

Title of the Colloquium: Task-Based Interaction and Learning in L2 Pragmatics

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The teaching of second language (L2) pragmatics concerns learners' development of socially situated language use. The field of task-based language teaching (TBLT) focuses on meaningful language use while performing tasks that resemble real-world needs and have clear outcomes. Although both research domains share similar tenets of L2 pedagogy which involves situated interactions, real-world communicative needs, and communication goals, it is only recently that researchers have begun to explore how both fields can complement each other (Taguchi & Kim, 2018). From an L2 pragmatics research perspective, the concept of *task* has been rather unsystematically defined, and from a TBLT research perspective, the learning of pragmatics through tasks has rarely been addressed compared to grammar and vocabulary (Plonsky & Kim, 2016). In this invited colloquium, we present four empirical studies that examined task-based interaction and learning in L2 pragmatics in diverse contexts including various forms of technology for task-based pragmatics teaching (e.g., artificial intelligence systems, social networking sites, and video conferencing). The studies address a variety of pragmatic features for instruction, including both traditional constructs of pragmatics (e.g., speech acts of request, advice-giving, and disagreement) and non-traditional areas of discourse-interactional features (e.g., turn-taking, interruptions).

Comparing Traditional and Task-Based Approaches to Teaching Pragmatics: Advice-Giving on Blog Posts

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Recently, researchers have advocated for the application of task-based language teaching (TBLT) in pragmatics instruction, as both fields (TBLT and L2 pragmatics) emphasize the importance of situated interactions and real-world communicative needs (Taguchi & Kim, 2018). However, to what extent task-based pragmatics instruction differs from traditional instruction in terms of students' learning of various pragmatic features has not been systematically examined. The goal of the current study is twofold: (1) to demonstrate how to design authentic blog-posting tasks for Korean EFL learners; and (2) to compare traditional instruction and task-based instruction in Korean high school learners' learning of advice-giving strategies in English.

A total of 52 high school students in Korea were assigned to either a traditional instruction condition or a task-based instruction condition. Advice-giving strategies were introduced in their regular textbook, and thus traditional group was taught advice-giving strategies using their textbook. For task-based instruction, advice-giving tasks were designed simulating online Q&A communities (e.g., <https://cafe.naver.com/suhui>), as Korean high school students commonly share their concerns anonymously in online forums. Participants were asked to read other high

school students' posts about their personal concerns and respond to the concerns by posting their advice in a forum. Both groups completed a background survey, a pretest, instructional treatment (textbook exercise for the traditional condition, and individual advice-giving tasks for the task condition), a reflection survey, and immediate and delayed posttests over three months. In the pre- and post-tests, learners were asked to write advice in response to four different concerns. Both groups' pretest/posttest advice-giving responses were analyzed in terms of the occurrence of advice-giving strategies (e.g., expressing sympathy) based on existing coding frameworks (Salemi, Rabiee, & Ketabi, 2012). In addition, linguistic forms appearing in each strategy were coded (e.g., bi-clausal constructions or mono-clausal constructions). The frequency of different advice-giving strategies and linguistic forms on posttests was compared between the two groups using Mann-Whitney U tests.

The results showed that task-based instruction group outperformed the traditional instruction for short-term learning of advice-giving strategies, but such pattern was not found for the long-term learning. Furthermore, task-based instruction group learned more complex structures of advice-giving headacts than the traditional instruction group. The implications of the study are discussed in terms of task-based approaches to teaching L2 pragmatics in a classroom-based context.

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L2 learners' pragmatic output in a face-to-face *versus* a computer-guided role-play task: Implications for TBLT

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Workplace interaction is a critical target task domain for many L2 learners (Long, 2015), and accomplishing oral interactive workplace tasks requires various language abilities, including pragmatics (Taguchi & Kim, 2018). Pedagogic tasks that emphasize spoken interaction may provide the optimal instructional vehicle for developing the pragmatic abilities required for such tasks (Doughty & Long, 2003). While TBLT research underscores the benefits of face-to-face interaction (Pica, 2005), there is increasing interest in exploring technology-mediated interactive tasks (Gonzalez-Lloret & Ortega, 2014). However, there may be important differences between technology-mediated and face-to-face interactions, leaving open the question of whether technology-mediated interactive tasks—in particular those facilitated by an AI-agent—are effective for teaching and assessing L2 pragmatics (Blyth & Sykes, 2020).

Accordingly, this study investigated how 47 tertiary-level ESL learners performed on an oral interactive task that required them to make requests to their boss in two distinct modalities. Each participant completed the same task with a fully-automated AI-agent and with a human interlocutor in a face-to-face format. This pedagogic task was designed to draw learners' attention to language forms used to realize requests. The elicited interactions were examined for linguistic indices (speaking time, number of turns, syntactic complexity, lexical variety, fluency) and pragmatic phenomena (type and strategy of requests, openings, closings).

