KOREAN JOURNAL OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LINGUISTICS

Investigating the features of L2 Pragmatic Competence in Conversation from Role-Play Interaction

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ABSTRACT

Youn, Soo Jung and Panjanit Chaipuapae. 2022. Investigating the features of L2 pragmatic competence in conversation from role-play interaction. *Korean Journal of English Language and Linguistics* 22, 563-578.

The purpose of this article is to discuss what second language (L2) pragmatic competence in conversation entails by demonstrating varying interactional patterns of English L2 learners' role-play performances. Data came from a role-play interaction corpus of adult English as a Second Language (ESL) learners with varying first languages. Using a conversation analytic approach, we demonstrate the turn-by-turn characteristics of role-play task performances of learners at different levels of pragmatic competence. The various example performances suggest that high-level learners utilized a range of resources, ranging from diverse grammatical resources to interactional resources, such as effective turn organizations and acknowledgement tokens to maintain the continuity of talk. The findings reveal that pragmatically appropriate conversation entails multi-dimensional components, including grammatical complexity and accuracy in a single response, as well as various interactional strategies, such as contextualizing an upcoming talk and repairing communication breakdown which are important for context-appropriate interactional achievement. We discuss concrete characteristics of pragmatically appropriate conversation, as well as suggestions for how a task-based approach could assist teaching pragmatics to L2 learners.

KEYWORDS

L2 pragmatics, role-play task, interactional competence, conversation analysis

1. Introduction

Second language (L2) pragmatics is a multi-dimensional and multi-layered construct, consisting of various components (Taguchi and Roever 2017). Of them, we focus on pragmatically appropriate conversation, which requires various abilities, such as contextualizing an upcoming talk using preliminary turns, maintaining the continuity of conversation, and providing necessary details while taking turns (Hall and Pekarek Doehler 2011, Kasper 2006, Pekarek Doehler and Berger 2018). For example, when making a request, it is important for the requester to know how to prepare an upcoming request using a preliminary turn (e.g., Can I ask you a favor?) and how to acknowledge unknown responses when the requestee does not comply with the request rather than assuming the request is appropriate. In addition, one needs to maintain the continuity of conversation. Essentially, learners need to understand how to utilize linguistic and interactional resources while managing pragmatic actions in the sequential unfolding of conversation. Thus, for English L2 learners, it is challenging to learn how to be pragmatically appropriate in conversation. To this end, in this article, we investigate how a task-based approach, particularly using role-play tasks, can be used to teach pragmatically appropriate conversation by presenting various examples of role-play task performances.

1.1 The Discursive Approach to L2 Pragmatic Competence

L2 pragmatic competence is characterized by a range of theoretical and analytical frameworks (Taguchi 2019). Existing theoretical frameworks offer complementary perspectives on how L2 pragmatic competence develops. Early L2 pragmatic research focused on cross-linguistic and cross-cultural characteristics of pragmatic competence following the rationalist speech act research tradition, such as politeness theory (Brown and Levinson 1978) and speech act theory (Searle 1976). Recently, there has been an increasing need for additional theoretical frameworks that enable the analysis of situated pragmatic actions in talk-in-interaction. Renewed theories and analytical frameworks, such as sociocultural theory and discursive approach to pragmatics, broadened the scope and definition of pragmatic competence (see Taguchi and Roever 2017 for an in-depth review). Of them, this study employs the discursive approach to L2 pragmatic competence (Kasper 2006). Compared to the rationalist approach to pragmatics, the discursive approach to L2 pragmatics allows us to examine the indexical nature of language use in situated social actions and participants' actions contingent upon the unfolding of social interaction using conversation analysis (CA). CA is now a well-established methodology of understanding social interaction (Kasper and Wagner 2014). CA enables us to understand ways in which L2 learners accomplish pragmatic actions in interaction. While the existing CA-based research offers the detailed nature of pragmatic interaction (e.g., Al-Gahtani and Roever 2012, 2018, Hassall 2020), concrete descriptions and explanations of pragmatic interaction are still necessary for teaching and assessing L2 pragmatic competence. For example, when teaching how to make a request in conversation, we need to know ways to express politeness while taking a turn and diverse linguistic resources, just to name a few. To this end, we argue that the task-based language teaching approach can complement teaching L2 pragmatic competence, which is further discussed in the next section.

