

**Anna Szczepaniak-Kozak.** *Interlanguage pragmatic competence: A longitudinal study of 'pragmatic accent' in learning EFL.* Poznań: Adam Mickiewicz University Press. 2018, 440 pp.

The monograph under review is the result of the author's five-year long study of an important, but often underestimated, linguistic skill, together with a much longer preoccupation with research into related issues. Pragmatic competence (PC) could arguably be considered the hardest skill to teach foreign language learners. Without it, otherwise proficient learners will encounter intercultural difficulties affecting their interaction with native speakers, since a lack of PC can be construed by the listener / reader as impoliteness, or simply odd. This study is, therefore, a welcome contribution to the domain of PC studies, highly relevant to the present state of scholarship in the field, and of particular interest for Polish learners and teachers of EFL.

The guiding hypothesis and focus of the monograph are clearly defined from the beginning. After the first 15 pages containing acknowledgements, abbreviations used and preliminary groundwork, the book is divided into seven chapters, followed by reflections on the theoretical, methodological and pedagogical implications of the findings. After the references section the study includes appendices in which the reader can find the description of the scenarios for the requests, as well as the MDCT, and tables quantifying and analyzing the answers. Chapter one deals with such important issues as politeness, formulaic language, misunderstandings and the role of culture in PC. In Chapter two the focus is on interlanguage pragmatics, and specifically on the acquisition of PC by NNSs in the context of Polish learners of EFL, with a discussion of scholarship on the possible interferences and transfers likely to be taking place. Chapter three is perhaps the most interesting from a pedagogical point of view, since it addresses the teacher's dilemma of

how "PC in a foreign language context can be best developed simultaneously with other components of communicative competence" (p. 88). Requests in English and Polish are the subject of Chapter four. The author is right to concentrate her research on the production of requests, since these speech acts can, if inadequately formulated, produce exactly the opposite of what the speaker intends, which is to persuade the addressee to do something which he / she might not be willing to undertake. Though requests have been studied by researchers in the context of other languages or combinations of languages, the author is justified in focusing on their acquisition by Polish speakers. Previous studies of requests from a cross-cultural viewpoint are the subject of Chapter five. The author demonstrates a thorough and exhaustive reappraisal of previous research on this particular point, discussing methodological issues, justifying their application or rejection on the grounds of appropriateness or inadequacy for her study.

Chapters six and seven deal in detail with the organization of the research itself, and a close examination of the data obtained, respectively. The author's interest stems from the fact that PC is not, according to her experience, a priority objective for either Polish learners or their teachers: "more often than not, Polish EFL speakers do not work on improving their PC, simply because they are unaware of their pragmatic incompetence. By the same token, they tend to treat pragmatic failures not as proficiency related errors, but rather they instinctively associate them with affective factors beyond their own control, e.g., factors related to the interpersonal relationship between the interlocutors" (p. 199). It is in Chapter six when the complete meaning of the title of the study becomes clear, since the expression 'pragmatic accent', coined by the author, is now understood by the reader as an analogy with a foreign accent in oral production which, depending on its degree of intelligibility, may interfere in speaker-addressee interaction to a greater or lesser extent. The author emphasizes that there is nothing wrong with speaking with a 'pragmatic accent' and that differences in pragmatic performance should not be considered as deficiencies (p. 343). However, she is right to recommend greater awareness training and remedial instruction (presumably for both teachers and students). Awareness is half the issue, since it is all too easy to blame one's interlocutor for a breakdown in communication without considering the role of different cultural norms.

This work fills a gap in the existing the body of research on the acquisition of PC, since the findings of previous scholars relate to different learners, cultural circumstances and contexts. Polish learners and their developing PC skills are thus highlighted by the author over a substantial period of time during the learners' linguistic training, and this will hopefully inspire others to follow on and produce further comparable studies and data. The author recognizes the limitations of her work, and consequently leaves the door open for further research on the topic, fine-tuning her methodology, and taking into account other factors.

The handling of key concepts and ideas is precise and rigorous, and reveals a competent treatment of the topic being dealt with. The work shows ample awareness of the theoretical and methodological aspects involved in the development of the issue studied, and it is written in a clear, correct and accessible style. Quotation from previous scholarship is moderate and fulfils its supportive role, without encroaching upon authorial discourse.

This monograph constitutes a thorough and conscientious analysis of a problematic but often ignored sociolinguistic phenomenon; it is likely to prove useful for other researchers in the field of applied linguistics, as well as practitioners in EFL teacher-training contexts.

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