Invited lecture series on L2 pragmatics (2020): Lecture 2

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Speech act & politeness in L2 pragmatics research

Shuai Li
October – December 2020
Topics

• Session 1:
  • Speech act theories (Austin, Searle).
  • Speech acts across cultures.
  • Politeness theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

• Session 2:
  • An empirical study on request-making in L2 Chinese.
Speech act theories

• Before the speech act theory:
  • 1930s logical positivism, central claim being that a sentence is meaningless unless it can be tested for its truth and falsity.
  • E.g., “Today is Oct. 20, 2020.” “I am 35 years old.”

• What is the problem with this proposal?
  • Many sentences we accept as normal would be meaningless.
  • E.g., “Have a great day.”
• John Austin (1962): *How to do things with words*.

• Central claim:
  • Saying is (part of) doing. OR Words are (part of) deeds.

• Speech acts:
  • The actions performed in saying something.

• Performative verbs:
  • Verbs that name the action while performing it, e.g., promise, command, apologize...etc.
Speech act theories

• **Felicity conditions**: Conditions that need to be met in order for a speech act to be performed.

• Felicity conditions for a marriage pronouncement: “I now pronounce you husband and wife.”
  • The speaker has the authority to perform marriages.
  • The man and woman are legally eligible to be married.
  • The speaker and the hearers are all present at the moment of speaking.
Speech act theories

• Austin proposes to analyze speech acts in three levels.
  • **Locutionary act**: what is being said (literal meaning).
  • **Illocutionary act**: what is being done in saying (speaker’s intended meaning).
  • **Perlocutionary act**: what is being done by saying (effects on hearer).

• Hence, “speech acts” refer to the 3 acts simultaneously performed in speaking.

• Exercise: Identify the locutionary, illocutionary, and perlocutionary acts of the following:
  • Between friends: “Can you pass me the salt?”
  • Between husband to wife: “Coke?”
Speech act theories

• Classifications of speech acts (Searle, 1976):
  • **Declaratives**: expressions that change the world by their very utterance.
    • E.g., declarations, etc.
  • **Representatives**: expressions stating what the speaker believes to be the case.
    • E.g., claims, boasts, complaints, etc.
  • **Commissives**: expressions that commit the speaker to a future action (or non-action).
    • Promises, pledges, etc.
  • **Directives**: expressions that aim to get the hearer to do things.
    • E.g., Requests, commands, invitations, suggestions, etc.
  • **Expressives**: expressions that state what the speaker feels.
    • E.g., Apologies, gratitude, sympathy, etc.
Speech act theories

• Direct & indirect speech acts:
  • Direct: Literal meaning matches the intended meaning.
  • Indirect: Literal meaning is different from the intended meaning.

• Examples:
  • “Sit down, please.”
  • “Would you mind giving me a ride?”
  • “Why don’t we have Chinese food?”

• Sometimes, context is important for us to make sense of indirect speech acts.
  • “It is cold inside.”
  • “The gun is loaded.”
Speech act theories

• Issues with Searle’s conceptualization of indirect speech acts:
  • Direct vs. indirect: There are varying degrees of directness, depending on particular linguistic forms, e.g.,
    • “Pass me the salt.”
    • “Would you please pass me the salt?”
    • “This soup is a little bland to me.”

• Certain indirect forms are conventionalized to convey pragmatic functions, e.g.,
  • “Can you pass the salt?”
  • “Are you able to pass the salt?”
  • “Do you have the ability to pass the salt?”
Speech acts across cultures

• Cross-Cultural Speech Acts Realization Project (CCSARP).
  • Conducted in the 1980s.
  • Published a monograph “Cross-cultural pragmatics: Requests and apologies” (Blum-Kulka, House, Kasper. 1989) and many articles.

• Project objectives: To investigate speech act realization patterns:
  • Cross-culturally: comparing across cultures/languages.
  • Intra-culturally: comparing across different situations within specific speech communities.
  • Inter-culturally: comparing native speakers (NSs) and non-native speakers (NNSs).
Speech acts across cultures

• The CCSARP.
  • Participants: 7 NSs groups, 3 NNSs groups.
    • NSs: English (Australian, American, British); Canadian French; Danish, German, Hebrew.
    • NNSs: L2 learners of English, German, Hebrew.
  