1.2 Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) Approach

In 1980s, TBLT came to prominence as a language teaching innovation following the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach (Van den Branden et al. 2009). One of the strengths of TBLT is engaging L2 learners into meaningful real-world tasks while promoting the use of language to achieve functional goals (Long 2016, Norris 2009). The characteristics of task-based activities are holistic (students are engaged in real-world communicative tasks and encounter target language use), learner-driven (students take charge in their own learning

and cooperate with each other using their language-related resources), goal-oriented (an outcome is clearly defined), and meaning-focused (understanding of meanings is a key, Taguchi and Kim 2018, Van den Branden et al. 2009). It should be emphasized that striking a balance between meanings and forms are essential and that task-based activities can be designed to facilitate a focus on form.

In order to develop meaningful tasks, two stages are considered (Norris 2009). First, we need to identify target tasks, or real-world communicative tasks, by analyzing communicative needs of various stakeholders, such as students and teachers. Then, spoken or written samples of real language use are collected and modified to create pedagogical tasks for teaching purposes. To illustrate, Youn (2018) conducted a task-based needs analysis to identify target tasks for pragmatic instruction in an EAP context. In her study, students and instructors reported various tasks of learning needs, such as writing an email asking their academic advisor for a letter of recommendation and managing conversation with their classmates. To address students' needs, teaching materials may include written or spoken samples of highly proficient students in order to illustrate concrete expectations and example performances.

The TBLT approach to teaching L2 pragmatic competence is gradually increasing (e.g., Barón et al. 2020, Taguchi and Kim 2016). As Taguchi and Kim (2018) argue, the tenets of TBLT are compatible with pragmatics because communicative and socially situated tasks demand learners to use pragmatic competence. Yet, as Plonsky and Kim (2016) reported, a majority of TBLT research focuses on complexity, accuracy, and fluency dimensions of language, rather than contextualized language use. The connection between TBLT and L2 pragmatic competence needs to be strengthened through investigating how tasks can be used to teach the multi-dimensional nature of pragmatic competence.

Of various tasks, we focus on role-plays which promote interactive pragmatic performances on a range of social actions, which is further discussed in the next section. Following the TBLT approach, role-play tasks can promote learning by doing; students can work on tasks representative of real-life domains. At the same time, such task encourages cooperative collaborative learning while students are interacting with their classmates.

1.3 Why Role-Plays for Pragmatically Appropriate Conversation?

According to the recent review of 77 L2 instructional pragmatics studies published from the 1980s up to 2021 (Taguchi and Youn, forthcoming), the most common measure was a discourse completion task (DCT) (50% of the studies), followed by a role-play (24% of the studies). Compared to a DCT, a role-play is relatively underused in L2 instructional pragmatics research. We first discuss how a role-play task is beneficial for interactive pragmatic performance compared to other commonly used instruments in L2 pragmatics, such as DCTs. The typical format of DCTs includes a prompt that specifies various scenarios and participants then provide responses to the given prompts. An example DCT item and a possible participant response below are from Taguchi and Roever (2017, p. 108).

Situation: You are at work and writing a report that is due by the end of the day. You don't know how to create a graph for the report from a spreadsheet but your colleague Jane in the next cubicle is very good with spreadsheets. You get along well with Jane and often help each other. You decide to ask Jane to show you how to create the graph. She is at her desk reading a document. You walk up to her and say:

Possible participant response: 'Hey Jane, I've got a favor to ask. Can you help me make a graph for my report? I'm a bit stuck.'

Figure 1. Example DCT Item and a Possible Response

As seen in Figure 1, DCTs only allow a single response to a prompt. Thus, DCTs do not show the sequential unfolding of conversation and learners' abilities to engage in extended conversation. DCTs also allow learners to plan their responses, which does not reflect real-time conversation. For these reasons, despite the wide use of DCTs, learners' responses elicited from DCTs do not allow us to infer how learners can actually perform in real-life conversation that requires a range of pragmatic competence. Even if learners can provide well-formulated request expressions via DCTs, the extent to which they can interact with an interlocutor spontaneously in spoken interaction remains unknown.