Linguistic performance across the delivery modes was comparable, with both modalities eliciting language use relevant to the pragmatics target. However, some important differences were observed in the elicited interactions depending on delivery format. Learners took longer and less turns with the AI-agent, deploying less rapport-building moves and backchanneling. Fully-automated interactions were also found to be more transactional, indicated by less elaborated opening/closing sequences and more direct requests. While fully-automated interactive tasks may be useful for eliciting basic pragmatic phenomena, replicating human-to-human interactions remains a challenge. The presentation concludes with implications for teaching and assessing L2 pragmatics through technology-mediated tasks.

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“Turn-taking, interruptions, and interjections on Zoom: A task-based approach to L2 pragmatic development”

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“No, you go ahead... sorry to interrupt you!” These phrases, along with other strategies to negotiate turn-taking in digital spaces, have become increasingly commonplace with the recent rise of online video conferencing. Navigating the norms of online communication is a struggle for all types of interlocutors, but this mode of interaction may present unique challenges to second language (L2) learners who are also navigating the pragmatic norms of an additional language. The acquisition of L2 pragmatics is generally an understudied area of SLA; however, there is some evidence L2 pragmatics teaching could benefit from a task-based approach (Taguchi & Kim, 2015; 2018). While there is a robust history of SLA research that has investigated learning in computer-mediated contexts (e.g., Ziegler, 2016) there have been ongoing calls for more research that links technology with task-based learning (e.g., González-Lloret & Ortega, 2014). Given the increasing number of language learners engaging in online synchronous language courses, there is a critical need to understand how technology can be leveraged to maximize opportunities for L2 pragmatic development.

This study aims to address these gaps by examining how tasks can be leveraged in synchronous online interactions to support learners’ acquisition of digital turn-taking, interruptions, and interjections. 18 Japanese-speaking intermediate learners of English participated in the current study. Learners first completed a pre-test where they engaged in a task designed to elicit communication breakdowns requiring learner-negotiated turn-taking and then rated their abilities and confidence in successfully obtaining and maintaining the online conversational “floor.” Following an adapted Willis (1996) framework, learners engaged in 3 tasks (including input flood pre-tasks, task cycles, and post-task language focus stages) specifically designed to raise pragmatic awareness and provide opportunities for practicing turn-taking strategies in professional video conferences. Following the final task, learners participated in an equivalent post-task and stimulated recall interviews. Data analysis investigated how learners progressed in terms of number of turns, time each interlocutor held the floor, and type of strategies used to regain the floor. Results examine patterns between learners’ own perceptions of their ability to navigate complex turn-taking interactions online in English, their perceptions of others’ performance, and how those perceptions were influenced by their participation in the task-based learning sessions.

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Learning to Disagree with Social Media

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As frequent as disagreement is to everyday conversation, this speech act is rarely present in the foreign/second/other language (L2) classrooms. Disagreement is a complex, multidirectional and multifunctional act that is mostly, but not always negative. Disagreement can be used to strengthen relationships (Sifianou, 2012). However, students almost never have an opportunity to disagree with the teacher, and disagreement with peers is framed as part of interactional activities without the real interactional work needed in real life. In addition to a lack of in-class practice, disagreement (as most speech acts) is realized differently by different cultural groups. This means that L2 learners need to understand not just the pragmalinguistic realizations of disagreement but also its sociopragmatic norms and how to interactionally manage the act. Technology can provide a space where students can practice this speech act in an authentic manner by engaging in interaction with other speakers of the language remotely.

This study investigates the development of disagreement in the language of beginner learners of Spanish in the U.S. through social media. Data was collected from three different groups of beginner Spanish learners engaged in Facebook interactions: 1) L2 students only, 2) L2 students with expert speakers, and 3) a control group. Every week, a picture or video of a social topic with a comment was posted to the groups' Facebook page for them to discuss. For example, a picture showed a homeless man with the comment "*Todas las personas tienen derecho a una vivienda digna y el gobierno debe ayudar*" (Everybody has the right to decent housing and the government must help). These tasks were designed following the idea that conversation and argumentation in Facebook are real-world authentic tasks since are treated as social action by the participants themselves, and they fit within Long's (1985) definition of task as "one of the hundred and one things people do in everyday life, at work, at play, and in between." (p. 89).

The data was contrasted through a pre- and post-test to assess gains in the development of learners' ability to produce disagreement. The results show a large variety of patterns of development among learners. The article finishes with pedagogical suggestions to enhance the learning of this speech act, especially by beginner students.

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