• Target speech acts: requests & apologies.
  
• Instrument: Written DCT (Discourse Completion Test).
  • 8 request scenarios and 8 apology scenarios.
  • Power and social distance between speakers were varied.
Speech acts across cultures

• Sample DCT item: *At the university* (Request).

Ann missed a lecture yesterday and would like to borrow Judith’s notes.

Ann: ________________________________.

Judith: Sure, but let me have them back before the lecture next week.

(From *Blum-Kulka, et al.*, 1989)
Speech acts across cultures

• Sample DCT item: At the College teacher’s office (Apology).

A student has borrowed a book from her teacher, which she promised to return today. When meeting her teacher, however, she realizes that she forgot to bring it along.

Teacher: Miriam, I hope you brought the book I lent you.
Miriam: __________________.
Teacher: OK, but please remember it next week.
Speech acts across cultures

• Data analysis: The CCSARP coding manual, e.g., Request.

“Professor Taylor, er, I didn’t really understand some of those things that you were talking about during the lecture. Would you please discuss them further with me? Thank you!”

• Alerter, i.e., opening elements. “Professor Taylor”.

• Request head act (request strategies). “Would you please discuss them further with me?”

• Supportive moves (or external modifications): “I didn’t really understand some of those things that you were talking about during the lecture.” “Thank you!”

• Internal modifications (i.e., syntactic downgraders, lexical and phrasal downgraders, upgraders): “please”.
Speech acts across cultures

- Request head acts are analyzed in terms of request strategies, based on the level of directness.
  - Three macro strategies: **direct**, **conventionally indirect**, and **non-conventionally indirect** strategies, each includes several sub-strategies.

- Direct strategies.
  - Mood derivable: “Move your car.”
  - Performatives: “I am asking you to move your car.”
  - Hedged performatives: “I would like to ask you to move your car.”
  - Obligation: “You ought to move your car.”
  - Want statement: “I want you to move your car.”
Speech acts across cultures

• Continued...

• Conventionally indirect strategies.
  • Suggestory formulae: “How about moving your car?”
  • Preparatory: “Can you move your car?”

• Non-conventionally indirect strategies (hints).
  • Strong hints: (asking for a lift) “Will you be going home now?”
  • Mild hints: (asking for a lift) “I don’t expect the meeting to end this late.”
The existence of (request & apologies) strategies is largely universal, the distribution of the strategies are culture-specific.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situation</th>
<th>Strategy Type</th>
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<th>Canadian</th>
<th>Argentinian</th>
<th>Australian</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>(163)</td>
<td>(128)</td>
<td>(39)</td>
<td>(224)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>impositives</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>2.7</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>93.1</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>(170)</td>
<td>(130)</td>
<td>(40)</td>
<td>(226)</td>
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<tr>
<td>S7</td>
<td>impositives</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>85.5</td>
<td>78.0</td>
<td>100.0</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>(165)</td>
<td>(127)</td>
<td>(40)</td>
<td>(223)</td>
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<td>(164)</td>
<td>(125)</td>
<td>(40)</td>
<td>(222)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>5.6</td>
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<tr>
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<td>84.7</td>
<td>60.5</td>
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<td>(150)</td>
<td>(124)</td>
<td>(38)</td>
<td>(220)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Significance levels for language distributions in each situation are at p < .000 (corrected χ²).
• Linguistic politeness: The *choices* that are made in language use, the linguistic expressions that give people space and show a friendly attitude to them (Cutting, 2008, p.43).