We suggest using role-play tasks to teach the features of pragmatically appropriate conversation. A role-play itself has been used widely in language teaching and research contexts. In L2 pragmatics, the discussion of role-plays as a data collection method dates back to the early 1990s (Kasper and Dahl 1991). While the role-play format itself is commonly known, the role-play is still underused in L2 pragmatics research compared to DCTs (Taguchi and Youn forthcoming). In addition, the design of role-play tasks varies which influence the nature of elicited pragmatic performance. For example, interactional outcomes can be predetermined (i.e., closed role-play) or participants can negotiate the course of interaction using contingent details available in the role-play situation (i.e., open role-play). In this study, the typical format of role-play was further strengthened using the TBLT tenet in order to ensure unique advantages to teaching pragmatic competence (Taguchi and Kim 2018). Following the TBLT approach, role-plays need to include a concrete communicative goal reflective of real-life needs and engage learners into meaningful conversation. In addition, we need a thorough understanding of what learners actually do during the role-play pragmatic interaction (Al-Gahtani and Roever 2012, 2018). The turn-by-turn analyses of role-play-based interaction allows us to understand how L2 learners accomplish pragmatic actions while utilizing interactional and linguistic resources. The quality of task-based spoken interaction determines the degree to which learners engage in meaningful learning opportunities.

Thus, in this article, we illustrate role-play-based pragmatic interaction at varying performance levels using CA. By examining qualitatively distinct interactional patterns, we discuss concrete characteristics of pragmatically appropriate conversation, which can inform teaching and assessment of L2 pragmatic competence. The following research questions guided the study:

1) What are interactional and linguistic features of successful role-play-based L2 pragmatic interaction?
2) What are interactional and linguistic features of less-smooth role-play-based L2 pragmatic interaction?

2. Methods

2.1 Data Collection

The data came from a corpus of 102 adult English as a Second Language (ESL) learners' role-play interaction collected in a previous study (Youn 2015). They were international undergraduate and graduate students at a university in the US with diverse first languages (e.g., Korean, Chinese, Japanese, Arabic, Indian, Spanish). The learners' performances were rated by trained raters using an analytical rubric and were classified into three pragmatic performance levels: high, intermediate, and low. Various pragmatic performance levels were included in the data. The degree to which the raters maintained scoring severity was quantitatively examined using FACETS analysis in the previous study (see Youn 2015 for details). All 12 raters, although they differed in terms of severity which is common in performance assessment, applied the rating rubric consistently. In the role-plays, two participants acted out as two classmates, Jesse (J) and Phoenix (P), who work on a group project together in a

university context (see Appendix A). Thus, the interlocutor for each participant was a fellow student participant. twelve learners of varying performance levels from different L1s were included in this study. Two real-life communicative goals achieved in this role-play were to negotiate an agreeable time and a meeting mode when the third group member was absent during the conversation. Thus, making agreement and disagreement while proposing various ideas were commonly occurring social actions. Further, in order to ensure some degree of authenticity of interaction, a different role-play card was given to each student (see Appendix A), which allowed spontaneous interaction to some extent. For example, a different weekly schedule was given to each participant. In terms of choosing how to meet, each participant was allowed to express their own preference between face-to-face and online meeting options. This way, each student did not know what responses from their interlocutor would be and each was held accountable for their own contribution to the interaction.

2.2 Data Analysis

The methodology employed to analyze the data in this study is conversation analysis (CA). CA is a descriptive and micro-analytic qualitative methodology that uncovers observable verbal and embodied resources that participants employ in interaction (Kasper and Wagner 2014). Through CA, we can understand turn-by-turn details of conversation and identify key resources for context-appropriate conversation. In order to illustrate role-play-based interaction turn-by-turn in real time, example excerpts were selected, which were transcribed and analyzed using conversation analysis (CA, see Appendix B for transcription symbols, Jefferson, 1984). The data were analyzed and explored for representative patterns that illustrate how the learners maintained the role-play interaction differently. Of the 15 extracts (i.e., 30 learners) analyzed, 6 extracts that include 12 different learners were included in this study. Successful interactions were determined by the learners' pragmatic performance levels which were judged by the trained raters from the previous study (Youn 2015). In addition to the raters' scores, CA's empirical concepts (e.g., sequence organization, preference organization) and CA literature on various action sequences (e.g., request) served the basis of successful interaction. For example, when accomplishing requests in spoken interaction, what is recognizable and expected to recipients is that accepting a request is preferred and therefore produced with no hesitation (e.g., Drew and Couper-Kuhlen 2014, Schegloff 2007).

