This innovative book links theory to practice with regard to teaching pragmatics. In laying out why this is useful, how it is achievable, and what to teach when it comes to pragmatics, this book outlines the theoretical background and offers a wide range of hands-on activities. While offering coverage of timely issues like pragmatics in text messaging, the authors expertly provide further guidance for developing pragmatics curricula for learners of different ages and languages, and at different proficiency levels in a research-based, practical way. This reader-friendly resource gives pre- and in-service FL/L2 teachers the tools and confidence to understand and implement these principles in the classroom and beyond. Advanced students and researchers of applied linguistics, education, and psychology, as well as curriculum developers, teacher trainers, and aspiring teachers around the world – and their students – will benefit from this unique book.

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Research and Resources in Language Teaching
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From Research to Practice
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PRAGMATICS IN LANGUAGE TEACHING

From Research to Practice

Júlia Barón, María Luz Celaya, and Peter Watkins
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SERIES EDITORS’ PREFACE

About the series

*Research and Resources in Language Teaching* is a ground-breaking series whose aim is to integrate the latest research in language teaching and learning with innovative classroom practice. The books are written by a partnership of writers, who combine research and materials writing skills and experience. Books in the series offer accessible accounts of current research on a particular topic, linked to a wide range of practical and immediately useable classroom activities. Using the series, language educators will be able both to connect research findings directly to their everyday practice through imaginative and practical communicative tasks and to realise the research potential of such tasks in the classroom. We believe the series represents a new departure in language education publishing, bringing together the twin perspectives of research and materials writing, illustrating how research and practice can be combined to provide practical and useable activities for classroom teachers and at the same time encouraging researchers to draw on a body of activities that can guide further research.

About the books

All the books in the series follow the same organisational principle:

Part I: *From research to implications*

Part I contains an account of current research on the topic in question and outlines its implications for classroom practice.

Part II: *From implications to application*
Part II focuses on transforming research outcomes into classroom practice by means of practical, immediately useable activities. Short introductions signpost the path from research into practice.

**Part III: From application to implementation**

Part III contains methodological suggestions for how the activities in Part II could be used in the classroom, for example, different ways in which they could be integrated into the syllabus or applied to different teaching contexts.

**Part IV: From implementation to research**

Part IV returns to research with suggestions for professional development projects and action research, often directly based on the materials in the book. Each book as a whole thus completes the cycle: research into practice and practice back into research.

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**About this book**

The aim of learning a foreign or second language is to become a competent speaker who can communicate in a variety of contexts and with different interlocutors. As teachers, to help students achieve this goal, we need to provide them with communicative strategies that go beyond grammar, vocabulary or pronunciation. It is pragmatics another essential component of language that can help learners in the process of becoming competent users of the L2. The objective of this book is to contribute to the body of research that point towards the need of dealing with pragmatics in the L2 class. The book consists of four parts. The first part provides a theoretical background on pragmatics and also research carried out in the area of learning and teaching L2 pragmatics. The second part provides a series of activities that teachers can use in their language class with students at different ages and proficiency levels. Although this book is addressed to teachers, we also think that researchers interested in instructed learning will find some food for thought in these pages. The third part aims at guiding teachers when deciding what to teach and how, as well as providing guidance when incorporating pragmatics in the curriculum. The fourth part creates an opportunity for teachers to carry out action-research studies in their classrooms and so explore future needs in the field of teaching pragmatics.

We hope that you will find the series exciting and above all valuable to your practice and research in language education!

*Anne Burns and Jill Hadfield (Series Editors)*
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PART I

From research to implications

Introduction

Second and foreign language teaching occurs worldwide and has many different goals and expectations. As teachers, we may find ourselves teaching in different contexts and engaging in different types of courses, which will be associated with our students’ needs. Sometimes, we find ourselves preparing our students to pass an official examination; sometimes the course we teach is compulsory in the school or university curriculum; at other times, we may teach a language to students who need it for work purposes; and it may also be the case that we teach languages to students who just want to know the language for pleasure so that they can travel and communicate with others in the target language (TL). In relation to materials that are used, however, even if many curricula nowadays are communication oriented, it is still very common to find courses, and even textbooks, whose main focus is on grammar. This is especially the case in courses whose main objective is to help students to pass an official language exam. Yet, despite the fact that, for the last few decades, many researchers have been claiming the benefits of teaching pragmatics in foreign and second language contexts (González-Lloret, 2019), this area of communication is seldom part of language courses.

