (for example, error recognition task, video-and-questionnaire task), "prompting learners to identify or repair pragmatic failures" and provide "sociolinguistic criteria to justify preferred answers". However, further discussion of the distinction between the terms is beyond the scope of this paper.

Research into L2 (meta)pragmatic awareness has been particularly fruitful. In the following paragraphs we are going to review studies relevant to the present study.

The much replicated seminal study by Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei (1998) employed a video-and-questionnaire task to examine the pragmatic and grammatical awareness of more than 600 participants (EFL learners and EFL teachers in Hungary and Italy, ESL learners and ESL teachers in the US). The results showed that EFL learners and their teachers ranked grammatical violations as more serious than pragmatic infelicities. On the other hand, English as a Second Language (ESL) learners and their teachers showed the opposite pattern by ranking pragmatic infelicities as more severe than grammatical violations. One probable explanation for this result is residency, that is, the fact that ESL students had the opportunity for additional target-language interaction outside the classroom.

In her study, entitled "Assessing the L2 pragmatic awareness of non-native EFL teacher candidates: is spotting a problem enough?" Glaser (2020) partly replicated the aforementioned study. The participants were 84 students at a German university studying to become teachers of EFL in primary schools. The author adapted the written task used in the original 1998 study by modifying some of the situations and by adding new situations to the questionnaire (the scenarios were not re-filmed, and her

participants did not watch the original video task). The final version contained 15 items: five unproblematic ones, five problematic ones in terms of grammar and five problematic ones in terms of pragmatics. The results showed that teacher candidates were, in general, better at recognizing unproblematic situations. Also, students were better at identifying pragmatic problems when compared to grammatical problems, which is contrary to other replication studies (e.g. Schauer, 2009). A closer analysis showed that in one of the situations which the author had added to the questionnaire, almost two thirds of the participants failed to recognize a grammatical mistake. Glaser (2020) attributed this result to the grammar item in the situation being too "advanced" for her student teachers, despite their high proficiency in English. On the other hand, one of the pragmatically inappropriate answers proved to be too easy, as almost all of the participants recognized the pragmatic problem. The participants were also asked to suggest repairs for the problems they had identified. They were quite successful in suggesting possible repairs for grammatical violations. On the other hand, the adequate repair rate for pragmatic violations varied a lot between the situations, and was, on the whole, much lower than the adequate repair rate for grammatical issues. The author emphasized the importance of collecting both perception and production data, as the results showed that her participants' productive skills for pragmatics aspects "lagged behind their recognition skills, which was not the case for grammatical aspects" (Glaser, 2020, 58).

In her article, Savić (2016) explored the metapragmatic awareness of 13 novice Serbian EFL teachers concerning their views of L2 politeness. Using qualitative methodology (interviews, content analysis), the author examined her students' definitions of politeness and the linguistic means they used to modify their messages in the L2. The analysis revealed a tension in the students' answers between their views of politeness as universal and their views of politeness as culture-specific. Some students believed that behaving politely in an L2 culture is simply a matter of learning politeness-related expressions, while "an important awareness of the cultural values underlying the words, vital for a full understanding of L2 pragmatics", was missing (Savić, 2016, 218). Additionally, the views of some novice teachers were often strongly influenced by their own cultural perspective. Some students equated politeness with the means to hide dishonesty, while others described it as "sugar-coating"; students with the stay-abroad experience, instead, displayed a stronger awareness of the culture-specific aspects of politeness. The findings suggested that novice EFL teachers in Serbia should be given more opportunities to learn about and discuss L2 pragmatic contents.

Based on our own experience as teacher trainers and intrigued by the supposed "gap" between what our students (who will become EFL teachers) should know about L2 pragmatics to be able to teach their learners effectively and what they are taught (or not taught) through university courses, we decided to investigate what they know and believe about L2 pragmatics and L2 pragmatics teaching. We decided to focus on their conceptualizations of politeness, as politeness is one of the topics most frequently discussed in courses on pragmatics (Savić, 2016; Vasquez and Sharpless, 2009). Although the literature extensively and fruitfully discusses politeness by ranging from the static views of politeness (for example, directness, indirectness and face-threatening acts in Brown and Levinson, 1987, see also Fukushima, 2003 for an extensive review) to its "socially constructed and indexical nature" (Pizziconi and Locher, 2015, 2), in this chapter the focus is on the most simple definition of politeness, as expounded by Félix-Brasdefer (2008). The author makes a distinction between politeness1 and politeness2, where politeness2 is a theoretical construct or a scientific conceptualization of politeness. In this chapter, we are concerned with politeness1 or politeness-as-practice in everyday interaction: how people talk about politeness as a concept in everyday interaction, and what people perceive politeness to be in different interactional practices (Félix-Brasdefer, 2008, 4).

The present small-scale study represents the first phase of a long-term research project, whose aim is to describe and enhance the pragmatic awareness of Croatian EFL teacher trainees, as well as their ability to incorporate pragmatics in their teaching. In taking this first step, we relied on the research conducted by Savić (2016), Bardovi-Harlig and Dörnyei (1998), and Glaser (2020).

Our first aim was to establish whether the trainee teachers are able to identify pragmatic and grammatical violations in pre-recorded scenarios. Following that, our second aim was to investigate whether the students were able to explain the reasons for pragmatic violations and to establish what they, as future teachers, know about L2 pragmatics and L2 pragmatics teaching. For our first aim, we followed a straightforward conceptualization of awareness as the ability to recognize pragmatic and grammatical violations and repair them (Glaser, 2020; Schauer, 2006).

3. Research design and method

3.1 Participants

Thirty-two female students participated in this study. All of them were first- and second-year students of the Graduate Study Programme in English Studies (double major-teacher education) at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Science in Split, Croatia. Only one student had a stay-abroad experience, as she had stayed in the US on a couple of occasions, visiting her close family, each time staying for a month. As for their teacher education, students in their first year completed a course in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and were enrolled in Glottodidactics[2]. For the students in their second year, the second-year course entitled Practicum and Teaching Practice was the first contact with teaching EFL[3]. They had completed courses in Second Language Acquisition and Glottodidactics, with the addition of English Language Teaching Methodology in their second year. None of them had any prior experience in teaching, apart from one student who had been teaching in a school of foreign languages since the beginning of the academic year. According to the course instructors, interlanguage pragmatics and L2 pragmatics teaching had not been explicitly mentioned or discussed in any of the above-mentioned courses. At the undergraduate level, obligatory courses for the students of English language and literature include Introduction to linguistics and Introduction to semantics. At the graduate level, the only course with links to pragmatics is an elective course in sociolinguistics. Talking to the course instructors and reading through the syllabuses of their classes, we established that the above-mentioned courses included the following pragmatics-related topics: definition of pragmatics, speech act theory according to Austin and Searle, direct and indirect speech acts, deixis, implicature, Gricean politeness maxims, and Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness. It seems that our students had gained purely theoretical knowledge of pragmatics during the course of their studies.

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[2] Glottodidactics is defined as the theory of foreign language teaching. As a university course at Croatian universities, Glottodidactics covers such topics as the history of FL teaching, teaching language skills, grammar and vocabulary, as well as teaching materials, providing feedback and assessment. For an overview of glottodidactic research in Croatia, see Mihaljević Djigunović (2013).

[3] As a part of this course, students have to observe lessons in primary and secondary schools (ten lessons per school, 20 in total). They also have to prepare and teach their own lessons (four in total, two lessons in a primary school, and two lessons in a secondary school). Each lesson lasts 45 minutes.