3. Results

3.1 Characteristics of Successful Role-Play Task Interaction

In this section, we present various excerpts of both successful and less-smooth interaction, which in turn illustrate what aspects of L2 pragmatic interaction need to be taught in classroom. Successful task-based interaction made between high-high and high-mid proficient learners entailed various characteristics. One of them is a recognizable phase of interaction (e.g., opening, initiating actions). Extract 1 illustrates ways in which high-level learners initiated the conversation by orienting to accomplishing the given communicative goal. The conversation started with P's (ID24, High) greeting sequence in line 1, followed by J's (ID23, High) reply and 'how are you doing' in line 3. J oriented to their identity as a classmate by initiating a question about the class in line 6. In line 14, P specifically talked about the meeting time. What is noteworthy in this interaction is both J and P oriented to contextualizing the upcoming talk by referring to the class (line 6) and by using proffering a topic (lines 14 to 15). Each turn was understood by each other without undue pauses (i.e., continuity).

Extract 1 ID23&24RP1-1, J: Jessie (ID23, High) P: Phoenix (ID24, High)

```
 1  P: hi Jessie↑
 2     (0.5)
 3  J: oh hi Phoenix how are you doing
 4     (0.4)
 5  P: oh I'm fine how about you:?
 6  J: ah good how was the class did you like it?
 7     (0.4)
 8  P: u::hm I thi↑nk ah it's grea:t but a:h (0.3) it's
 9     pretty (.) ah a lot of home work↑ (.) and ha- we have
10     to (.) do the presentation↑ it's (.) kind of busy
11     I think
12     (0.2)
13  J: [right
14  P: [so↑ u:hm (0.3) have you thought about (0.3) what time
15     (0.5) is perfect for the presentation (0.5) and exercise?
16     (0.3) I mean we have to (.) exess together↑ right?
17     (0.4)
18  J: yeah I was thinking about that I think we have to meet
19     sometime a:h (0.5) this week let me check my schedule
20     (0.3)
21  P: uh huh↑
22  J: ah so are you free on (.) Monday after in the afternoon↑
23     after one?
```

As the learners moved onto the topic of how to meet for an upcoming project, J was supposed to propose two meeting options (i.e., face-to-face and online discussions) and decide how they would meet. In doing so, some high-level learners were more strategic than others. For example, one learner utilized two meeting modes and suggested a combined meeting option, as seen in the Extract 2 below (lines 11-13). That is, P (ID44, High) recommended using Facebook and meeting face-to-face. This combined meeting option was agreeable to J (ID43, Mid). Such suggestion essentially saved both of them from engaging in further negotiation. No role-play card specified such option. It was simply the result of utilizing the information that they had to creatively solve the problem at hand.

Extract 2 ID43&44RP1-2, J: Jessie (ID43, Mid), P: Phoenix (ID44, High)

```
 4  J: =so (0.6) hm: (.) I think we have two options
 5     face-to-face or online discussion by chatting↑ or
 6     skype↑ (1.0) or using facebook message↑
 7     (0.7)
 8  J: [°what do you want?°
 9  P: [uhm:
10     (2.5)
11  P: .hh I- we cou:ld (0.5) talk online or like (.) sending
12     message you mean facebook and stuff but I think at lea:st
13     one ti:me >I think we should meet up< face-to-face
14  J: yeah
15     (1.8)
16  J: so: yeah I pre:fer online discussion but (0.4) because
17     he is not here=
18  P: =uh huh=
19  J: =so I think we should meet face-to-face at least one
20     time↑
21  P: mh mm
22     (1.2)
23  J: a:nd .hh (1.0) then I think↑ (.) we should meet first
24     on online?
25  P: hm↑
```

The following extract demonstrates both participants' active engagement and contribution to the interaction, as evident in various suggestion sequences made by both students (i.e., lines 13 and 23). P (ID100, High) suggested using Skype in lines 13 to 17. J (ID99, Mid) agreed and arranged the meeting details (setting up the app to audio or video chat) in lines 23 to 27. Note a range of linguistic resources used by the learners in completing the role-play, such as a past progressive (e.g., line 3) and a modal verb (e.g., line 13).