Regardless of the course objectives, as teachers we may believe that our ultimate goal is to provide students with strategies to communicate with both native (NSs) and non-native (NNSs) speakers of the students’ TL. Mastering grammar, vocabulary, or pronunciation will not guarantee that communication is going to be successful. Being polite, using the appropriate

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language depending on who your interlocutor is, adapting the language to the situation you are in, or knowing about the culture of the language you are interacting with are all important and necessary factors to communicate with others in a second language (L2) (González-Lloret, 2021). These features of language are referred to in language study as pragmatics. As Bardovi-Harlig (2013, p. 68) points out, pragmatics is “the study of how-to-say-what-to-whom-when”, so if our final objective is to help students to communicate, dealing with pragmatics in the language class should probably be one of the main objectives in classroom syllabi.

This book looks at key theoretical perspectives on pragmatics and how they can be enacted in practice. Part I of this book is divided into two main sections. Section 1 (An introduction to pragmatics) presents a general overview that will frame the theoretical background: from definitions and history of pragmatics, to approaches to pragmatics, culture, social contexts, and (im)politeness. Section 2 (Pragmatics in second language learning and teaching) aims to help readers to understand the process of L2 pragmatics learning as well as to provide an overview of approaches to the teaching of pragmatics.

Section 1. An introduction to pragmatics

Defining pragmatics

Yule’s (1996, p. 3) definition of pragmatics gives a general working overview of the term. He points out that pragmatics is the “study of the speaker’s meaning”, as well as “contextual meaning”, that is, to know what a speaker really means in a particular context. For example, if someone says ‘Some fresh air would be nice now’ after being closed in a room for a very long time, what the speaker really means is ‘let’s get out of here’. Pragmatics shows us “how more gets communicated than is said” which means that we cannot rely only on the literal meaning of sentences, but we need to further understand the implied meanings of utterances, as in the previous example. Finally, according to Yule, pragmatics also expresses “relative distance” which refers to the relationship between speakers when communicating. The language we use with our friends or family members will not be the same as when we communicate with people from work; we might choose more informal language in the first situation, and more formal language in the second one.

Therefore, as Yule suggests, when dealing with pragmatics, we are not only focusing on what the speaker is literally saying; we need to go further and try to infer what the speaker’s meaning really is. Not only that, but also the context or situation in which something is said is an important aspect
to consider, since it may affect the meaning of the utterance. Furthermore, who we are interacting with will play a major role in what we say: talking to a friend is not the same as talking to a boss.

Another working definition of pragmatics is the one by Crystal (1997, p. 301) who defined it as “the study of language from the point of view of users, especially of the choices they make, the constraints they encounter in using language in social interaction, and the effects their use of language has on other participants in the act of communication”. This definition includes some key aspects that play an important role in pragmatics. The first one is the word ‘choices’. According to this definition, pragmatics does not only refer to what speakers say, but how they find themselves choosing which linguistic strategy is more appropriate according to the situation in which it is being said. That can sometimes be problematic: what if we do not choose the appropriate one? What if we make a request which is too direct in a context and culture in which a more indirect one would be expected? Then, ‘interaction’ will probably fail from a pragmatic perspective. Thus, ‘interaction’ is another key term in pragmatics, since pragmatic exchanges always take place in interaction and communication. Nowadays, when we refer to interaction, we no longer mean only face-to-face communication, but also online communication, text messaging, or texting in social media. Finally, the word ‘effect’ in Crystal’s definition is another important aspect that needs to be considered. If pragmatic exchanges take place in interaction, this means that what we say is not only relevant from an individual perspective, but also from the interlocutor’s reaction towards what we say. As in the example provided earlier, if we say ‘it is hot in here’ and somebody opens a window or turns on an air conditioner or fan, it will mean that the hint we have made has had the expected effect that we had hoped for. If, on the contrary, nobody reacts, we may need to change the way we request it, and perhaps become more direct, with something like ‘would you mind opening the window?’

As we can see in the definitions above, pragmatics plays an important role in interaction, a role that is important in our first language (L1) as well. The norms and behaviours of our L1 pragmatics are acquired from childhood, since from very early stages we are told by our parents, caregivers, or teachers what is appropriate and what is not in different situations in our daily life: for example, we can be told that we must say ‘thank you’ when somebody gives us a present, that we must apologise if we do something wrong, that elderly people must be treated with respect, and so on. Of course, we are not born pragmatically appropriate; it is through contact and interaction with pragmatically experienced speakers that we become pragmatically competent in our L1. This takes time.