• In L2 pragmatics research, the politeness theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987) offers a framework to conceptualize “context”; in practice, researchers often use the theoretical framework to design data collection instruments.
Politeness theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987)

- Politeness as face management.
  - **Face**: the (universal) public self-image that every member wants to claim (Brown & Levinson, 1978).
  - **Positive face**: one’s desire to be approved of, liked, appreciated, and accepted.
  - **Negative face**: one’s desire to be free and independent, not to be imposed upon.
Politeness theory (B & L, 1987)

- **Face-threatening acts (FTAs):** illocutionary acts that can potentially damage one’s positive or negative face.
  - FTAs threaten H’s positive face: refusals, insulting...
  - FTAs threaten H’s negative face: requests, orders...
  - FTAs threaten S’s positive face: admitting one’s flaw...
  - FTAs threaten S’s negative face: (be forced to make) an offer...
  *(Classifications are not necessarily mutually exclusive.)*

- Brown & Levinson claim that people use politeness strategies to reduce the possibility of threatening S’s and/or H’s face, hence the idea of face management.
Politeness theory (B & L, 1987)

- People choose politeness strategies based on an estimation of the size of a FTA, which is evaluated along three contextual factors:
  - Power (P)
  - Social distance (D)
  - Ranking of imposition (R)
- Size of FTA = P + D + R
  - Low-risk FTA: Asking your close friend for a small favor.
  - High-risk FTA: Asking the BLCU president for a big favor.
Politeness theory (B & L, 1987)

- Do the FTA
  - On record
    - Bald on record
      - Positive politeness
    - With redress
      - Negative politeness
  - Off record
- Avoid the FTA

Size of FTA:
- Lesser
- Greater

Politeness strategies
Politeness theory (B & L, 1987)

• (1) Avoid the FTA.

• (2) Do the FTA, off record (hints).
  • E.g., “The soup is a little bland.” “It is a bit cold inside.”
  • The speaker can easily deny the performance of the FTA!

• (3) Do the FTA, on record, w/ negative politeness strategies.
  • E.g., Giving options (phrase the utterance in questions).
  • E.g., Minimize imposition “Do you have a second?”
  • E.g., Be pessimistic “I couldn’t borrow your laptop, could I?”
  • E.g., Be apologetic.
Politeness theory (B & L, 1987)

• (4) Do the FTA, on record, w/ positive politeness strategies, e.g.,
  • “Hey, blondie, what are you studying then? French and Italian? Join the club.”
    • In-group identity marker (blondie).
    • Express interest in H (what are you studying).
    • Claim common ground (join the club).

• (5) Do the FTA, bald on record.
  • Can be the most risky: “Fix the problem!”
  • But in some situations, it is appropriate to use this strategy. E.g.,
    • “Have some more coffee!” (a pleasant offer)
    • “Look out!” (emergency)
Politeness theory (B & L, 1987)

Greater

Avoid the FTA

Do the FTA

On record

Bald on record

Positive politeness

With redress

Negative politeness

Off record

lesser

Size of FTA

Politeness strategies
Let’s take a break. We’ll be back around 9:00.
Session 2: A study on request-making in L2 Chinese
Background

• The speech act of request-making:
  • According to Brown & Levinson (1987), request-making is a face-threatening act; it primarily threatens the listener’s negative face wants (i.e., to be free from imposition).
  • Request-making is one of the most basic language functions for L2 learners; yet it is also a challenging learning target.
    • Pragmalinguistic: syntactically complex forms, e.g., “I was wondering if....”
    • Sociopragmatic: effects of contextual variables on one’s choice of linguistic forms (e.g., “Can you...?” across different situations), sociocultural conventions (e.g., legitimacy issue of requesting personal information).
  • Request making in Chinese involves multiple pragmalinguistic forms that are not necessarily easy to master, e.g.,
    • 把 structure, topic-comment structure, 能不能..., 能...吗? 可以...? 可以不可以...?
Request is the most researched speech act in L2 pragmatics in general, and in L2 Chinese pragmatics in particular.