Extract 3 ID99&100RP1-2, J: Jessie (ID99, Mid), P: Phoenix (ID100, High)

```
 1 J: ah (1.4) so about (0.8) our meeting tomor[row↑ ahm
 2 P:                                          [uhm
 3 J: I was thinking↑ (.) that (0.8) say Tom cannot make
 4    it↑ maybe we can have o- .hh an online discussion
 5    <instead>? (0.4) so [I mean
 6 P:                     [uhm
 7    (1.3)
 8 J: it is yeah so it's up to you we can either (0.4) eh
 9    meet in person↑ or we can do: (0.7) do- through
10    skype
11    (0.7)
12 J: >what do you think<?
13 P: tsh o↑kay hm: let me see (0.7) I would actually
14    prefer skype (0.9) yeah I mean (.) we could meet
15    up↑ but since our you know apartment is so far away
16    (0.3) might be (0.6) yeah it might be better to│
17    talk in skype
18    (0.7)
19 P: I like that
20    (1.0)
21 J: okay
22    (2.4)
23 J: so ahm (0.9) tsh (1.3) if we are doing skype↑ shall
24    we: (0.9) set the apps: (.) so tha:t we get to like
25    see each others↑ like (.) .hh a:h on the screen↑
26    or sh- t- sha- I- should we just do ahm (0.5) .hh
27    do audio
```

3.2 Characteristics of Less-Smooth Role-Play Task Interaction

Less smooth interaction from the lower-level learner was characterized by a shorter length of turn and noticeable between-turn pauses, leading to a lower-level of mutuality. In addition, in terms of turn-taking, learners at a lower performance level projected a turn at less-relevant places, resulting in unnecessary turns and miscommunication.

Examples of a low degree of mutuality are shown in Extracts 4 and 5. The turns observed in low-level students were typically short. Furthermore, both participants initiated turns with noticeable between- and within-turn delays. For instance, in Extract 4 in lines 10 and 11, it took P (ID84, Low) about 1.1 second pause to respond to J's (ID83, Low) question on the preferred mode of meeting. Compared to the high-high proficient interaction (e.g., Extract 1), it is noteworthy that turn initiation in line 1 directly refers to the goal of the conversation rather than using a preliminary turn to contextualize an upcoming talk. Another point was that some low-proficient learners did not elaborate to justify their opinions despite the disagreement on the meeting option, as shown in lines 6 and 7.

Extract 4 ID83&84RP1-2, J: Jessie (ID83, Low), P: Phoenix (ID84, Low)

```
 1  J: Phoenix? ah we have to discuss a project
 2     (0.4)
 3  J: a:h there are two option↑ (.) face-to-face discussion
 4     and other one is online discussion
 5     (0.5)
 6  J: I thi:nk face-to-face discussion is more (0.4) good
 7     (0.5) more be- better
 8     (0.6)
 9  J: how about you?
10     (1.1)
11  P: a:h (1.0) I'd like to (1.2) chat (1.1) at online
12     (0.4) because (0.7) we don't have (0.3) lots of time
13     (0.9)
14  J: u::hm (0.9) the:n ah (1.0) online discussion is
15     also good (.) thinking ah (0.9) first we: as-
16     (0.3) ah the:n ask to Tom↑ (0.5) to online
17     discussion is o:kay?
18     (1.3)
19  J: to ask Tom
20  P: oh=
21  J: =hhh
22     (0.7)
23  P: eh (0.5) oh (0.7) okay (0.4) a:h (0.6) I think↑
24     we should ask (1.0) ask (0.4) Tom
25  J: uh
26  P: °Tom's thinking°
```

A low-level mutuality was also shown by awkward pauses that occurred as some learners did not complete turns in relevant positions. An account that is normally expected was not provided. In Extract 5, P (ID16, Low) proposed a preferred meeting option without offering an explanation in lines 7 and 8. After a noticeable 1.2 second pause in line 9, J (ID15, Low) pursued an expected explanation from P in line 13.

Extract 5 ID15&16RP1-2, J: Jessie (ID15, Low) P: Phoenix (ID16, Low)

```
 1  J: ah Phoenix <we should> (0.6) have a meeting (.) for
 2     (.) the pre- (0.3) prepare (1.0) ah presentation
 3     (1.0)
 4  J: a:h what do you think (1.8) which is better (0.8) to
 5     meet (.) face-to-face or (0.9) online discussion?
 6     (0.7)
 7  P: a:h (0.3) I think online discussion better than
 8     face-to-face
 9     (1.2)
10  J: A:h really?
11     (2.0)
12  P: °yeah°
13  J: o:h (0.5) why (0.5) do you think so
```

The lower-level learners had less successful interaction in terms of engagement and mutual understanding. The following extract is the interaction between J (ID61, high) and P (ID62, low) to determine how they would meet to discuss an upcoming project. In lines 3 to 14, J launched a long proposal sequence suggesting that they could discuss their work online and then meet face-to-face to finish up, which ended with an explicit question to seek a

reply from P (*what do you think?*) in line 14. P's response in line 16 was incomplete and delayed. After a noticeable pause in line 17, P issued a question in line 18, that was also irrelevant to a given topic. What is more, P's response in lines 21 and 23 caused more confusion. P seemed to prefer using an e-mail only without the face-to-face discussion and later suggested that they should ask Tom, the third group member. P's delayed and unclear response to J's initial suggestion led to less effective interaction. In the end, J explicitly stated she cannot understand P's opinions in lines 40 to 41.

Extract 6 ID61&62RP1-2, J: Jessie (ID61, High) P: Phoenix (ID62, Low)

```
 3  J: so: I was thinking about meeting for the: (0.6)
 4     project to discuss the project?
 5     (0.4)
 6  P: [yeah
 7  J: [bu:t as both of us are well not uh Tom we have
 8     like really busy schedules? (0.5) we could maybe
 9     do some research online and exchange some e-mails
10     or chatting?
11     (0.7)
12  J: a:nd when we have whole the information meet face-to
13     -face to: uh (1.3) eh finish all the project and see
14     how we are going to present it? what do you think?
15     (0.4)
16  P: I think it's better uh:
17     (2.5)
18  P: we can meet together right?
19  J: Yeah we can on Saturday
20     (0.5)
21  P: yeah we- we can meet onto the their on Saturday
22     but (1.0) because it- our conversation we can do
23     it the by e-mail (0.5) it's better
24  J: so you don't want to meet face-to-face
25     (0.9)
26  J: you seem [you don't need to=
27  P:          [no-
28  P: =we meet face-to-face on- on the=
29  J: =Yes
30     (0.4)
31  P: but we- we want to make sure it does because we- we
32     cannot meet Tom right?
33  J: uh huh
34     (0.4)
35  P: and (1.0) and (0.6) the best way I can (0.5) we send
36     we send him any e-mail or we text him or I may see
37     and (0.8) let's uh we know uh his respondent (0.8)
38     but then
39     (0.3)
40  J: so what do you I don:'t (0.5) really understand what
41     you prefer hh
```

4. Discussion

4.1 Teaching Various Components of L2 Pragmatic Competence in Conversation

Based on the findings, Table 1 summarizes various features of successful and less-smooth role-play interaction. The communicative goal of the role-play task was for two classmates to decide an agreeable meeting time and meeting mode (between face-to-face and online options) when the third group member was absent. Since each student had different pieces of information (e.g., weekly schedule) and preferences on the meeting mode, the students needed to discuss their available options at hand and arrived at the final solution. They needed to draw on both linguistic knowledge and utilize their pragmatic strategies to complete the task. As seen in Table 1, the learners with high-level of pragmatic performance levels displayed various interactional and linguistic features that resulted in smooth and successful role-play interaction. Notable interactional features of higher-level learners' role-play interaction included the gradual movement of conversation that entails a preliminary turn to contextualize the talk at the beginning of the conversation. Compared to the lower-level learners, the higher-level learners also maintained the continuity of the interaction without unexplained pauses at the levels of between-turns and within-turns. If students lack linguistic and/or interactional pragmatic strategies, this may result in long and irrelevant turns of conversation (e.g., Extract 6). A wide range of students' performances elicited from the role-play task illustrate that the features of pragmatic interaction can be structurally complex and the use of DCTs alone might not be able to tap into the multi-dimensional pragmatic competence.

Table 1. Successful and Less-Smooth Role-Play Interaction.

Successful interaction	Less-smooth interaction
• Gradual movement of interaction	• Lack of a preliminary turn
• Contextualization of talk	• Short length of turns
• Continuity of mutually understood turns	• Noticeable or awkward pauses
• Active engagement and contribution	• Less relevant or unnecessary turns
• Various linguistic resources	• Lack of engagement and mutual understanding
	• Limited linguistic resources

We suggest the following inter-related components to teach pragmatic competence in spoken interaction.