- Among the 84 studies published (in Chinese or English) between 1995 and 2020 on L2 Chinese pragmatics, 57 included speech acts, and 29 targeted requests.
- L2 Chinese requests have been examined in “pragmatics use” studies (e.g., Ying & Hong, 2019), “pragmatics development” or acquisitional studies (e.g., Wen, 2014; Su & Ren, 2017), instructional studies (e.g., Li & Taguchi, 2014), and pragmatics assessment studies (Li, Taguchi & Xiao, 2019).
- The effects of proficiency appear to be mixed depending on how researchers evaluate “development”.
Research question

• What are the developmental trajectories involved in the production of requests among American learners of Chinese?
  • Rating scores.
  • Pragmalinguistic analysis: directness levels; pragmalinguistic forms.
  • Sociopragmatic analysis: contextual sensitivity.
### Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>L1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elementary (n = 20)</td>
<td>Mean = 21.10</td>
<td>Female (n = 6)</td>
<td>Male (n = 14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate (n = 20)</td>
<td>Mean = 20.95</td>
<td>Female (n = 7)</td>
<td>Male (n = 13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced (n = 22)</td>
<td>Mean = 22.59</td>
<td>Female (n = 7)</td>
<td>Male (n = 15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese natives (n = 22)</td>
<td>Mean = 21.71</td>
<td>Female (n = 11)</td>
<td>Male (n = 11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American natives (n = 20)</td>
<td>Mean = 24.30</td>
<td>Female (n = 7)</td>
<td>Male (n = 13)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- 62 college-level American learners of Chinese enrolled in a 15-week study abroad program in Beijing.
- 22 college-level native Chinese speakers.
- 20 college-level Americans.
Instrumentation

• Background information questionnaire: demographic info, prior experience of Chinese language learning.

• Oral Discourse Completion Test (ODCT).
  • A major data collection instrument in L2 pragmatics research.
  • Data collected tend to retain characteristics of natural speech (Yuan, 2001).
  • Allows relatively efficient data collection.
  • Allows good control of contextual variables.
  • Yet unable to capture interaction.
Instrumentation

• Development of the ODCT.
  • Started with 47 candidate scenarios based on previous studies and informal surveys.
  • Followed guidelines suggested by Hudson, Detmer and Brown (1995, pp.73–74) in writing scenario descriptions.
    • (a) Neither interlocutor has gender specified.
    • (b) Situation must be face to face. No situation can be over the telephone or written.
    • (c) The explicit statement beginning with either “You want...” or “You need...” must be used in the prompt.
    • (d) No explicit money is to be involved in the contexts
    • (e) No socially stigmatized roles should be included (e.g. rich patron – maid).
    • (f) Avoid professionally defined or formulaic interactional patterns (e.g. doctor – patient).
    • (g) Situations will be familiar to examinees.
    • (h) All request scenarios contain near-future, non-verbal requests.
Instrumentation

• Development of the ODCT (continued).
  • Used Brown & Levinson’s model to introduce contextual variables.
  • Power (P): operationalized as equal and unequal role relationships.
    • 2 levels: P1: friend-friend; P2: student-professor.
  • Rank of imposition (R): operationalized as psychological difficulty that a speaker has in putting forward a request.
    • 2 levels: R1: small favor (e.g., borrow a pen); R2: big favor (e.g., extending the deadline for turning in a term paper).
  • Social distance (D): operationalized as degree of familiarity, a controlled variable.
Instrumentation

• Development of the ODCT (continued).
  • Context Assessment Questionnaire (CAQ) was developed to select ODCT scenarios with cross-cultural comparability in perceived level of imposition involved in request-making. E.g., “Is borrowing $50 a big deal?”

• Each of the 47 scenarios in the CAQ was followed by a 6-point scale assessing the perceived psychological difficulty in request making.
  • Least difficult 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5 – 6 most difficult
Instrumentation

- Development of the ODCT (continued).
  - CAQ included Chinese and English versions.
  - Distributed to 15 native Chinese speakers and 18 American learners of Chinese (not included in the main study).
  - Scenario selection criterion: at least 75% of the participants from both native speaker groups need to agree on a rating (of imposition).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item number in CAQ</th>
<th>Native Chinese Group (n = 15)</th>
<th>Native English Group (n = 18)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Low-imposition (R1)</td>
<td>High-imposition (R2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>14 (93.33%)</td>
<td>1 (6.67%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Instrumentation