4.1.1 Accomplishing actions via turn-taking

It is important to emphasize that pragmatic actions are sequentially accomplished in conversation. As seen in the data, not all interaction included an opening sequence that prepares a listener an upcoming action (e.g., Extract 4 line 1). Instead of jumping right to the communicative goal of task, a preliminary turn (e.g., greeting, pre-request, establishing shared context between the interlocutors) also functions as an ice breaker establishing rapport with the interlocutor and prepare a listener for an upcoming action (e.g., Extract 1 lines 1 to 6; Extract 3 lines 1 to 5). In other words, understanding that conversation consists of a series of sequences, rather than a single turn, is critical. Extensive resources on teaching turn-taking features (e.g., Wong and Waring, 2020) can be utilized in teaching.

4.1.2 Interactional fluency

Fluency in conversation refers to various features both at the levels of within- and between-turns. Being fluent at the level of within-turn means that a speaker delivers an utterance smoothly and easily with few pauses. However, learners can still struggle when it comes to providing relevant turns in a timely manner while taking turns, which concerns fluency at the level of between-turns (e.g., Extract 5 lines 4 to 13). If a speaker's answer to a question is delayed or an expected explanation is not provided (e.g., Extract 4 lines 6 to 10), a between-turn pause occurs and the continuity of interaction is interrupted. Thus, completing the next relevant turn timely prevents awkward pauses in conversation. However, it is important to know that some other types of pauses can be natural and expected in pragmatic interaction. For example, in some social actions, such as refusal and disagreement, it is normal to observe hesitation, which are realized using pauses and hesitation markers both within and between turns.

4.1.3 Interactional strategies

Since conversation is a result of mutual efforts among speakers, it is useful to know how to handle unexpected communicative situations using various strategies. Some speakers may interrupt the conversation or their utterances might be unclear to follow. In these cases, the continuity of conversation can be interrupted (e.g., Extract 6, lines 12 to 32). The following interactional strategies to maintain the flow of conversation can be used: (a) requesting to repeat utterances for unclear utterances; (b) rephrasing and offering your understanding; (c) using neutral acknowledgement tokens (e.g., OK, I see); (d) changing a topic of conversation; and (e) expressing interest and engagement in the conversation using paralinguistic resources (e.g., eye contact and a nod).

4.1.4 Diverse linguistic expressions

Knowing useful formulaic expressions is equally important in pragmatically-appropriate interaction. Students need to know how to formulate a sentence appropriate for different speech acts, such as using modal verbs (e.g., could or would) and indirect bi-clausals (e.g., I was wondering if) to make an appropriate request. In the data, the high-level learners used various linguistic expressions, such as present progressive (e.g., I was thinking) (Extract 1 line 18; Extract 3 line 3) when making a proposal. In addition to the expressions for a particular speech act, using proper expressions for various interactional sequences, such as when initiating, shifting the conversation (or shifting the topic using discourse markers), and expressing disagreement, is quite crucial. For example, when shifting a conversation, context-appropriate expressions (e.g., speaking of, by the way, and you know what?) that prepare an interlocutor that the conversation is moving into a different topic are quite useful.

After teaching these components, we can promote learning-by-doing by asking students to record, transcribe, and analyze their own role-play conversations to self-assess how successful they are and identify the features of successful interaction. This activity could allow students to realize their own pragmatic competence as well as teachers to diagnose areas of improvement. We hope that this activity makes students realize the nuances of pragmatics in social interaction. At the same time, we should note that role-plays may not be appropriate for students at all levels. For lower-level learners, DCTs may be more appropriate to scaffold students' learning of pragmatics. Despite the limitations of DCTs, some merits are evident. Using DCTs is advantageous for lower-level learners as the scenarios are straightforward and a single response is allowed (e.g., Tamimi Sa'd and Gholami 2017). Furthermore, DCTs may help lower students' anxiety allowing them to focus more on their productions.

5. Conclusion

In this study, we demonstrated varying interactional and linguistic features of L2 English learners' role-play-based pragmatic interaction. Although a DCT is a common research instrument in L2 pragmatics research, learner data elicited from DCTs are limited to understand how learners accomplish pragmatic actions in spoken interaction. Thus, we focused on how pragmatic actions were accomplished in interaction by analyzing learners' role-play performance turn-by-turn. This way, various sequences (e.g., initiating an action, contextualizing the talk, making a proposal, disagreement) of pragmatic interaction were examined through CA's analytical tenet. The data demonstrated successful pragmatic interaction goes beyond grammatical complexity and accuracy in a single turn, but include a range of interactional resources and strategies. Being pragmatically appropriate in conversation extends to ways in which turns are organized and how to manage the sequential unfolding of conversation. The interactional features that characterized the high-level pragmatic performances included a step-wise movement of turn-taking (e.g., a preliminary turn), interactional fluency at the levels of between-turns and within-turns, and interactional strategies. This means that a range of interactional resources need to have a prominent place when teaching L2 pragmatic competence. In order to teach a range of interactional and linguistic features of L2 pragmatic interaction, a DCT alone is insufficient. Thus, we advocate a well-designed role-play task for teaching pragmatic competence in conversation as it elicits spontaneous real-time interaction and allows students to utilize a wide range of interactional and linguistic resources. This way, L2 learners can have opportunities to learn the multi-dimensional components of L2 pragmatic competence.

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Examples in: English
Applicable Languages: English
Applicable Level: Tertiary

Appendix A

Role-Play Tasks and Role-Play Cards (from Youn, 2015)

Situation: After class, you are going to talk with your classmate who is doing a class project (article presetation) regarding **when and how your group members will meet** to discuss the project. The third member (Tom) is absent today. Your presentation is next Friday.

Task: You will receive role-play cards that describe what you are going to tell your classmate. Please have a conversation with your classmate naturally.

Role-play Card for Task 1 (Meeting time)

Jessie		**Phoenix**
		1. Approach Jessie and start a conversation about an upcoming class project (article presentation). **Suggest** discussing an appropriate meeting time. Propose an available time slot based on your schedule.
Jessie		**Phoenix**
1. **Look at your schedule.** Respond to Phoenix's question.		
Jessie		**Phoenix**
		2. Respond to Jessie's time availability **based on your own schedule**.
Jessie		**Phoenix**
2. You need to leave soon since you have another class soon. So, whether you found a good time or not, **suggest** asking the third member (Tom)'s opinion to make a final decision.		
Jessie		**Phoenix**
3. Respond to what Phoenix says.		3. Respond to what Jessie says.

Jessie's Schedule

Monday	**Tuesday**	**Wednesday**	**Thursday**	**Friday**	**Saturday**	**Sunday**
9am-1pm: Classes	Part-time Work (10am-5pm)	9am-1pm: Classes	Part-time Work (10am-5pm)	9am-1pm: Classes		Part-time Work (2-9pm)

Phoenix' Schedule

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
10am-3pm: Classes	No class	10am-1pm: Classes	10am-3pm: Classes	Meeting with an advisor at 2pm	BBQ party with friends at 5pm	

Role-play Card for Task 2 (Discussion mode)

Jessie	Phoenix
1. Move the discussion to a discussion mode. **Suggest** discussing how you will meet all together to discuss a project. Propose an option between **face-to-face discussion** and **online discussion (e.g., chatting)** that you personally prefer.	
Jessie	**Phoenix**
	1. Respond to what Jessie proposes. **Choose one option that you prefer** and express your own opinion.
Jessie	**Phoenix**
2. Respond to Phoenix's opinion.	2. Respond to Jessie's opinion. **Suggest** that you want to ask the third group member (Tom) who is absent today to make a final decision about how you will meet.
Jessie	**Phoenix**
3. Wrap up the conversation.	3. Wrap up the conversation.

Appendix B

Transcription Conventions

The transcription adapts the Jeffersonian conventions as described in Atkinson & Heritage (1984: ix-xvi)

:	Lengthening of the preceding sound
-	Abrupt cutoff
.	Falling intonation
?	Rising intonation
(.)	Very short untimed pause
↑↓	Sharper intonation rises or falls than neighboring talk
> <	Talk surrounded by this bracket is produced more quickly than neighboring talk
[	Point of overlap onset
=	No gap between adjacent utterances
<u>word</u>	Speaker emphasis
CAPITALS	Especially loud sounds relative to surrounding talk
° °	Utterances between degree signs are noticeably quieter than surrounding talk
(3.5)	Intervals between utterances (in seconds)