• Development of the ODCT (continued).
  • 20 scenarios according to the combinations of 2 contextual variables (power, imposition), leading to 4 types of situations, each with 5 scenarios:
    • P1R1: Asking for a small favor from a friend.
    • P1R2: Asking for a big favor from a friend.
    • P2R1: Asking for a small favor from a professor.
    • P2R2: Asking for a big favor from a professor.
During class break, LI Xiao Chen's pencil does not work. So LI Xiao Chen wants to borrow one from WANG Ning. LI Xiao Chen says: _______________________.

Course break, LI Xiao Chen's pencil broke. LI Xiao Chen wants to borrow a pencil from WANG Ning.
Procedures

• Participants completed the ODCT individually in a quite room on campus.
• There were 2 practice items; follow-up questions after completing the ODCT.
• Oral responses were recorded and transcribed for analysis.
• Learners took 40-60 minutes; native speakers 15-20 minutes.
Data analysis & results

Rating score analysis:

- ANOVA; Rasch.

Pragmalinguistic analysis:

- Request strategies (i.e., macro directness levels).
- Linguistic analysis (partially presented today).

Sociopragmatic analysis:

- Contextual variations of request strategies (i.e., distribution of request strategies according to different scenario types).
Data analysis & results

- **Ratings:**
  - Based on a 5-point rating scale tapping communicative function, appropriateness, and grammaticality.

- Three native speaker raters, averaged inter-rater reliability $r = .85$.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Very good</td>
</tr>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Good</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Fair</td>
</tr>
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<td>1</td>
<td>Poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Target communicative function fully realized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Expression fully appropriate for a given scenario as judged by the native speaker rater</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No or almost no syntactic/lexical errors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Target communicative function mostly realized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expression mostly appropriate for a given scenario as judged by the native speaker rater AND/OR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Limited syntactic/lexical errors (i.e., errors in peripheral lexical items, minor syntactic errors) that do not interfere with meaning and/or appropriateness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Target communicative function somewhat realized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expression somewhat appropriate for a given scenario as judged by the native speaker rater (e.g., verbosity, somewhat more direct and/or indirect than needed, use of uncommon semantic formula) AND/OR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Syntactic and/or lexical errors tend to interfere with meaning and/or appropriateness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Target communicative function somewhat realized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expression clearly inappropriate (in terms of directness, formality, or semantic formula) for a given scenario as judged by the native speaker rater AND/OR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Notable syntactic and/or lexical errors (i.e., code switching, key lexical items) that clearly interfere with meaning and/or appropriateness</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Target communicative function not realized</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Expression incomprehensible (due to serious phonological, syntactic/lexical error) OR</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expression totally irrelevant to a given scenario (expression in this case may contain no, almost no, or some syntactic/lexical error) OR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expression is too limited for making judgment</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Data analysis & results

• Ratings (continued):
  • 3 (proficiency) x 4 (scenario type) repeated measures ANOVA.
  • Between-group independent variable: Proficiency (3 levels).
  • Within-group independent variables: 4 scenario types.
• Findings:
  • Main effect of proficiency, $F(2, 59) = 24.207, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .451.$ *
  • Main effect of scenario type, $F(3, 177) = 61.429, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .510$ *
  • Proficiency x scenario type interaction, $F(6, 177) = 2.670, p = .017, \eta_p^2 = .083.$ *
Data analysis & results

Follow-up rating analysis results.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situation type</th>
<th>Results of pairwise comparisons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| P1R1 (equal power, low imposition) | Elementary = Intermediate, p = .136  
Intermediate < Advanced, p = .031*  
Elementary < Advanced, p < .001* |
| P1R2 (equal power, high imposition) | Elementary < Intermediate, p = .009*  
Intermediate < Advanced, p = .001*  
Elementary < Advanced, p < .001* |
| P2R1 (unequal power, low imposition) | Elementary = Intermediate, p = .322  
Intermediate < Advanced, p = .199  
Elementary < Advanced, p < .002* |
| P2R2 (unequal power, high imposition) | Elementary < Intermediate, p = .028*  
Intermediate < Advanced, p = .032*  
Elementary < Advanced, p < .001* |
Data analysis & results

- Ratings (continued):
  - Rasch analysis of ratings through FACETS.

- The Rasch model is a probability-based psychometric model (more details to be offered in Lecture #5).

- It visualizes test item difficulty, learner ability on the same logit scale.

Advanced: Mean = 0.979 logits, SD = 0.490
Intermediate: Mean = 0.338 logits, SD = 0.607
Elementary: Mean = -0.216 logits, SD = 0.579
Data analysis & results

- Pragmalinguistic analysis on request strategies (i.e., directness levels).
  - Direct strategies. 借我一支笔。
  - Conventionally indirect strategies. 我能借你的笔用一下吗？
  - Non-conventionally indirect strategies. 我的笔坏了。
  - Results based on all 20 scenarios.

- Coding.
  - 20% of leaner data coded by two independent researchers, 97.67% agreement.
  - 20% Chinese native data coded by two independent researchers; 99.00% agreement.
Data analysis & results

• Choice of pragmalinguistic forms: 可以 vs. 能.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Keyi category</th>
<th>Neng category</th>
<th>Others</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>G1</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G2</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G3</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHN</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data analysis & results

• Sociopragmatic analysis on contextual variations of direct strategies, e.g., 借我一支笔.
  • Mean frequency of production across scenario types (see below).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenario type</th>
<th>G1</th>
<th>G2</th>
<th>G3</th>
<th>CHN</th>
<th>ENG</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P1R1: Friend – small request</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P1R2: Friend – big request</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2R1: Professor – small request</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2R2: Professor – big request</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data analysis & results

- Sociopragmatic analysis on contextual variations of conventionally direct strategies, e.g., 我能借你的笔用一下吗？
  - Mean frequency of production across scenario types (see below).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenario type</th>
<th>G1</th>
<th>G2</th>
<th>G3</th>
<th>CHN</th>
<th>ENG</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P1R1: Friend – small request</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P1R2: Friend – big request</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2R1: Professor – small request</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2R2: Professor – big request</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summary of findings

• Back to the research question: What are the developmental trajectories involved in the production of requests among American learners of Chinese?
  • Rating: Positive effects of proficiency on overall performance.
  
• Pragmalinguistic analysis:
  • Strategies: Change towards L1 (English norm) and away from L2 (Chinese norm).
  • Specific form choice (可以 vs. 能): limited improvement, remained non-native like.

• Sociopragmatic analysis: very limited change/development, strongly influenced by L1 (English norm).
Learner interview findings

- Foreigner mentality, identity, learner agency.

G2 “…I lot of time, I just hope that they understand that I’m a foreigner.”

“I think it is excusable, since we are foreign language students. We are foreigners, so we are excusable if we don’t know…”

G3 “…可能那个不是必要的, 因为有很多中国人, 他们可能知道有那个文化的差别存在, 所以他们知道你有好心, 可是你从来没有受到那个教育。。。可以原谅那个‘老外’。。。”

“…maybe that is not necessary, because many Chinese people, they may know that there exists culture differences, so they know that you have good intention, but you have never received that instruction… (they) could forgive that ‘foreigner’…”
Learner interview findings

• Lack of input and corrective feedback.

G3 “...我觉得我的答案有点儿不太好, 但是我不知道我应该用什么词回答这些问题...我要说什么跟我会说什么不一致, 我觉得我现在没有受到这样的教育, 礼貌的教育.”

“I feel that my answers were not very good, but I don’t know what words I should use to answer these questions...What I want to say is different from what I am able to say, I think I haven’t received this kind of instruction, instruction on how to be polite.”
Questions to consider

For purposes of teaching and assessment, what should/can be the appropriate set of norms of communication for students like those included in this study?

How do we evaluate learner progress from a pragmatics perspective?
Thanks, and keep in touch:
sli12@gsu.edu

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